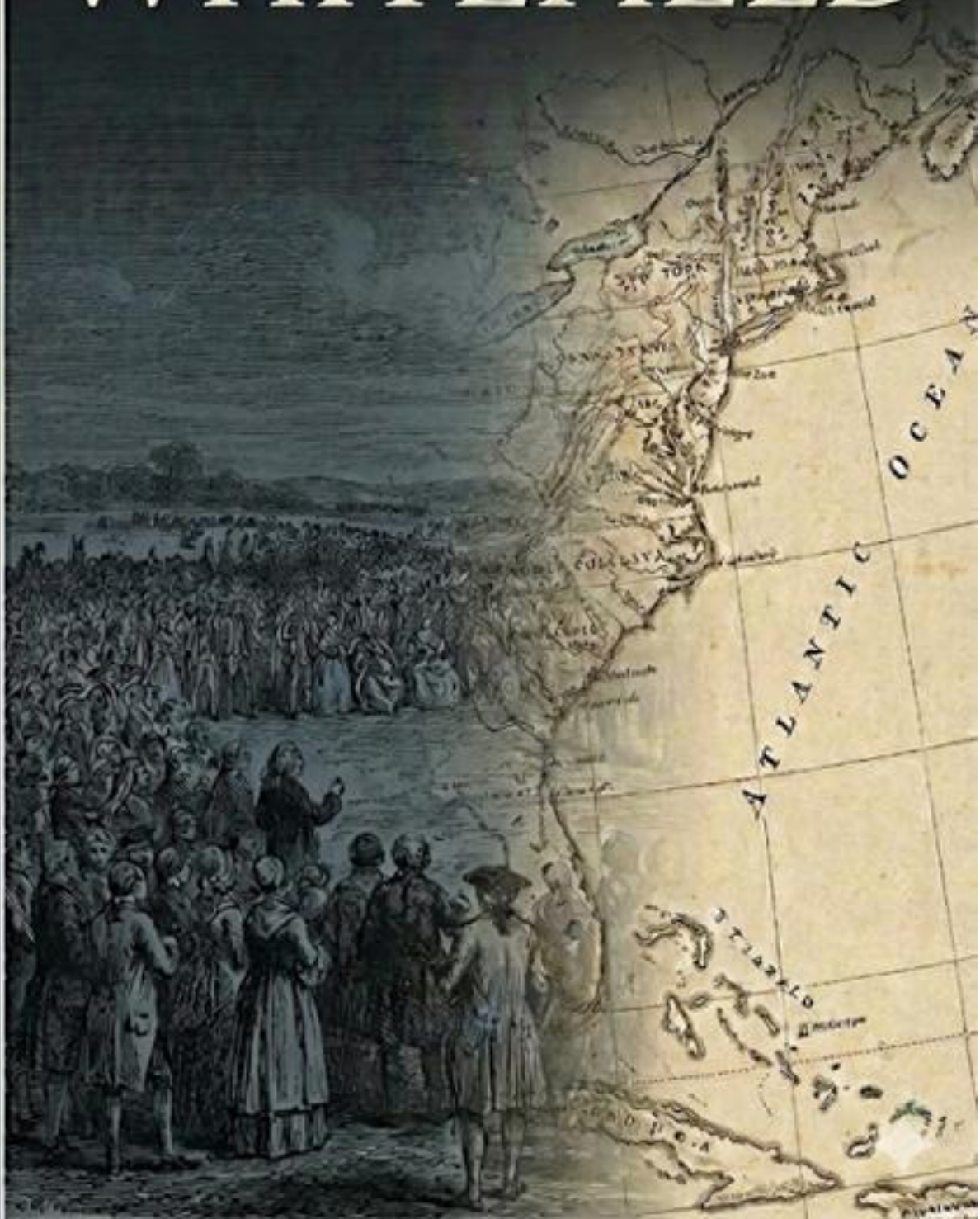
THE WORKS OF THE REVEREND GEORGE WHITEFIELD

VOLUME V



THE WORKS OF THE REVEREND GEORGE WHITEFIELD, M.A.

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GEORGE WHITEFIELD

Monergism Books

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SERMON I.

The Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent.
Genesis iii. 15.

And I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel.

ON reading to you these words, I may address you in the language of the holy angels to the shepherds, that were watching their flocks by night; "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy." For this is the first promise that was made of a Saviour to the apostate race of *Adam*. We generally look for Christ only in the New Testament; but Christianity, in one sense, is very near as old as the creation. It is wonderful to observe how gradually God revealed his Son to mankind. He began with the promise in the text, and this the elect lived upon, till the time of *Abraham*. To him, God made further discoveries of his eternal council concerning man's redemption. Afterwards, at sundry times, and in divers manners, God spoke to the fathers by the prophets, till at length the Lord Jesus himself was manifested in flesh, and came and tabernacled amongst us.

This first promise must certainly be but dark to our first parents, in comparison of that great light which we enjoy: And yet, dark as it was, we may assure ourselves they built upon it their hopes of everlasting salvation, and by that faith were saved.

How they came to stand in need of this promise, and what is the extent and meaning of it, I intend, God willing, to make the subject-matter of your present meditation.

The fall of man is written in too legible characters not to be understood: Those that deny it, by their denying, prove it. The very heathens confessed, and bewailed it: They could see the streams of corruption running through the whole race of mankind, but could not trace them to the fountain-head. Before God gave a revelation of his Son, man was a riddle to himself. And *Moses* unfolds more, in this one chapter (out of which the text is taken) than all mankind could have been capable of finding out of themselves, though they had studied to all eternity.

In the preceding chapter he had given us a full account, how God spoke the world into being; and especially how he formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life, so that he became a living soul. A council of the Trinity was called concerning the formation of this lovely creature. The result of that council was, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.” *Moses* remarkably repeats these words, that we might take particular notice of our divine Original. Never was so much expressed in so few words: None but a man inspired could have done so. But it is remarkable, that though *Moses* mentions our being made in the image of God, yet he mentions it but twice, and that in a transient manner; as though he would have said, “man was made in honour, God made him

upright, ‘in the image of God, male and female created he them.’ But man so soon fell, and became like the beasts that perish, nay, like the devil himself, that it is scarce worth mentioning.”

How soon man fell after he was created, is not told us; and therefore, to fix any time, is to be wise above what is written. And, I think, they who suppose that man fell the same day in which he was made, have no sufficient ground for their opinion. The many things which are crouded together in the former chapter, such as the formation of *Adam*’s wife, his giving names to the beasts, and his being put into the garden which God had planted, I think require a longer space of time than a day to be transacted in. However, all agree in this, “man stood not long.” How long, or how short a while, I will not take upon me to determine. It more concerns us to enquire, how he came to fall from his stedfastness, and what was the rise and progress of the temptation which prevailed over him. The account given us in this chapter concerning it, is very full; and it may do us much service, under God, to make some remarks upon it.

“Now the serpent (says the sacred historian) was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made; and he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Though this was a real serpent, yet he that spoke was no other than the devil; from hence, perhaps, called the old serpent, because he took possession of the serpent when he came to beguile our first parents. The devil envied the happiness of man, who was made, as some think, to supply the place of the fallen angels. God made man upright, and with full power to stand if he would: He was just, therefore, in suffering him to be tempted. If he fell, he had no one to blame except himself. But how must satan effect his fall? He cannot do it by his power, he attempts it therefore by policy: he

takes possession of a serpent, which was more subtile than all the beasts of the field, which the Lord God had made; so that men who are full of subtilty, but have no piety, are only machines for the devil to work upon, just as he pleases.

"And he said unto the woman." Here is an instance of his subtilty. He says unto the woman, the weaker vessel, and when she was alone from her husband, and therefore was more liable to be overcome; "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" These words are certainly spoken in answer to something which the devil either saw or heard. In all probability, the woman was now near the tree of knowledge of good and evil; (for we shall find her, by and by, plucking an apple from it) perhaps she might be looking at, and wondering what there was in that tree more than the others, that she and her husband should be forbidden to taste of it. Satan seeing this, and coveting to draw her into a parley with him, (for if the devil can persuade us not to resist, but to commune with him, he hath gained a great point) he says, "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" The first thing he does is to persuade her, if possible, to entertain hard thoughts of God; this is his general way of dealing with God's children: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? What! hath God planted a garden, and placed you in the midst of it, only to teaze and perplex you? hath he planted a garden, and yet forbid you making use of any of the fruits of it at all?" It was impossible for him to ask a more insnaring question, in order to gain his end: for *Eve* was here seemingly obliged to answer, and vindicate God's goodness. And therefore, —

Verse 2, 3. The woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of

the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

The former part of the answer was good, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, God has not forbid us eating of every tree of the garden. No; we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden (and, it should seem, even of the tree of life, which was as a sacrament to man in a state of innocence) there is only one tree in the midst of the garden, of which God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Here she begins to warp, and sin begins to conceive in her heart. Already she has contracted some of the serpent's poison, by talking with him, which she ought not to have done at all. For she might easily suppose, that it could be no good being, that could put such a question unto her, and insinuate such dishonourable thoughts of God. She should therefore have fled from him, and not stood to have parleyed with him at all. Immediately the ill effects of it appear, she begins to soften the divine threatning. God had said, "the day thou eatest thereof, *thou shalt surely die*;" or, dying thou shalt die. But *Eve* says, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, *lest ye die*." We may be assured we are fallen into, and begin to fall by temptation, when we begin to think God will not be as good as his word, in respect to the execution of his threatnings denounced against sin. Satan knew this, and therefore artfully

"Said unto the woman, (verse 4.) Ye shall not surely die," in an insinuating manner, "Ye shall not surely die. Surely, God will not be so cruel as to damn you only for eating an apple, it cannot be." Alas! how many does Satan lead captive at his will, by flattering them, that they shall not surely die; that hell-torments will not be eternal; that God is all mercy; that he therefore will not punish a few years sin with an eternity of misery?

But *Eve* found God as good as his word; and so will all they who go on in sin, under a false hope that they shall not surely die.

We may also understand the words spoken positively, and this is agreeable to what follows; You shall not surely die; “It is all a delusion, a mere bugbear, to keep you in a servile subjection.”

For (verse 5.) “God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then shall your eyes be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

What child of God can expect to escape slander, when God himself was thus slandered even in paradise? Surely the understanding of *Eve* must have been, in some measure, blinded, or she would not have suffered the tempter to speak such perverse things. In what odious colours is God here represented! “God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods,” (equal with God.) So that the grand temptation was, that they should be hereafter under no controul, equal, if not superior, to God that made them, knowing good and evil. *Eve* could not tell what Satan meant by this; but, to be sure, she understood it of some great privilege which they were to enjoy. And thus Satan now points out a way which seems right to sinners, but does not tell them the end of that way is death.

To give strength and force to this temptation, in all probability, Satan, or the serpent, at this time plucked an apple from the tree, and ate it before *Eve*; by which *Eve* might be induced to think, that the sagacity and power of speech, which the serpent had above the other beasts, must be owing, in a great measure, to his eating that fruit; and, therefore, if he received so much improvement, she might also expect a like benefit from it. All this, I think, is clear; for, otherwise, I do not see with what propriety it could be said, “When the woman saw that it was good for food.” How could she know it was good for food, unless she had seen the serpent feed upon it?

Satan now begins to get ground apace. Lust had conceived in *Eve*'s heart; shortly it will bring forth sin. Sin being conceived, brings forth death. Verse 6. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat."

Our senses are the landing ports of our spiritual enemies. How needful is that resolution of holy *Job*, "I have made a covenant with mine eyes!" When *Eve* began to gaze on the forbidden fruit with her eyes, she soon began to long after it with her heart. When she saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, (here was the lust of the flesh, and lust of the eye) but, above all, a tree to be desired to make one wise, wiser than God would have her be, nay, as wise as God himself; she took of the fruit thereof, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. As soon as ever she sinned herself, she turned tempter to her husband. It is dreadful, when those, who should be help-meets for each other in the great work of their salvation, are only promoters of each other's damnation: but thus it is. If we ourselves are good, we shall excite others to goodness; if we do evil, we shall entice others to do evil also. There is a close connection between doing and teaching. How needful then is it for us all to take heed that we do not sin any way ourselves, lest we should become factors for the devil, and insnare, perhaps, our nearest and dearest relatives? "she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

Alas! what a complication of crimes was there in this one single act of sin! Here is an utter disbelief of God's threatning; the utmost ingratitude to their Maker, who had so lately planted this garden, and placed them in it, with such a glorious and comprehensive charter. And, the utmost neglect of

their posterity, who they knew were to stand or fall with them. Here was the utmost pride of heart: they wanted to be equal with God. Here's the utmost contempt put upon his threatning and his law: the devil is credited and obeyed before him, and all this only to satisfy their sensual appetite. Never was a crime of such a complicated nature committed by any here below: Nothing but the devil's apostasy and rebellion could equal it.

And what are the consequences of their disobedience? Are their eyes opened? Yes, their eyes are opened; but, alas! it is only to see their own nakedness. For we are told (verse 7.) "That the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." Naked of God, naked of every thing that was holy and good, and destitute of the divine image, which they before enjoyed. They might rightly now be termed *Ichabod*; for the glory of the Lord departed from them. O how low did these sons of the morning then fall! out of God, into themselves; from being partakers of the divine nature, into the nature of the devil and the beast. Well, therefore, might they know that they were naked, not only in body, but in soul.

And how do they behave now they are naked? Do they flee to God for pardon? Do they seek to God for a robe to cover their nakedness? No, they were now dead to God, and became earthly, sensual, devilish: therefore, instead of applying to God for mercy, "they sewed or platted fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons," or things to gird about them. This is a lively representation of all natural men: we see that we are naked: we, in some measure, confess it; but, instead of looking up to God for succour, we patch up a righteousness of our own (as our first-parents platted fig-leaves together) hoping to cover our nakedness by that. But our righteousness will not stand the severity of God's judgment: it will do us no more service than the fig-leaves did *Adam* and *Eve*, that is, none at all.

For (verse 8.) “They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the trees of the garden, in the cool of the day; and *Adam* and his wife (notwithstanding their fig-leaves) hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden.”

They heard the voice of the Lord God, or the Word of the Lord God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the word that was with God, and the word that was God.” They heard him walking in the trees of the garden, in the cool of the day. A season, perhaps, when *Adam* and *Eve* used to go, in an especial manner, and offer up an evening-sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The cool of the day. Perhaps the sin was committed early in the morning, or at noon; but God would not come upon them immediately, he staid till the cool of the day. And if we would effectually reprove others, we should not do it when they are warmed with passion, but wait till the cool of the day.

But what an alteration is here! Instead of rejoicing at the voice of their beloved, instead of meeting him with open arms and inlarged hearts, as before, they now hide themselves in the trees of the garden. Alas, what a foolish attempt was this? Surely they must be naked, otherwise how could they think of hiding themselves from God? Whither could they flee from his presence? But, by their fall, they had contracted an enmity against God: they now hated, and were afraid to converse with God their Maker. And is not this our case by nature? Assuredly it is. We labour to cover our nakedness with the fig-leaves of our own righteousness: We hide ourselves from God as long as we can, and will not come, and never should come, did not the Father prevent, draw, and sweetly constrain us by his grace, as he here prevented *Adam*.

Verse 9. “And the Lord God called unto *Adam*, and said unto him, *Adam*, where art thou?”

“The Lord God called unto *Adam*,” (for otherwise *Adam* would never have called unto the Lord God) and said, “*Adam*, where art thou? How is it that thou comest not to pay thy devotions as usual?” Christians, remember the Lord keeps an account when you fail coming to worship. Whenever therefore you are tempted to withhold your attendance, let each of you fancy you heard the Lord God calling unto you, and saying, “O man, O woman, where art thou?” It may be understood in another and better sense; “*Adam*, where art thou?” What a condition is thy poor soul in? This is the first thing the Lord asks and convinces a sinner of; when he prevents and calls him effectually by his grace; he also calls him by name; for unless God speaks to us in particular, and we know where we are, how poor, how miserable, how blind, how naked, we shall never value the redemption wrought out for us by the death and obedience of the dear Lord Jesus. “*Adam*, where art thou?”

Verse 10. “And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid.” See what cowards sin makes us. If we knew no sin, we should know no fear. “Because I was naked, and I hid myself.” Verse 11. “And he said, who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I (thy Maker and Law-giver) commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat?”

God knew very well that *Adam* was naked, and that he had eaten of the forbidden fruit. But God would know it from *Adam*’s own mouth. Thus God knows all our necessities before we ask, but yet insists upon our asking for his grace, and confessing our sins. For, by such acts, we acknowledge our dependence upon God, take shame to ourselves, and thereby give glory to his great name.

Verse 12. “And the man said, the woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”

Never was nature more lively delineated. See what pride *Adam* contracted by the fall! How unwilling he is to lay the blame upon, or take shame to himself. This answer is full of insolence towards God, enmity against his wife, and disingenuity in respect to himself. For herein he tacitly reflects upon God. “The woman that *thou* gavest to be with me.” As much as to say, if *thou* hadst not given me *that woman*, I had not eaten the forbidden fruit. Thus, when men sin, they lay the fault upon their passions; then blame and reflect upon God for giving them those passions. Their language is, “the appetites that thou gavest us, they deceived us; and therefore we sinned against thee.” But, as God, notwithstanding, punished *Adam* for hearkning to the voice of his wife, so he will punish those who hearken to the dictates of their corrupt inclinations: For God compels no man to sin. *Adam* might have withstood the solicitations of his wife, if he would. And so, if we look up to God, we should find grace to help in the time of need. The devil and our own hearts tempt, but they cannot force us to consent, without the concurrence of our own wills. So that our damnation is of ourselves, as it will evidently appear at the great day, notwithstanding all mens present impudent replies against God. As *Adam* speaks insolently in respect to God, so he speaks with enmity against his wife; the woman, or this woman, she gave me. He lays all the fault upon her, and speaks of her with much contempt. He does not say, my wife, my dear wife; but, *this woman*. Sin disunites the most united hearts: it is the bane of holy fellowship. Those who have been companions in sin here, if they die without repentance, will both hate and condemn one another hereafter. All damned souls are accusers of their brethren. Thus it is, in some degree, on this side the grave.

“The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” What a disingenuous speech was here! He makes use of no less than fifteen words to excuse himself, and but one or two (in the original) to confess his fault, if it may be called a confession at all. “The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree;” here are fifteen words; “And I did eat.” With what reluctance do these last words come out? How soon are they uttered? “And I did eat.” But thus it is with an unhumbled, unregenerate heart: It will be laying the fault upon the dearest friend in the world, nay, upon God himself, rather than take shame to itself. This pride we are all subject to by the fall; and, till our hearts are broken, and made contrite by the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be always charging God foolishly. “Against thee, and thee only, have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou art judged,” is the language of none but those, who, like *David*, are willing to confess their faults, and are truly sorry for their sins. This was not the case of *Adam*: his heart was not broken; and therefore he lays the fault of his disobedience upon his wife and God, and not upon himself; “The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”

Verse 13. “And the Lord God said, What is this that thou hast done?” What a wonderful concern does God express in this expostulation! “What a deluge of misery hast thou brought upon thyself, thy husband, and thy posterity? What is this that thou hast done? Disobeyed thy God, obeyed the devil, and ruined thy husband, for whom I made thee to be an help-meet! What is this that thou hast done?” God would here awaken her to a sense of her crime and danger, and therefore, as it were, thunders in her ears: for the law must be preached to self-righteous sinners. We must take care of healing before we see sinners wounded, lest we should say, Peace, peace,

where there is no peace. Secure sinners must hear the thunderings of mount *Sinai*, before we bring them to mount *Sion*. They who never preach up the law, it is to be feared, are unskilful in delivering the glad tidings of the gospel. Every minister should be a *Boanerges*, a son of thunder, as well as a *Barnabas*, a son of consolation. There was an earthquake and a whirlwind, before the small still voice came to *Elijah*: We must first shew people they are condemned, and then shew them how they must be saved. But how and when to preach the law, and when to apply the promises of the gospel, wisdom is profitable to direct. "And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?"

"And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." She does not make use of so many words to excuse herself, as her husband; but her heart is as unhumbled as his. What is this, says God, that thou hast done? God here charges her with doing it. She dares not deny the fact, or say, I have not done it; but she takes all the blame off herself, and lays it upon the serpent; "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." She does not say, "Lord, I was to blame for talking with the serpent; Lord, I did wrong, in not hastening to my husband, when he put the first question to me; Lord, I plead guilty, I only am to blame, O let not my poor husband suffer for my wickedness!" This would have been the language of her heart, had she now been a true penitent. But both were now alike proud; therefore neither will lay the blame upon themselves: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

I have been the more particular in remarking this part of their behaviour, because it tends so much to the magnifying of Free-grace, and plainly shews us, that salvation cometh only from the Lord. Let us take a short

view of the miserable circumstances our first parents were now in: They were legally and spiritually dead, children of wrath, and heirs of hell. They had eaten the fruit, of which God had commanded them, that they should not eat; and when arraigned before God, notwithstanding their crime was so complicated, they could not be brought to confess it. What reason can be given, why sentence of death should not be pronounced against the prisoners at the bar? All must own they are worthy to die. Nay, how can God, consistently with his justice, possibly forgive them? He had threatened, that the day wherein they eat of the forbidden fruit, they should "surely die;" and, if he did not execute this threatening, the devil might then slander the Almighty indeed. And yet mercy cries, spare these sinners, spare the work of thine own hands. Behold, then, wisdom contrives a scheme how God may be just, and yet be merciful; be faithful to his threatening, punish the offence, and at the same time spare the offender. An amazing scene of divine love here opens to our view, which had been from all eternity hid in the heart of God! Notwithstanding *Adam* and *Eve* were thus unhumbled, and did not so much as put up one single petition for pardon, God immediately passes sentence upon the serpent, and reveals to them a Saviour.

Verse 14. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art accursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life;" i.e. he should be in subjection, and his power should always be limited and restrained. "His enemies shall lick the very dust," says the Psalmist. (Verse 15.) "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Before I proceed to the explanation of this verse, I cannot but take notice of one great mistake which the author of the *Whole Duty of Man* is guilty of, in making this verse contain a covenant between God and *Adam*, as though God now personally treated with *Adam*, as before the fall. For, talking of the second covenant in his preface, concerning caring for the soul, says he, "This second covenant was made with *Adam*, and us in him, presently after the fall, and is briefly contained in these words, *Genesis* iii. 15. where God declares, 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head;' and this was made up, as the first was, of some mercies to be afforded by God, and some duties to be performed by us." This is exceeding false divinity: for these words are not spoken to *Adam*; they are directed only to the serpent. *Adam* and *Eve* stood by as criminals, and God could not treat with them, because they had broken his covenant. And it is so far from being a covenant wherein "some mercies are to be afforded by God, and some duties to be performed by us," that here is not a word looking that way; it is only a declaration of a free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. God the Father and God the Son had entered into a covenant concerning the salvation of the elect from all eternity, wherein God the Father promised, That, if the Son would offer his soul a sacrifice for sin, he should see his seed. Now this is an open revelation of this secret covenant, and therefore God speaks in the most positive terms, "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The first *Adam*, God had treated with before; he proved false: God therefore, to secure the second covenant from being broken, puts it into the hands of the second *Adam*, the Lord from heaven. *Adam*, after the fall, stood no longer as our representative; he and *Eve* were only private persons, as we are, and were only to lay hold on the declaration of mercy contained in this promise by faith, (as they really did)

and by that they were saved. I do not say but we are to believe and obey, if we are everlastingly saved. Faith and obedience are conditions, if we only mean that they in order go before our salvation; but I deny that these are proposed by God to *Adam*, or that God treats with him in this promise, as he did before the fall under the covenant of works. For how could that be, when *Adam* and *Eve* were now prisoners at the bar, without strength to perform any conditions at all? The truth is this: God, as a reward of Christ's sufferings, promised to give the elect faith and repentance, in order to bring them to eternal life: and both these, and every thing else necessary for their everlasting happiness, are infallibly secured to them in this promise; as Mr. *Boston*, an excellent *Scots* divine, clearly shews, in a book entitled, "A view of the covenant of grace."

This is by no means an unnecessary distinction; it is a matter of great importance: for want of knowing this, people have been so long misled. They have been taught that they must do so and so, as though they were under a covenant of works, and then for DOING this, they should be saved. Whereas, on the contrary, people should be taught, That the Lord Jesus was the second *Adam*, with whom the Father entered into covenant for fallen man; That they can now do nothing of or for themselves, and should therefore come to God, beseeching him to give them faith, by which they shall be enabled to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ; and that faith they will then shew forth by their works, out of love and gratitude to the ever-blessed Jesus, their most glorious Redeemer, for what he has done for their souls. This is a consistent scriptural scheme: without holding this, we must run into one of those two bad extremes; I mean, *Antinomianism* on the one hand, or *Arminianism* on the other: from both which may the good Lord deliver us!

But to proceed: By the seed of the woman, we are here to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though very God of very God, was, for us men and our salvation, to have a body prepared for him by the Holy Ghost, and to be born of a woman who never knew man, and by his obedience and death make an atonement for man's transgression, and bring in an everlasting righteousness, work in them a new nature, and thereby bruise the serpent's head, i.e. destroy his power and dominion over them. By the serpent's seed, we are to understand the devil and all his children, who are permitted by God to tempt and sift his children. But, blessed be God, he can reach no further than our heel.

It is not to be doubted but *Adam* and *Eve* understood this promise in this sense; for it is plain, in the latter part of the chapter, sacrifices were instituted. From whence should those skins come, but from beasts slain for sacrifice, of which God made them coats? We find *Abel*, as well as *Cain*, offering sacrifice in the next chapter: and the Apostle tells us, he did it by faith, no doubt in this promise. And *Eve*, when *Cain* was *born*, said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord;" or, (as Mr. *Henry* observes, it may be rendered) "I have gotten a man,—the Lord,—the promised Messiah." Some further suppose, that *Eve* was the first believer; and therefore they translate it thus, "The seed, (not of the, but) of this woman:" which magnifies the grace of God so much the more, that she, who was first in the transgression, should be the first partaker of redemption. *Adam* believed also, and was saved: for unto *Adam* and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and cloathed them: which was a remarkable type of their being clothed with the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This promise was literally fulfilled in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Satan bruised his heel, when he tempted him for forty days together in the

wilderness: he bruised his heel, when he raised up strong persecution against him during the time of his public ministry: he in an especial manner bruised his heel, when our Lord complained, that his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and he sweat great drops of blood falling upon the ground, in the garden: He bruised his heel, when he put it into the heart of *Judas* to betray him: and he bruised him yet most of all, when his emissaries nailed him to an accursed tree, and our Lord cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet, in all this, the blessed Jesus, the seed of the woman, bruised Satan's accursed head: for, in that he was tempted, he was able to succour those that are tempted. By his stripes we are healed. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. By dying, he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. He thereby spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them upon the cross.

This promise has been fulfilled in the elect of God, considered collectively, as well before, as since the coming of our Lord in the flesh: for they may be called, the seed of the woman. Marvel not, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution. In this promise, there is an eternal enmity put between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; so that those that are born after the flesh, cannot but persecute those that are born after the spirit. This enmity shewed itself, soon after this promise was revealed, in *Cain*'s bruising the heel of *Abel*: it continued in the church through all ages before Christ came in the flesh, as the history of the Bible, and the xith chapter of the *Hebrews*, plainly shew. It raged exceedingly after our Lord's ascension; witness the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the History of the Primitive Christians. It now rages, and will continue to rage and shew itself, in a greater or less degree, to the end of time. But let

not this dismay us; for in all this, the seed of the woman is more than conqueror, and bruises the serpent's head. Thus the *Israelites*, the more they were oppressed, the more they increased. Thus it was with the Apostles; thus it was with their immediate followers. So that *Tertullian* compares the church in his time to a mowed field; the more frequently it is cut, the more it grows. The blood of the martyrs was always the seed of the church. And I have often sat down with wonder and delight, and admired how God has made the very schemes which his enemies contrived, in order to hinder, become the most effectual means to propagate his gospel. The devil has had so little success in persecution, that if I did not know that he and his children, according to this verse, could not but persecute, I should think he would count it his strength to sit still. What did he get by persecuting the martyrs in Queen *Mary*'s time? Was not the grace of God exceedingly glorified in their support? What did he get by persecuting the good old Puritans? Did it not prove the peopling of *New-England*? Or, to come nearer our own times, what has he got by putting *us* out of the synagogues? Hath not the word of God, since that, mightily prevailed? My dear hearers, you must excuse me for enlarging on this head; God fills my soul generally, when I come to this topic. I can say with *Luther*, "If it were not for persecution, I should not understand the scripture." If Satan should be yet suffered to bruise my heel further, and his servants should thrust me into prison, I doubt not, but even that would only tend to the more effectual bruising of his head. I remember a saying of the then Lord Chancellor to the pious *Bradford*: "Thou hast done more hurt, said he, by thy exhortations in private in prison, than thou didst in preaching before thou wast put in," or words to this effect. The promise of the text is my daily support; "I will put

enmity between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Further: this promise is also fulfilled, not only in the church in general, but in every individual believer in particular. In every believer there are two seeds, the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. It is with the believer, when quickened with grace in his heart, as it was with *Rebekah*, when she had conceived *Esau* and *Jacob* in her womb; she felt a struggling, and began to be uneasy; "If it be so, says she, why am I thus?" Thus grace and nature struggle (if I may so speak) in the womb of a believer's heart: but, as it was there said, "The elder shall serve the younger;" so it is here,—grace in the end shall get the better of nature; the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Many of you that have believed in Christ, perhaps may find some particular corruption yet strong, so strong, that you are sometimes ready to cry out with *David*, "I shall fall one day by the hand of *Saul*." But, fear not, the promise in the text insures the perseverance and victory of believers over sin, Satan, death, and hell. What if indwelling corruption does yet remain, and the seed of the serpent bruise your heel, in vexing and disturbing your righteous souls? Fear not, though faint, yet pursue: you shall yet bruise the serpent's head. Christ hath died for you; and yet a little while, and he will send death to destroy the very being of sin in you. Which brings me

To shew the most extensive manner in which the promise of the text shall be fulfilled, viz. at the final judgment, when the Lord Jesus shall present the elect to his Father, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, glorified both in body and soul.

Then shall the seed of the woman give the last and fatal blow, in bruising the serpent's head. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, and all his accursed seed, shall then be cast out, and never suffered to disturb the seed of the woman any more. Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and sit with Christ on thrones in majesty on high.

Let us, therefore, not be weary of well-doing; for we shall reap an eternal harvest of comfort, if we faint not. Dare, dare, my dear brethren in Christ, to follow the Captain of your salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Fear not men. Be not too much cast down at the deceitfulness of your hearts. Fear not devils; you shall get the victory even over them. The Lord Jesus has engaged to make you more than conquerors over all. Plead with your Saviour, plead: plead the promise in the text. Wrestle, wrestle with God in prayer. If it has been given you to believe, fear not if it should also be given you to suffer. Be not any wise terrified by your adversaries; the king of the church has them all in a chain: be kind to them, pray for them; but fear them not. The Lord will yet bring back his ark, though at present driven into the wilderness; and Satan like lightening shall fall from heaven.

Are there any enemies of God here? The promise of the text encourages me to bid you defiance: the seed of the woman, the ever-blessed Jesus, shall bruise the serpent's head. What signifies all your malice? You are only raging waves of the sea, foaming out your own shame. For you, without repentance, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. The Lord Jesus sits in heaven, ruling over all, and causing all things to work for his childrens good: he laughs you to scorn: he hath you in the utmost derision, and therefore so will I. Who are you that persecute the children of the ever-

blessed God? Though a poor stripling, the Lord Jesus, the seed of the woman, will enable me to bruise your heads.

My brethren in Christ, I think I do not speak thus in my own strength, but in the strength of my Redeemer. I know in whom I have believed; I am persuaded he will keep that safe, which I have committed unto him. He is faithful who hath promised, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. May we all experience a daily completion of this promise, both in the church and in our hearts, till we come to the church of the first-born, the spirits of just men made perfect, in the presence and actual fruition of the great God our heavenly Father!

To whom, with the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, power, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON II.

Walking with GOD.

Genesis v. 24.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

VARIOUS are the pleas and arguments, which men of corrupt minds frequently urge against yielding obedience to the just and holy commands of God. But, perhaps, one of the most common objections that they make is this, that our Lord's commands are not practicable, because contrary to flesh and blood; and consequently, that he is "an hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed." These we find were the sentiments entertained by that wicked and slothful servant mentioned in the xxvth of St. *Matthew*; and are undoubtedly the same with many which are maintained in the present wicked and adulterous generation. The Holy Ghost foreseeing this, hath taken care to inspire holy men of old, to record the examples of many holy men and women; who, even under the Old Testament dispensation, were enabled chearfully to take Christ's yoke upon them, and counted his service perfect freedom. The

large catalogue of saints, confessors, and martyrs, drawn up in the xith chapter to the *Hebrews*, abundantly evidences the truth of this observation. What a great cloud of witnesses have we there presented to our view? All eminent for their faith, but some shining with a greater degree of lustre than do others. The proto-martyr *Abel*, leads the van. And next to him, we find *Enoch* mentioned, not only because he was next in order of time, but also on account of his exalted piety. He is spoken of in the words of the text in a very extraordinary manner. We have here a short but very full and glorious account, both of his behaviour in this world, and the triumphant manner of his entering into the next. The former is contained in these words, "And *Enoch* walked with God." The latter in these, "and he was not: for God took him." He was not; i.e. He was not found, he was not taken away in the common manner, he did not see death; for *Hebrews* xi. 5. God had translated him. Who this *Enoch* was, does not appear so plainly. To me, he seems to have been a person of public character. I suppose, like *Noah*, a preacher of righteousness. And, if we may credit the Apostle *Jude*, he was a flaming preacher. For he quotes one of his prophecies, wherein he saith, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." But whether a public or private person, he has a noble testimony given him in the lively oracles. The author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* saith, that before his translation he had this testimony, "that he pleased God;" and his being translated, was a proof of it beyond all doubt. And I would observe, that it was wonderful wisdom in God to translate *Enoch* and *Elijah* under the Old Testament dispensation, that hereafter when it should be asserted, that the

Lord Jesus was carried into heaven, it might not seem a thing altogether incredible to the *Jews*; since they themselves confessed, that two of their own prophets had been translated several hundred years before. But it is not my design to detain you any longer, by enlarging, or making observations on *Enoch*'s short, but comprehensive character. The thing I have in view, being to give a discourse, as the Lord shall enable, upon a weighty and a very important subject; I mean, *walking with* God. "And *Enoch* walked with God." If so much as this can be truly said of you and me after our decease, we shall not have any reason to complain, that we have lived in vain.

In handling my intended subject, I shall,

First, Endeavour to shew, what is implied in these words, *walked with* God.

Secondly, I shall prescribe some means, upon the due observance of which, believers may keep up and maintain their *walk with* God. And,

Thirdly, Offer some motives to stir us up, if we never walked with God before, to come and walk with God now. The whole shall be closed with a word or two of application.

First, I am to shew what is implied in these words, "walked with God;" or in other words, what we are to understand by *walking with* God.

And *First*, *Walking with* God, implies, that the prevailing power of the enmity of a person's heart, be taken away by the blessed Spirit of God. Perhaps it may seem a hard saying to some, but our own experience daily proves, what the scripture in many places assert, that the carnal mind, the mind of the unconverted, natural man, nay, the mind of the regenerate, so far as any part of him remains unrenewed, is enmity, not only an enemy, but "enmity itself against God; so that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." Indeed one may well wonder that any creature,

especially that lovely creature man, made after his Maker's own image, should ever have any enmity, much less a prevailing enmity against that very God in whom he lives, and moves, and hath his being. But alas! so it is. Our first parents contracted it when they fell from God by eating the forbidden fruit, and the bitter and malignant contagion of it, hath descended to, and quite overspread their whole posterity. This enmity discovered itself, in *Adam*'s endeavouring to hide himself in the trees of the garden. When he heard the voice of the Lord God, instead of running with an open heart, saying, Here am I; alas! he now wanted no communion with God; and still more discovered his lately contracted enmity, by the excuse he made to the Most High. "The woman, or this woman, thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." By saying thus, he in effect lays all the fault upon God; as though he had said, if thou hadst not given me this woman, I had not sinned against thee, so thou mayst thank thyself for my transgression. In the same manner this enmity works in the hearts of *Adam*'s children. They now and again find something rising against God, and saying even unto God, what doest thou? "It scorns any meaner competitor (says the learned Doctor *Owen* in his excellent treatise on indwelling sin) than God himself." Its command is like that of the *Assyrians* in respect to *Ahab*, Shoot only at the King. And it strikes against every thing that has the appearance of real piety, as the *Assyrians* shot at *Jehosaphat* in *Ahab*'s cloathes. But the opposition ceases when it finds that it is only an appearance, as the *Assyrians* left off shooting at *Jehosaphat*, when they perceived it was not *Ahab* they were shooting at. This enmity discovered itself in accursed *Cain*; he hated and slew his brother *Abel*, because *Abel* loved, and was peculiarly favoured by his God. And this same enmity rules and prevails in every man that is naturally engendered of the offspring of

Adam. Hence that averseness to prayer and holy duties, which we find in children, and very often in grown persons, who have notwithstanding been blessed with a religious education. And all that open sin and wickedness, which like a deluge has overflowed the world, are only so many streams running from this dreadful, contagious fountain; I mean the enmity of man's desperately wicked and deceitful heart. He that cannot set his seal to this, knows nothing yet, in a saving manner, of the holy scriptures, or of the power of God. And all that do know this, will readily acknowledge, that before a person can be said to walk with God, the prevailing power of this heart-enmity must be destroyed. For persons do not use to walk and keep company together, who entertain an irreconcilable enmity and hatred against one another. Observe me, I say, the prevailing power of this enmity must be taken away. For the inbeing of it will never be totally removed, till we bow down our heads and give up the ghost. The apostle *Paul*, no doubt, speaks of himself, and that too not when he was a pharisee, but a real Christian; when he complains, "that when he would do good, evil was present with him;" not having dominion over him, but opposing and resisting his good intentions and actions, "so that he could not do the things which he would," in that perfection which the new man desired. This is what he calls sin dwelling in him. "And this is that Φρόνημα σαρκός, which, (to use the words of the ninth article of our church,) some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affectation, some the desire of the flesh, which doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated." But as for its prevailing power, it is destroyed in every soul that is truly born of God, and gradually more and more weakened as the believer grows in grace, and the spirit of God gains a greater and greater ascendancy in the heart.

But *Secondly*, Walking with God not only implies, that the prevailing power of the enmity of a man's heart be taken away, but also that a person is actually reconciled to God the Father, in and through the all-sufficient righteousness and atonement of his dear Son. "Can two walk together, (says *Solomon*), unless they are agreed?" Jesus is our peace, as well as our peace-maker. When we are justified by faith in Christ, then, but not till then, we have peace with God; and consequently cannot be said till then, to walk with him. Walking with a person, being a sign and token that we are friends to that person, or at least, though we have been at variance, yet that now we are reconciled and become friends again. This is the great errand that gospel ministers are sent out upon. To us is committed the ministry of reconciliation: As ambassadors for God, we are to beseech sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God; and when they comply with the gracious invitation, and are actually by faith brought into a state of reconciliation with God, then, and not till then, may they be said so much as to begin to walk with God.

Further, *Thirdly*, Walking with God implies, a settled, abiding communion and fellowship with God, or what in scripture is called, "The Holy Ghost dwelling in us." This is what our Lord promised when he told his disciples, that "the Holy Spirit should be in, and with them;" not to be like a wayfaring-man, to stay only for a night, but to reside and make his abode in their hearts. This I am apt to believe is what the Apostle *John* would have us understand, when he talks of a person abiding in him, in Christ, "and walking as he himself also walked." And this is what is particularly meant in the words of our text. "And *Enoch* walked with God." i.e. He kept up and maintained a holy, settled, habitual, though undoubtedly not altogether uninterrupted communion and fellowship with God, in and through Christ

Jesus. So that to sum up what has been said on this part of the first general head, *walking with* God consists especially in the fixed habitual bent of the will for God, in an habitual dependance upon his power and promise, in an habitual voluntary dedication of our all to his glory, in an habitual eying of his precept in all we do, and in an habitual complacence in his pleasure in all we suffer.

Fourthly, *Walking with* God implies, our making progress or advances in the divine life. *Walking*, in the very first idea of the word, seems to suppose a progressive motion. A person that walks, though he move slowly, yet he goes forwards and does not continue in one place. And so it is with those that walk with God. They go on, as the psalmist says, "from strength to strength;" or, in the language of the Apostle *Paul*, "they pass from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord." Indeed in one sense, the divine life admits of neither increase nor decrease. When a soul is born of God, to all intents and purposes he is a child of God, and, though he should live to the age of *Methuselah*, yet he would then be only a child of God, after all. But in another sense, the divine life admits of decays and additions. Hence it is, that we find the people of God charged with backslidings, and losing their first love. And hence it is, that we hear of babes, young men and fathers in Christ; and upon this account it is that the Apostle exhorts *Timothy*, "to let his progress be made known to all men." And what is here required of *Timothy* in particular; by St. *Peter*, is enjoined all Christians in general, "But grow in grace, (says he) and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." For the new creature increases in spiritual stature; and though a person can but be a new creature, yet there are some that are more conformed to the divine image than others, and will, after death, be admitted to a greater degree of blessedness. For want of observing this

distinction, even some gracious souls that have better hearts than heads, (as well as men of corrupt minds, reprobates concerning the faith) have unawares run into downright *Antinomian* principles, denying all growth of grace in a believer, or any marks of grace to be laid down in the scriptures of truth. From such principles, and more especially from practices naturally consequent on such principles, may the Lord of all Lord's deliver us!

From what then has been said, we may now know what is implied in the words, "walked with God," viz. Our having the prevailing enmity of our hearts taken away by the power of the Spirit of God; our being actually reconciled and united to him by faith in Jesus Christ; our having and keeping up a settled communion and fellowship with him; and our making a daily progress in this fellowship, so as to be conformed to the divine image more and more.

How this is done, or, in other words, by what means believers keep up and maintain their walk with God, comes to be considered under our second general head.

And, *First*, Believers keep up and maintain their walk with God, by reading of his holy word. "Search the scriptures," says our blessed Lord, "for these are they that testify of me." And the royal psalmist tells us, "that God's word was a light unto his feet, and a lanthorn unto his paths;" and he makes it one property of a good man, "that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and that he exercises himself therein day and night." "Give thyself to reading," (says *Paul* to *Timothy*); "And this book of the law, (says God to *Joshua*) shall not go out of thy mouth." For whatsoever was written in afore time, was written for our learning. And the word of God is profitable for reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, and every way sufficient to make every true child of God thoroughly furnished to every

good work. If we once get above our Bibles, and cease making the written word of God our sole rule, both as to faith and practice, we shall soon lie open to all manner of delusion, and be in great danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Our blessed Lord, though he had the Spirit of God without measure, yet always was governed by, and fought the devil with, "It is written." This the Apostle calls the "Sword of the Spirit." We may say of it as *David* said of *Goliah*'s sword, "None like this." The scriptures are called the lively oracles of God: not only because they are generally made use of to beget in us a new life, but also to keep up and increase it in the soul. The Apostle *Peter*, in his 2d epistle, prefers it even to seeing Christ transfigured upon the mount. For after he had said, chapter i. 18. "That the voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount;" he adds, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:" i.e. Till we shake off these bodies, and see Jesus face to face. Till then, we must see and converse with him through the glass of his word. We must make his testimonies our counsellors, and daily, with *Mary*, sit at Jesus feet, by faith hearing his word. We shall then by happy experience find, that they are spirit and life, meat indeed, and drink indeed to our souls.

Secondly, Believers keep up and maintain their walk with God by secret prayer. The spirit of grace is always accompanied with the spirit of supplication. It is the very breath of the new-creature, the fan of the divine life, whereby the spark of holy fire kindled in the soul by God, is not only kept in, but raised into a flame. A neglect of secret prayer has been frequently an inlet to many spiritual diseases, and has been attended with fatal consequences. *Origen* observed, "That the day he offered incense to an

idol, he went out of his closet without making use of secret prayer." It is one of the most noble parts of the believer's spiritual armour. "Praying always, says the Apostle, with all manner of supplication." "Watch and pray, says our Lord, that ye enter not into temptation." And he spake a parable, that his disciples should pray, and not faint. Not that our Lord would have us always upon our knees, or in our closets, to the neglect of our other relative duties. But he means, that our souls should be kept in a praying-frame, so that we might be able to say, as a good man in *Scotland* once said to his friends on his death-bed, "Could these curtains, or could these walls speak, they would tell you what sweet communion I have had with my God here." O prayer, prayer! It brings and keeps God and man together. It raises man up to God, and brings God down to man. If you would therefore, O believers, keep up your walk with God; pray, pray without ceasing. Be much in secret, set prayer. And when you are about the common business of life, be much in ejaculatory prayer, and send, from time to time, short letters post to heaven upon the wings of faith. They will reach the very heart of God, and return to you again loaded with spiritual blessings.

Thirdly, Holy and frequent meditation is another blessed means of keeping up a believer's walk with God. "Prayer, reading, temptation, and meditation," says *Luther*, "make a minister." And they also make, and perfect a Christian. Meditation to the soul, is the same as digestion to the body. Holy *David* found it so, and therefore he was frequently employed in meditation, even in the night season. We read also of *Isaac*'s going out into the fields to meditate in the evening; or, as it is in the margin, to pray. For meditation is a kind of silent prayer, whereby the soul is frequently, as it were, carried out of itself to God, and in a degree made like unto those blessed Spirits, who by a kind of immediate intuition always behold the

face of our heavenly Father. None but those happy souls that have been accustomed to this divine employ, can tell what a blessed promoter of the divine life, meditation is. “Whilst I was musing, says *David*, the fire kindled.” And whilst the believer is musing on the works and word of God; especially that work of works, that wonder of wonders, that mystery of godliness, “God manifest in the flesh,” the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world: he frequently feels the fire of divine love kindle, so that he is obliged to speak with his tongue, and tell of the loving-kindness of the Lord to his soul. Be frequent therefore in meditation, all ye that desire to keep up and maintain a close and uniform walk with the most-high God.

Fourthly, Believers keep up their walk with God, by watching and noting his providential dealings with them. If we believe the scriptures, we must believe what our Lord hath declared therein, “That the very hairs of his disciples heads are all numbered; and that a sparrow does not fall to the ground, (either to pick up a grain of corn, or when shot by a fowler) without the knowledge of our heavenly Father.” Every cross has a call in it, and every particular dispensation of divine providence, has some particular end to answer in those to whom it is sent. If it be of an afflictive nature, God does thereby say, “My son, keep thyself from idols:” if prosperous, he does it as it were by a small, still voice, say, “My son, give me thy heart.” If believers, therefore, would keep up their walk with God, they must from time to time hear what the Lord has to say concerning them in the voice of his providence. Thus we find *Abraham*’s servant, when he went to fetch a wife for his master *Isaac*, eyed and watched the providence of God, and by that means found out the person that was designed for his master’s wife. “For a little hint from Providence,” says pious Bishop *Hall*, “is enough for faith to feed upon.” And as I believe it will be one part of our happiness in

heaven, to take a view of, and look back upon, the various links of the golden chain which drew us there; so those that enjoy most of heaven below, I believe, will be most minute in remarking God's various dealings with them, in respect to his providential dispensations here on earth.

Fifthly, In order to walk closely with God, his children must not only watch the motions of God's providence without them, but the motions also of his blessed Spirit in their hearts. "As many as are the sons of God, are led by the Spirit of God," and give up themselves to be guided by the Holy Ghost, as a little child gives its hand to be led by a nurse or parent. It is no doubt in this sense, that we are to be converted, and become like little children. And though it is the quintessence of enthusiasm, to pretend to be guided by the Spirit without the written word; yet it is every Christian's bounden duty to be guided by the Spirit in conjunction with the written word of God. Watch, therefore, I pray you, O believers, the motions of God's blessed Spirit in your souls, and always try the suggestions or impressions that you may at any time feel, by the unerring rule of God's most holy word: and if they are not found to be agreeable to that, reject them as diabolical and delusive. By observing this caution, you will steer a middle course between the two dangerous extremes many of this generation are in danger of running into; I mean, *enthusiasm*, on the one hand, and *deism*, and *downright infidelity*, on the other.

Sixthly, They that would maintain a holy walk with God, must walk with him in ordinances as well as providences, &c. It is, therefore, recorded of *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, that "They walked in all God's ordinances as well as commandments, blameless." And all rightly informed Christians, will look upon ordinances, not as beggarly elements, but as so many conduit-pipes, whereby the infinitely condescending *Jehovah* conveys his grace to

their souls. They will look upon them as childrens bread, and as their highest privileges. Consequently they will be glad when they hear others say, “Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord.” They will delight to visit the place where God’s honour dwelleth, and be very eager to embrace all opportunities to shew forth the Lord Christ’s death till he come.

Seventhly and *lastly*, If you would walk with God, you will associate and keep company with those that do walk with him. “My delight, says holy *David*, is in them that do excel” in virtue. They were in his sight, the excellent ones of the earth. And the primitive Christians, no doubt, kept up their vigour and first love, by continuing in fellowship one with another. The Apostle *Paul* knew this full well, and therefore exhorts the Christians to see to it, that they did not forsake the assembling of themselves together. For how can one be warm alone? And has not the wisest of men told us, that, “as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend?” If we look, therefore, into church history, or make a just observation of our own times, I believe we shall find, that as the power of God prevails, Christian societies, and fellowship meetings prevail proportionably. And as one decays, the other has insensibly decayed and dwindled away at the same time. So necessary is it for those that would walk with God, and keep up the life of religion, to meet together as they have opportunity, in order to provoke one another to love and good works.

Proceed we now to the Third general thing proposed, To offer some motives to excite all to come and walk with God.

And *First*, Walking with God, is a very honourable thing. This generally is a prevailing motive to persons of all ranks, to stir them up to any important undertaking. O that it may have its due weight and influence with you, in respect to the matter now before us! I suppose you would all think it

a very high honour to be admitted into an earthly prince's privy-council, to be trusted with his secrets, and to have his ear at all times, and at all seasons. It seems *Haman* thought it so, when he boasted, *Esther* v. 11, that besides his being "advanced above the princes and servants of the king; yea, moreover, *Esther* the Queen did let no man come in with the King unto the banquet that she had prepared, but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the King." And when afterwards a question was put to this same *Haman*, chapter vi. 6. "What shall be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honour?" he answered, verse 8. "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king used to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the King delights to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour." This was all then, it seems, that an ambitious *Haman* could ask, and the most valuable thing that he thought *Ahasuerus*, the greatest monarch upon earth, could give. But alas, what is this honour in comparison of that which the meanest of those enjoy, that walk with God! Think ye it a small thing, Sirs, to have the secret of the Lord of Lords with you, and to be called the friends of God? and such honour have all God's saints. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him:" and "Henceforth, says the blessed Jesus, call I you no longer servants, but friends; for the servant knoweth not the will of his master." Whatever you may think of it, holy *David* was so sensible of the honour attending a walk with God, that he declares, "He had rather be a door-keeper in his house, than to dwell even in the tents of ungodliness." O that all were like-minded with him!

But, *Secondly*, As it is an honourable, so it is a pleasing thing to walk with God. The wisest of men has told us, that "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace." And I remember pious Mr. *Henry*, when he was just about to expire, said to a friend, "You have heard many mens dying words, and these are mine; A life spent in communion with God, is the pleasantest life in the world." I am sure I can set to my seal that this is true. Indeed, I have been lifted under Jesus's banner only for a few years; but I have enjoyed more solid pleasure in one moment's communion with my God, than I should or could have enjoyed in the ways of sin, though I had continued to have went on in them for thousands of years. And may I not appeal to all you that fear and walk with God, for the truth of this? Has not one day in the Lord's courts, been to you better than a thousand? In keeping God's commandments, have you not found a present and very great reward? Has not his word been sweeter to you than the honey, or the honey-comb? O what have you felt, when, *Jacob*-like, you have been wrestling with your God? Has not Jesus often met you when meditating in the fields, and been made known to you over and over again in breaking of bread? Has not the Holy Ghost frequently shed the divine love abroad in your hearts abundantly, and filled you with joy unspeakable, even joy that is full of glory? I know you will answer all these questions in the affirmative, and freely acknowledge the yoke of Christ to be easy, and his burden light; or (to use the words of one of our collects) "That his service is perfect freedom." And what need we then any further motive to excite us to walk with God?

But methinks I hear some among you say, "How can these things be? For, if walking with God, as you say, is such an honourable and pleasant thing, whence is it, that the name of the people of this way is cast out as evil, and

every where spoken against? How comes it to pass that they are frequently afflicted, tempted, destitute, and tormented? Is this the honour, this the pleasure that you speak of?" I answer, Yes. Stop a while; be not over-hasty. Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment, and all will be well. It is true, we acknowledge the "people of this way," as you, and *Paul* before you, when a persecutor, called them, have their names cast out as evil, and are a sect every where spoken against. But by whom? Even by the enemies of the most high God. And do you think it a disgrace to be spoken evil of by them? Blessed be God, we have not so learnt Christ. Our royal Master has pronounced those "blessed, who are persecuted, and have all manner of evil spoken against them falsly." He has commanded them "to rejoice and be exceeding glad." For it is the privilege of their discipleship, and that their reward will be great in heaven. He himself was thus treated. And can there be a greater honour put upon a creature, than to be conformed to the ever-blessed Son of God? And further, it is equally true, that the people of this way are frequently afflicted, tempted, destitute, and tormented. But what of all this? Does this destroy the pleasure of walking with God? No, in no wise; for those that walk with God, are enabled, through Christ strengthening them, to joy even in tribulation, and to rejoice when they fall into divers temptations. And I believe I may appeal to the experience of all true and close walkers with God, Whether or not their suffering times, have not frequently been their sweetest times, and that they enjoyed most of God, when most cast out and despised by men? This we find was the case of Christ's primitive servants, when threatened by the *Jewish* sanhedrim, and commanded to preach no more in the name of Jesus; they rejoiced, that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of Jesus. *Paul* and *Silas* sang praises even in a dungeon; and the face of

Stephen, that glorious proto-martyr of the Christian church, shone like the face of an angel. And Jesus is the same now, as he was then, and takes care so to sweeten sufferings and afflictions with his love, that his disciples find, by happy experience, that as afflictions abound, consolations do much more abound. And therefore these objections, instead of destroying, do only more enforce the motives before urged to excite you to walk with God.

But supposing the objections were just, and walkers with God were as despicable and unhappy as you would represent them to be; yet I have a third motive to offer, which, if weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, will over-weigh all objections, viz. That there is a heaven at the end of this walk. For, to use the words of pious Bishop *Beveridge*, "Though the way be narrow, yet it is not long; and though the gate be straight, yet it opens into everlasting life." *Enoch* found it so. He walked with God on earth, and God took him to sit down with him for ever in the kingdom of heaven. Not that we are to expect to be taken away as he was: no; I suppose we shall all die the common death of all men. But after death, the spirits of those who have walked with God, shall return to God that gave them; and at the morning of the resurrection, soul and body shall be for ever with the Lord. Their bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, and their souls filled with all the fulness of God. They shall sit on thrones; they shall judge angels. They shall be enabled to sustain an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, even that glory which Jesus Christ enjoyed with the Father before the world began. *O gloriam quantam et qualem*, says the learned and pious *Arndt*, just before he bowed down his head, and gave up the ghost. The very thought of it is enough to make us "wish to leap our seventy years," as good Dr. *Watts* expresses himself, and to make us break out into the earnest language of the royal Psalmist, "My soul is athirst for God, yea for the

living God. When shall I come to appear in the immediate presence of my God?" I wonder not that a sense of this, when under a more than ordinary irradiation and influx of divine life and love, causes some persons even to faint away, and for a time lose the power of their senses. A less sight than this, even a sight of *Solomon*'s glory, made *Sheba*'s queen astonished; and a still lesser sight than that, even a sight of *Joseph*'s waggons, made holy *Jacob* to faint, and for a while, as it were, die away. *Daniel*, when admitted to a distant view of this excellent glory, fell down at the feet of the angel as one dead. And if a distant view of this glory be so excellent, what must the actual possession of it be? If the first fruits are so glorious, how infinitely must the harvest exceed in glory?

And now what shall I, or indeed what can I well say more, to excite you, even you that are yet strangers to Christ, to come and walk with God? If you love honour, pleasure, and a crown of glory, come, seek it where alone it can be found. Come, put ye on the Lord Jesus. Come, haste ye away and walk with God, and make no longer provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof. Stop, stop, O sinner! turn ye, turn ye, O ye unconverted men! for the end of that way you are now walking in, however right it may seem in your blinded eyes, will be death, even eternal destruction both of body and soul. Make no long tarrying, I say: at your peril, I charge you, step not one step further on in your present walk. For how knowest thou, O man, but the next step thou takest may be into hell? Death may seize thee, judgment find thee, and then the great gulph will be fixed between thee and endless glory, for ever and ever. O think of these things, all ye that are unwilling to come and walk with God. Lay them to heart. Shew yourselves men, and in the strength of Jesus say, Farewel lust of the flesh, I will no more walk with thee! Farewel lust of the eye, and pride of life! Farewel carnal acquaintance,

and enemies of the cross, I will no more walk and be intimate with you! Welcome Jesus, welcome thy word, welcome thy ordinances, welcome thy Spirit, welcome thy people, I will henceforth walk with you. O that there may be in you such a mind! God will set his almighty fiat to it, and seal it with the broad seal of heaven, even the signet of his Holy Spirit. Yes, he will, though you have been walking with, and following after, the devices and desires of your desperately wicked hearts, ever since you have been born. "I the high and lofty one," says the great Jehovah, "that inhabiteth eternity, will dwell with the humble and contrite heart, even with the man that trembleth at my word." The blood, even the precious blood of Jesus Christ, if you come to the Father in and through him, shall cleanse you from all sin.

But the text leads me to speak to you that are saints, as well as to you that are open or unconverted sinners. I need not tell you that walking with God is not only honourable, but pleasant and profitable also: for ye know it by happy experience, and will find it more and more so every day. Only give me leave to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, and to beseech you by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, to take heed to yourselves, and walk closer with your God, than you have in days past: for the nearer you walk with God, the more you will enjoy of Him whose presence is life, and be the better prepared for being placed at his right-hand, where are pleasures for evermore. O do not follow Jesus afar off! O be not so formal, so dead and stupid in your attendance on holy ordinances! Do not so shamefully forsake the assembling yourselves together, or be so niggardly, and so indifferent about the things of God. Remember what Jesus says of the church of *Laodicea*, "Because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Think of the love of Jesus, and let that love

constrain you to keep near unto him; and though you die for him, do not deny him, do not keep at a distance from him in any wise.

One word to my brethren in the ministry that are here present, and I have done. You see, my brethren, my heart is full; I could almost say it is too big to speak, and yet too big to be silent, without dropping a word to you. For does not the text speak in a particular manner to those who have the honour of being stiled the ambassadors of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God? I observed at the beginning of this discourse, that *Enoch* in all probability was a public person, and a flaming preacher. Though he be dead, does he not yet speak to us, to quicken our zeal, and make us more active in the service of our glorious and ever-blessed Master? How did *Enoch* preach? How did *Enoch* walk with God, though he lived in a wicked and adulterous generation? Let us then follow him, as he followed Jesus Christ, and ere long, where he is, there shall we be also. He is now entered into his rest: yet a little while, and we shall enter into ours, and that too much sooner than he did. He sojourned here below three hundred years; but blessed be God, the days of man are now shortened, and in a few days our work will be over. The Judge is before the door: he that cometh will come, and will not tarry: his reward is with him. And we shall all (if we are zealous for the Lord of Hosts) ere long shine as the stars in the firmament, in the kingdom of our heavenly Father, for ever and ever. To Him, the blessed Jesus, and eternal Spirit, be all honour and glory, now, and to all eternity. *Amen*, and *Amen*.

SERMON III.

A braham's offering up his Son *Isaac*.
Genesis xxii. 12.

And he said, Lay not thine Hand upon the Lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me.

THE great Apostle *Paul*, in one of his epistles, informs us, that "whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the holy scripture might have hope." And as without faith it is impossible to please God, or be accepted in Jesus, the Son of his love; we may be assured, that whatever instances of a more than common faith are recorded in the book of God, they were more immediately designed by the holy Spirit for our learning and imitation, upon whom the ends of the world are come. For this reason, the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, in the xith chapter, mentions such a noble catalogue of Old Testament saints and martyrs, "who subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, &c. and are gone

before us to inherit the promises." A sufficient confutation, I think, of their error, who lightly esteem the Old Testament saints, and would not have them mentioned to Christians, as persons whose faith and patience we are called upon more immediately to follow. If this was true, the apostle would never have produced such a cloud of witnesses out of the Old Testament, to excite the Christians of the first, and consequently purest age of the church, to continue stedfast and unmoveable in the profession of their faith. Amidst this catalogue of saints, methinks the patriarch *Abraham* shines the brightest, and differs from the others, as one star differeth from another star in glory; for he shone with such distinguished lustre, that he was called the "friend of God," the "father of the faithful;" and those who believe on Christ, are said to be "sons and daughters of, and to be blessed with, faithful *Abraham*." Many trials of his faith did God send this great and good man, after he had commanded him to get out from his country, and from his kindred, unto a land which he should shew him; but the last was the most severe of all, I mean, that of offering up his only son. This, by the divine assistance, I propose to make the subject of your present meditation, and, by way of conclusion, to draw some practical inferences, as God shall enable me, from this instructive story.

The sacred penman begins the narrative thus; verse 1. "And it came to pass, after these things, God did tempt *Abraham*." After these things, that is, after he had underwent many severe trials before, after he was old, full of days, and might flatter himself perhaps that the troubles and toils of life were now finished; "after these things, God did tempt *Abraham*." Christians, you know not what trials you may meet with before you die: notwithstanding you may have suffered, and been tried much already, yet, it may be, a greater measure is still behind, which you are to fill up. "Be not

high-minded, but fear." Our last trials, in all probability, will be the greatest: and we can never say our warfare is accomplished, or our trials finished, till we bow down our heads, and give up the ghost. "And it came to pass, after these things, that God did tempt *Abraham*."

"God did tempt *Abraham*." But can the scripture contradict itself? Does not the apostle *James* tell us, "that God tempts no man;" and God does tempt no man to evil, or on purpose to draw him into sin; for, when a man is thus tempted, he is drawn away of his own heart's lust, and enticed. But in another sense, God may be said to tempt, I mean, to try his servants; and in this sense we are to understand that passage of *Matthew*, where we are told, that, "Jesus was led up by the Spirit (the good Spirit) into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." And our Lord, in that excellent form of prayer which he has been pleased to give us, does not require us to pray that we may not absolutely be led into temptation, but delivered from the evil of it; whence we may plainly infer, that God sees it fit sometimes to lead us into temptation, that is, to bring us into such circumstances as will try our faith and other Christian graces. In this sense we are to understand the expression before us; "God did tempt or try *Abraham*."

How God was pleased to reveal his will at this time to his faithful servant, whether by the *Shechinah*, or divine appearance, or by a small still voice, as he spoke to *Elijah*, or by a whisper, like that of the Spirit to *Philip*, when he commanded him to go join himself to the eunuch's chariot, we are not told, nor is it material to enquire. It is enough that we are informed, God said unto him, *Abraham*; and that *Abraham* knew it was the voice of God: for he said, "Behold, here I am." O what a holy familiarity (if I may so speak) is there between God and those holy souls that are united to him by faith in Christ Jesus! God says, *Abraham*; and *Abraham* said (it should seem

without the least surprize) Behold, here I am. Being reconciled to God by the death and obedience of Christ, which he rejoiced in, and saw by faith afar off; he did not, like guilty *Adam*, seek the trees of the garden to hide himself from, but takes pleasure in conversing with God, and talketh with him, as a man talketh with his friend. O that Christ-less sinners knew what it is to have fellowship with the Father and the Son! They would envy the happiness of saints, and count it all joy to be termed enthusiasts and fools for Christ's sake.

But what does God say to *Abraham*? Verse 2. "Take now thy son, thine only son *Isaac*, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of *Moriah*, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of."

Every word deserves our particular observation. Whatever he was to do, he must do it now, immediately, without conferring with flesh and blood. But what must he do? "Take now thy son." Had God said, take now a firstling, or choicest lamb or beast of thy flock, and offer it up for a burnt-offering, it would not have appeared so ghastly; but for God to say, "take now thy son, and offer him up for a burnt-offering," one would have imagined, was enough to stagger the strongest faith. But this is not all: it must not only be a son, but "thine only son *Isaac*, whom thou lovest." If it must be a son, and not a beast, that must be offered, why will not *Ishmael* do, the son of the bond-woman? No, it must be his only son, the heir of all, his *Isaac*, by interpretation *laughter*, the son of his old age, in whom his soul delighted, "whom thou lovest," says God, in whose life his own was wrapped up: and this son, this only son, this *Isaac*, the son of his love, must be taken now, even now, without delay, and be offered up by his own father,

for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains of the which God would tell him.

Well might the apostle, speaking of this man of God, say, that "against hope he believed in hope, and, being strong in faith, gave glory to God:" For, had he not been blessed with faith which man never before had, he must have refused to comply with this severe command. For how many arguments might nature suggest, to prove that such a command could never come from God, or to excuse himself from obeying it? "What! (might the good man have said) butcher my own child! it is contrary to the very law of nature: much more to butcher my dear son *Isaac*, in whose seed God himself has assured me of a numerous posterity. But supposing I could give up my own affections, and be willing to part with him, though I love him so dearly, yet, if I murder him, what will become of God's promise? Besides, I am now like a city built upon a hill; I shine as a light in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: How then shall I cause God's name to be blasphemed, how shall I become a by-word among the heathen, if they hear that I have committed a crime which they abhor! But, above all, what will *Sarah* my wife say? How can I ever return to her again, after I have imbrued my hands in my dear child's blood? O that God would pardon me in this thing, or take my life in the place of my son's!" Thus, I say, *Abraham* might have argued, and that too seemingly with great reason, against complying with the divine command. But as before by faith he considered not the deadness of *Sarah*'s womb, when she was past age, but believed on him, who said, "*Sarah* thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed;" so now, being convinced that the same God spoke to and commanded him to offer up that son, and knowing that God was able to raise him from the dead, without delay he obeys the heavenly call.

O that unbelievers would learn of faithful *Abraham*, and believe whatever is revealed from God, though they cannot fully comprehend it! *Abraham* knew God commanded him to offer up his son, and therefore believed, notwithstanding carnal reasoning might suggest many objections. We have sufficient testimony, that God has spoken to us by his son; why should we not also believe, though many things in the New Testament are above our reason? For, where reason ends, faith begins. And, however infidels may stile themselves reasoners, of all men they are the most unreasonable: For, is it not contrary to all reason, to measure an infinite by a finite understanding, or think to find out the mysteries of godliness to perfection?

But to return to the patriarch *Abraham*: We observed before what plausible objections he might have made; but he answered not a single word: no, without replying against his Maker, we are told, verse 3. that "*Abraham* rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and *Isaac* his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him."

From this verse we may gather, that God spoke to *Abraham* in a dream, or vision of the night: For it is said, he rose up early. Perhaps it was near the fourth watch of the night, just before break of day, when God said, Take now thy son; and *Abraham* rises up early to do so; as I doubt not but he used to rise early to offer up his morning-sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. It is often remarked of people in the Old Testament, that they rose early in the morning; and particularly of our Lord in the New, that he rose a great while before day to pray. The morning befriends devotion; and, if people cannot use so much self-denial as to rise early to pray, I know not how they will be able to die at a stake (if called to it) for Jesus Christ.

The humility as well as the piety of the patriarch is observable: he saddled his own ass (great men should be humble;) and to shew his sincerity, though he took two of his young men with him, and *Isaac* his son, yet he keeps his design as a secret from them all: nay, he does not so much as tell *Sarah* his wife: for he knew not but she might be a snare unto him in this affair; and, as *Rebekah* afterwards, on another occasion, advised *Jacob* to flee, so *Sarah* also might persuade *Isaac* to hide himself; or the young men, had they known of it, might have forced him away, as in after-ages the soldiers rescued *Jonathan* out of the hands of *Saul*. But *Abraham* sought no such evasion, and therefore, like an *Israelite* indeed, in whom there was no guile, he himself resolutely "clave the wood for the burnt-offering, rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him." In the second verse God commanded him to offer up his son upon one of the mountains which he would tell him of. He commanded him to offer his son up, but would not then directly tell him the place where: this was to keep him dependent and watching unto prayer: for there is nothing like being kept waiting upon God; and, if we do, assuredly God will reveal himself unto us yet further in his own time. Let us practise what we know, follow providence so far as we can see already; and what we know not, what we see not as yet, let us only be found in the way of duty, and the Lord will reveal even that unto us. *Abraham* knew not directly where he was to offer up his son; but he rises up and sets forward, and behold now God shews him: "And he went to the place of which God had told him." Let us go and do likewise.

Verse 4. "Then on the third day *Abraham* lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off."

So that the place, of which God had told him, was no less than three days journey distant from the place where God first appeared to him, and

commanded him to take his son. Was not this to try his faith, and to let him see that what he did, was not meerly from a sudden pang of devotion, but a matter of choice and deliberation? But who can tell what the aged patriarch felt during these three days? Strong as he was in faith, I am persuaded his bowels often yearned over his dear son *Isaac*. Methinks I see the good old man walking with his dear child in his hand, and now and then looking upon him, loving him, and then turning aside to weep. And perhaps, sometimes he stays a little behind to pour out his heart before God, for he had no mortal to tell his case to. Then, methinks, I see him join his son and servants again, and talking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, as they walked by the way. At length, "on the third day, he lifts up his eyes, and saw the place afar off." And, to shew that he was yet sincerely resolved to do whatsoever the Lord required of him, he even now will not discover his design to his servants, but "said, verse 5. to his young men," (as we should say to our worldly thoughts, when about to tread the courts of the Lord's house) "Abide you here with the ass; and I and the lad will go up yonder and worship, and come again to you." This was a sufficient reason for their staying behind; and, it being their master's custom to go frequently to worship, they could have no suspicion of what he was going about. And by *Abraham*'s saying, that he and the lad would come again, I am apt to think he believed God would raise him from the dead, if so be he permitted him to offer his child up for a burnt-offering. However that be, he is yet resolved to obey God to the uttermost; and therefore,

Verse 6. "*Abraham* took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon *Isaac* his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and they went both of them together." Little did *Isaac* think that he was to be offered on that very wood which he was carrying upon his shoulders; and therefore

Isaac innocently, and with a holy freedom (for good men should not keep their children at too great a distance) "spake unto *Abraham* his father, and said, My father; and he (with equal affection and holy condescension) said, Here am I, my son." And to shew how careful *Abraham* had been (as all Christian parents ought to be) to instruct his *Isaac* how to sacrifice to God, like a youth trained up in the way wherein he should go; *Isaac* said, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" How beautiful is early piety! how amiable, to hear young people ask questions about sacrificing to God in an acceptable way! *Isaac* knew very well that a lamb was wanting, and that a lamb was necessary for a proper sacrifice: "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Young men and maidens, learn of him.

Hitherto, it is plain, *Isaac* knew nothing of his father's design: but I believe, by what his father said in answer to his question, that now was the time *Abraham* revealed it unto him.

Verse 8. "And *Abraham* said, My son, God will provide himself a Lamb for a burnt-offering." Some think, that *Abraham* by faith saw the Lord Jesus afar off, and here spake prophetically of that Lamb of God already slain in decree, and hereafter to be actually offered up for sinners. This was a lamb of God's providing indeed (we dared not have thought of it) to satisfy his own justice, and to render him just in justifying the ungodly. What is all our fire and wood, the best preparation and performances we can make or present, unless God had provided himself this Lamb for a burnt-offering? He could not away with them. The words will well bear this interpretation. But, whatever *Abraham* might intend, I cannot but think he here made an application, and acquainted his son, of God's dealing with his soul; and at length, with tears in his eyes, and the utmost affection in his heart, cried out,

“Thou art to be the lamb, my Son;” God has commanded me to provide thee for a burnt-offering, and to offer thee upon the mountain which we are now ascending. And, as it appears from a subsequent verse, *Isaac*, convinced that it was the divine will, made no resistance at all: For it is said, “They went both of them together;” and again, when we are told, that *Abraham* bound *Isaac*, we do not hear of his complaining, or endeavouring to escape, which he might have done, being (as some think) near thirty years of age, and, it is plain, capable of carrying wood enough for a burnt-offering. But he was partaker of the like precious faith with his aged father, and therefore is as willing to be offered, as *Abraham* is to offer him: And “so they went both of them together.”

Verse 9. At length “they came to the place of which God had told *Abraham*. He built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound *Isaac* his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.”

And here let us pause a while, and by faith take a view of the place where the father has laid him. I doubt not but the blessed angels hovered round the altar, and sang, “Glory be to God in the highest,” for giving such faith to man. Come, all ye tender-hearted parents, who know what it is to look over a dying child: fancy that you saw the altar erected before you, and the wood laid in order, and the beloved *Isaac* bound upon it: fancy that you saw the aged parent standing by weeping. (For, why may we not suppose that *Abraham* wept, since Jesus himself wept at the grave of *Lazarus*?) O what pious, endearing expressions passed now alternately between the father and the son! *Josephus* records a pathetic speech made by each, whether genuine I know not: but methinks I see the tears trickle down the Patriarch *Abraham*’s cheeks; and out of the abundance of the heart, he cries, Adieu, adieu, my son; the Lord gave thee to me, and the Lord calls thee away;

blessed be the name of the Lord: adieu, my *Isaac*, my only son, whom I love as my own soul; adieu, adieu. I see *Isaac* at the same time meekly resigning himself into his heavenly Father's hands, and praying to the most High to strengthen his earthly parent to strike the stroke. But why do I attempt to describe what either son or father felt? It is impossible: we may indeed form some faint idea of, but shall never fully comprehend it, till we come and sit down with them in the kingdom of heaven, and hear them tell the pleasing story over again. Hasten, O Lord, that blessed time! O let thy kingdom come!

And now, the fatal blow is going to be given. "And *Abraham* stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." But do you not think he intended to turn away his head, when he gave the blow? Nay, why may we not suppose he sometimes drew his hand in, after it was stretched out, willing to take another last farewell of his beloved *Isaac*, and desirous to defer it a little, though resolved at last to strike home? Be that as it will, his arm is now stretched out, the knife is in his hand, and he is about to put it to his dear son's throat.

But sing, O heavens! and rejoice, O earth! Man's extremity is God's opportunity: for behold, just as the knife, in all probability, was near his throat, verse 11. "the angel of the Lord, (or rather the Lord of angels, Jesus Christ, the angel of the everlasting covenant) called unto him, (probably in a very audible manner) from heaven, and said, *Abraham*, *Abraham*. (The word is doubled, to engage his attention; and perhaps the suddenness of the call made him draw back his hand, just as he was going to strike his son.) And *Abraham* said, Here am I."

"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now know I that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not

withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

Here then it was that *Abraham* received his son *Isaac* from the dead in a figure. He was in effect offered upon the altar, and God looked upon him as offered and given unto him. Now it was that *Abraham*'s faith, being tried, was found more precious than gold purified seven times in the fire. Now as a reward of grace, though not of debt, for this signal act of obedience, by an oath, God gives and confirms the promise, "that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed," verse 17, 18. With what comfort may we suppose the good old man and his son went down from the mount, and returned unto the young men! With what joy may we imagine he went home, and related all that had passed to *Sarah*! And above all, with what triumph is he now exulting in the paradise of God, and adoring rich, free, distinguishing, electing, everlasting love, which alone made him to differ from the rest of mankind, and rendered him worthy of that title which he will have so long as the sun and the moon endure, "The Father of the faithful!"

But let us now draw our eyes from the creature, and do what *Abraham*, if he was present, would direct to; I mean, fix them on the Creator, God blessed for evermore.

I see your hearts affected, I see your eyes weep. (And indeed, who can refrain weeping at the relation of such a story?) But, behold, I shew you a mystery, hid under the sacrifice of *Abraham*'s only son, which, unless your hearts are hardned, must cause you to weep tears of love, and that plentifully too. I would willingly hope you even prevent me here, and are ready to say, "It is the love of God, in giving Jesus Christ to die for our sins." Yes; that is it. And yet perhaps you find your hearts, at the mentioning of this, not so much affected. Let this convince you, that we are all fallen

creatures, and that we do not love God or Christ as we ought to do: for, if you admire *Abraham* offering up his *Isaac*, how much more ought you to extol, magnify and adore the love of God, who so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son Christ Jesus our Lord, "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" May we not well cry out, Now know we, O Lord, that thou hast loved us, since thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from us? *Abraham* was God's creature (and God was *Abraham*'s friend) and therefore under the highest obligation to surrender up his *Isaac*. But O stupendious love! whilst we were his enemies, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might become a curse for us. O the freeness, as well as the infinity, of the love of God our Father! It is unsearchable: I am lost in contemplating it; it is past finding out. Think, O believers, think of the love of God, in giving Jesus Christ to be a propitiation for our sins. And when you hear how *Abraham* built an altar, and laid the wood in order, and bound *Isaac* his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood; think how your heavenly Father bound Jesus Christ his only Son, and offered him upon the altar of his justice, and laid upon him the iniquities of us all. When you read of *Abraham*'s stretching forth his hand to slay his Son, Think, O think, how God actually suffered his Son to be slain, that we might live for evermore. Do you read of *Isaac* carrying the wood upon his shoulders, upon which he was to be offered? Let this lead you to mount *Calvary* (this very mount of *Moriah* where *Isaac* was offered, as some think) and take a view of the antitype Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bearing and ready to sink under the weight of that cross, on which he was to hang for us. Do you admire *Isaac* so freely consenting to die, though a creature, and therefore obliged to go when God called? O do not forget to admire infinitely more the dear Lord

Jesus, that promised seed, who willingly said, “Lo, I come,” though under no obligation so to do, “to do thy will,” to obey and die for men, “O God!” Did you weep just now, when I bid you fancy you saw the altar, and the wood laid in order, and *Isaac* laid bound on the altar? Look by faith, behold the blessed Jesus, our all-glorious *Emmanuel*, not bound, but nailed on an accursed tree: see how he hangs crowned with thorns, and had in derision of all that are round about him: see how the thorns pierce him, and how the blood in purple streams trickle down his sacred temples! Hark how the God of nature groans! See how he bows his head, and at length humanity gives up the ghost! *Isaac* is saved, but Jesus, the God of *Isaac*, dies: A ram is offered up in *Isaac*’s room, but Jesus has no substitute; Jesus must bleed, Jesus must die; God the Father provided this Lamb for himself from all eternity. He must be offered in time, or man must be damned for evermore. And now, where are your tears? Shall I say, refrain your voice from weeping? No; rather let me exhort you to look to him whom you have pierced, and mourn, as a woman mourneth for her first-born: for we have been the betrayers, we have been the murderers of this Lord of glory; and shall we not bewail those sins, which brought the blessed Jesus to the accursed tree? Having so much done, so much suffered for us, so much forgiven, shall we not love much? O! let us love Him with all our hearts, and minds, and strength, and glorify him in our souls and bodies, for they are his. Which leads me to a second inference I shall draw from the foregoing discourse.

From hence we may learn the nature of true, justifying faith. Whoever understands and preaches the truth, as it is in Jesus, must acknowledge, that salvation is God’s free gift, and that we are saved, not by any or all the works of righteousness which we have done or can do: no; we can neither

wholly nor in part justify ourselves in the sight of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is our righteousness; and if we are accepted with God, it must be only in and through the personal righteousness, the active and passive obedience, of Jesus Christ his beloved Son. This righteousness must be imputed, or counted over to us, and applied by faith to our hearts, or else we can in no wise be justified in God's sight: and that very moment a sinner is enabled to lay hold on Christ's righteousness by faith, he is freely justified from all his sins, and shall never enter into condemnation, notwithstanding he was a fire-brand of hell before. Thus it was that *Abraham* was justified before he did any good work: he was enabled to believe on the Lord Christ; it was accounted to him for righteousness; that is, Christ's righteousness was made over to him, and so accounted his. This, this is gospel; this is the only way of finding acceptance with God: good works have nothing to do with our justification in his sight. We are justified by faith alone, as saith the article of our church; agreeable to which the apostle *Paul* says, "By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Notwithstanding, good works have their proper place: they justify our faith, though not our persons; they follow it, and evidence our justification in the sight of men. Hence it is that the apostle *James* asks, was not *Abraham* justified by works? (alluding no doubt to the story on which we have been discoursing) that is, did he not prove he was in a justified state, because his faith was productive of good works? This declarative justification in the sight of men, is what is directly to be understood in the words of the text; "Now know I, says God, that thou fearest me, since thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me." Not but that God knew it before; but this is spoken in condescension to our weak capacities, and plainly shews, that his offering up his son was accepted with God, as an evidence of the

sincerity of his faith, and for this, was left on record to future ages. Hence then you may learn, whether you are blessed with, and are sons and daughters of, faithful *Abraham*. You say you believe; you talk of free grace and free justification: you do well; the devils also believe and tremble. But has the faith, which you pretend to, influenced your hearts, renewed your souls, and, like *Abraham*'s, worked by love? Are your affections, like his, set on things above? Are you heavenly-minded, and like him, do you confess yourselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth? In short, has your faith enabled you to overcome the world, and strengthened you to give up your *Isaacs*, your laughter, your most beloved lusts, friends, pleasures, and profits for God? If so, take the comfort of it; for justly may you say, "We know assuredly, that we do fear and love God, or rather are loved of him." But if you are only talking believers, have only a faith of the head, and never felt the power of it in your hearts, however you may bolster yourselves up, and say, "We have *Abraham* for our father, or Christ is our Saviour;" unless you get a faith of the heart, a faith working by love, you shall never sit with *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, or Jesus Christ, in the kingdom of heaven.

But I must draw one more inference, and with that I shall conclude.

Learn, O saints! from what has been said, to sit loose to all your worldly comforts; and stand ready prepared to part with every thing, when God shall require it at your hand. Some of you perhaps may have friends, who are to you as your own souls; and others may have children, in whose lives your own lives are bound up: all I believe have their *Isaacs*, their particular delights of some kind or other. Labour, for Christ's sake, labour, ye sons and daughters of *Abraham*, to resign them daily in affection to God, that, when he shall require you really to sacrifice them, you may not confer with

flesh and blood, any more than the blessed patriarch now before us. And as for you that have been in any measure tried like unto him, let his example encourage and comfort you. Remember, *Abraham* your father was tried so before you: think, O think of the happiness he now enjoys, and how he is incessantly thanking God for tempting and trying him when here below. Look up often by the eye of faith, and see him sitting with his dearly beloved *Isaac* in the world of spirits. Remember, it will be but a little while, and you shall sit with them also, and tell one another what God has done for your souls. There I hope to sit with you, and hear this story of his offering up his Son from his own mouth, and to praise the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne, for what he hath done for all our souls, for ever and ever.

SERMON IV.

The great Duty of Family-Religion.

Joshua xxiv. 15.

As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.

THESE words contain the holy resolution of pious *Joshua*, who having in a most moving, affectionate discourse recounted to the *Israelites* what great things God had done for them, in the verse immediately preceding the text, comes to draw a proper inference from what he had been delivering; and acquaints them, in the most pressing terms, that since God had been so exceeding gracious unto them, they could do no less, than out of gratitude for such uncommon favours and mercies, dedicate both themselves and families to his service. “Now therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the Gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood.” And by the same engaging motive does the prophet *Samuel* afterwards enforce their obedience to the commandments of God, 1 *Samuel* xii. 24. “Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you.” But then, that

they might not excuse themselves (as too many might be apt to do) by his giving them a bad example, or think he was laying heavy burdens upon them, whilst he himself touched them not with one of his fingers, he tells them in the text, that whatever regard they might pay to the doctrine he had been preaching, yet he (as all ministers ought to do) was resolved to live up to and practise it himself: “Chuse you therefore, whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your fathers served, or the Gods of the *Amorites*, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

A resolution this, worthy of *Joshua*, and no less becoming, no less necessary for every true son of *Joshua*, that is intrusted with the care and government of a family in our day: and, if it was ever seasonable for ministers to preach up, or people to put in practice *family-religion*, it was never more so than in the present age; since it is greatly to be feared, that out of those many housholds that call themselves Christians, there are but few that serve God in their respective families as they ought.

It is true indeed, visit our churches, and you may perhaps see something of the *form of godliness* still subsisting amongst us; but even that is scarcely to be met with in private houses. So that were the blessed angels to come, as in the patriarchal age, and observe our spiritual oeconomy at home, would they not be tempted to say as *Abraham* to *Abimilech*, “Surely, the fear of God is not in this place?” *Genesis* xx. 11.

How such a general neglect of family-religion first began to overspread the Christian world, is difficult to determine. As for the primitive Christians, I am positive it was not so with them: No, they had not so learned Christ, as falsely to imagine religion was to be confined solely to their assemblies for public worship; but, on the contrary, behaved with such piety and exemplary holiness in their private families, that St. *Paul* often styles their

house a church: “Salute such a one, says he, and the church which is in his house.” And, I believe, we must for ever despair of seeing a primitive spirit of piety revived in the world, till we are so happy as to see a revival of primitive family religion; and persons unanimously resolving with good old *Joshua*, in the words of the text, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

From which words, I shall beg leave to insist on these three things.

I. *First*, That it is the duty of every governor of a family to take care, that not only he himself, but also that those committed to his charge, “*serve the* Lord.”

II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to shew after what manner a governor and his houshold ought to serve the Lord. And,

III. *Thirdly*, I shall offer some motives, in order to excite all governors, with their respective housholds, to serve the Lord in the manner that shall be recommended.

And *First*, I am to shew that it is the duty of every governor of a family to take care, that not only he himself, but also that those committed to his charge, should serve the Lord.

And this will appear, if we consider that every governor of a family ought to look upon himself as obliged to act in three capacities: as a prophet, to instruct; as a priest, to pray for and with; as a king, to govern, direct, and provide for them. It is true indeed, the latter of these, their kingly office, they are not so frequently deficient in, (nay in this they are generally too solicitous;) but as for the two former, their priestly and prophetic office, like *Gallio*, they care for no such things. But however indifferent some governors may be about it, they may be assured, that God will require a due discharge of these offices at their hands. For if, as the apostle argues, “He

that does not provide for his own house," in temporal things, "has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" to what greater degree of apostasy must he have arrived, who takes no thought to provide for the spiritual welfare of his family!

But farther, persons are generally very liberal of their invectives against the clergy, and think they justly blame the conduct of that minister who does not take heed to and watch over the flock, of which the Holy Ghost has made him overseer: but may not every governor of a family, be in a lower degree liable to the same censure, who takes no thought for those souls that are committed to his charge? For every house is as it were a little parish, every governor (as was before observed) a priest, every family a flock: and if any of them perish through the governor's neglect, their blood will God require at their hands.

Was a minister to disregard teaching his people publicly, and from house to house, and to excuse himself by saying, that he had enough to do to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, without concerning himself with that of others; would you not be apt to think such a minister, to be like the unjust judge, "One that neither feared God, nor regarded man?" And yet, odious as such a character would be, it is no worse than that governor of a family deserves, who thinks himself obliged only to save his own soul, without paying any regard to the souls of his houshold. For (as was above hinted) every house is as it were a parish, and every master is concerned to secure, as much as in him lies, the spiritual prosperity of every one under his roof, as any minister whatever is obliged to look to the spiritual welfare of every individual person under his charge.

What precedents men who neglect their duty in this particular, can plead for such omission, I cannot tell. Doubtless not the example of holy *Job*,

who was so far from imagining that he had no concern, as governor of a family, with any one's soul but his own, that the scripture acquaints us, "When the days of his childrens feasting were gone about, that *Job* sent and sanctified them, and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all; for *Job* said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts: thus did *Job* continually." Nor can they plead the practice of good old *Joshua*, whom, in the text, we find as much concerned for his houshold's welfare, as his own. Nor lastly, that of *Cornelius*, who feared God, not only himself, but with all his house: and were Christians but of the same spirit of *Job*, *Joshua*, and the *Gentile* centurion, they would act as *Job*, *Joshua*, and *Cornelius* did.

But alas! if this be the case, and all governors of families ought not only to serve the Lord themselves, but likewise to see that their respective housholds do so too; what will then become of those who not only neglect serving God themselves, but also make it their business to ridicule and scoff at any of their house that do? Who are not content with "not entering into the kingdom of heaven themselves; but those also that are willing to enter in, they hinder." Surely such men are factors for the devil indeed. Surely their damnation slumbereth not: for although God, in his good providence, may suffer such stumbling-blocks to be put in his childrens way, and suffer their greatest enemies to be those of their own housholds, for a trial of their sincerity, and improvement of their faith; yet we cannot but pronounce a woe against those masters by whom such offences come. For if those that only take care of their own souls, can scarcely be saved, where will such monstrous profane and wicked governors appear?

But hoping there are but few of this unhappy stamp, proceed we now to the

Second thing proposed; To shew after what manner a governor and his houshold ought to serve the Lord.

1. And the first thing I shall mention, is, *reading the word of* God. This is a duty incumbent on every private person. “Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life,” is a precept given by our blessed Lord indifferently to all: but much more so, ought every governor of a family to think it in a peculiar manner spoken to himself, because (as hath been already proved) he ought to look upon himself as a prophet, and therefore, agreeably to such a character, bound to instruct those under his charge in the knowledge of the word of God.

This we find was the order God gave to his peculiar people *Israel*: for thus speaks his representative *Moses*, *Deuteronomy* vi. 6, 7. “These words,” that is, the scripture words, “which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,” that is, as it is generally explained, servants, as well as children, “and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house.” From whence we may infer, that the only reason, why so many neglect to read the words of scripture diligently to their children is, because the words of scripture are not in their hearts: for if they were, out of the abundance of the heart their mouth would speak.

Besides, servants as well as children, are, for the generality, very ignorant, and mere novices in the laws of God: and how shall they know, unless some one teach them? And what more proper to teach them by, than the lively oracles of God, “which are able to make them wise unto salvation?” And who more proper to instruct them by these lively oracles, than parents and masters, who (as hath been more than once observed) are as much concerned to feed them with spiritual, as with bodily bread, day by day.

But if these things be so, what a miserable condition are those unhappy governors in, who are so far from feeding those committed to their care with the sincere milk of the word, to the intent they may grow thereby, that they neither search the scriptures themselves, nor are careful to explain them to others? Such families must be in a happy way indeed to do their Master's will, who take such prodigious pains to know it! Would not one imagine that they had turned converts to the Church of *Rome*; that they thought ignorance to be the mother of devotion; and that those were to be condemned as heretics who read their Bibles? And yet how few families are there amongst us, who do not act after this unseemly manner! But shall I praise them in this? I praise them not: Brethren, this thing ought not so to be.

2. Pass we on now to the second means whereby every governor and his houshold ought to serve the Lord, *family-prayer*.

This is a duty, though as much neglected, yet as absolutely necessary as the former. Reading is a good preparative for prayer, as prayer is an excellent means to render reading effectual. And the reason why every governor of a family should join both these exercises together, is plain, because a governor of a family cannot perform his priestly office (which we before observed he is in some degree invested with) without performing this duty of family prayer.

We find it therefore remarked, when mention is made of *Cain* and *Abel*'s offering sacrifices, that they brought them. But to whom did they bring them? Why, in all probability, to their father *Adam*, who, as priest of the family, was to offer sacrifice in their names. And so ought every spiritual son of the second *Adam*, who is entrusted with the care of an houshold, to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of supplications and thanksgivings,

acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, in the presence and name of all who wait upon, or eat meat at his table.

Thus we read our blessed Lord behaved, when he tabernacled amongst us: for it is said often, that he prayed with his twelve disciples, which was then his little family. And he himself has promised a particular blessing to joint supplications: “Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” And again, “If two or three are agreed touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be given them.” Add to this, that we are commanded by the Apostle to “pray always, with all manner of supplication,” which doubtless includes family prayer. And holy *Joshua*, when he set up the good resolution in the text, that he and his houshold would serve the Lord, certainly resolved to pray with his family, which is one of the best testimonies they could give of their serving him.

Besides, there are no families but what have some common blessings, of which they have been all partakers, to give thanks for; some common crosses and afflictions, which they are to pray against; some common sins, which they are all to lament and bewail: but how this can be done, without joining together in one common act of humiliation, supplication, and thanksgiving, is difficult to devise.

From all which considerations put together, it is evident, that family prayer is a great and necessary duty; and consequently, those governors that neglect it, are certainly without excuse. And it is much to be feared, if they live without family prayer, they live without God in the world.

And yet, such an hateful character as this is, it is to be feared, that was God to send out an angel to destroy us, as he did once to destroy the *Egyptian* first-born, and withal give him a commission, as then, to spare no houses but where they saw the blood of the lintel, sprinkled on the door-

post, so now, to let no families escape, but those that called upon him in morning and evening prayer; few would remain unhurt by his avenging sword. Shall I term such families Christians or heathens? Doubtless they deserve not the name of Christians; and heathens will rise up in judgment against such profane families of this generation: for they had always their houshold gods, whom they worshipped, and whose assistance they frequently invoked. And a pretty pass those families surely are arrived at, who must be sent to school to pagans. But will not the Lord be avenged on such profane housholds as these? Will he not pour out his fury upon those that call not upon his name?

3. But it is time for me to hasten to the third and last means I shall recommend, whereby every governor ought with his houshold to serve the Lord, *catechizing* and *instructing* their children and servants, and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

That this, as well as the two former, is a duty incumbent on every governor of an house, appears from that famous encomium or commendation God gives of *Abraham*: “I know that he will command his children and his houshold after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.” And indeed scarce any thing is more frequently pressed upon us in holy writ, than this duty of catechising. Thus, says God in a passage before cited, “Thou shalt teach these words diligently unto thy children.” And parents are commanded in the New Testament, to “breed up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The holy Psalmist acquaints us, that one great end why God did such great wonders for his people, was, “to the intent that when they grew up, they should shew their children, or servants, the same.” And in *Deuteronomy* vi. at the 20th and following verses, God strictly commands his people to instruct their

children in the true nature of the ceremonial worship, when they should enquire about it, as he supposed they would do, in time to come. And if servants and children were to be instructed in the nature of *Jewish* rites, much more ought they now to be initiated and grounded in the doctrines and first principles of the gospel of Christ: not only, because it is a revelation, which has brought life and immortality to a fuller and clearer light, but also, because many seducers are gone abroad into the world, who do their utmost endeavour to destroy not only the superstructure, but likewise to sap the very foundation of our most holy religion.

Would then the present generation have their posterity be true lovers and honourers of God; masters and parents must take *Solomon*'s good advice, and train up and catechise their respective housholds in the way wherein they should go.

I am aware but of one objection, that can, with any shew of reason, be urged against what has been advanced; which is, that such a procedure as this will take up too much time, and hinder families too long from their worldly business. But it is much to be questioned, whether persons that start such an objection, are not of the same hypocritical spirit as the traitor *Judas*, who had indignation against devout *Mary*, for being so profuse of her ointment, in anointing our blessed Lord, and asked why it might not be sold for two hundred pence, and given to the poor. For has God given us so much time to work for ourselves, and shall we not allow some small pittance of it, morning and evening, to be devoted to his more immediate worship and service? Have not people read, that it is God who gives men power to get wealth, and therefore that the best way to prosper in the world, is to secure his favour? And has not our blessed Lord himself promised, that

if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all outward necessaries shall be added unto us?

Abraham, no doubt, was a man of as great business as such objectors may be; but yet he would find time to command his houshold to serve the Lord. Nay, *David* was a king, and consequently had a great deal of business upon his hands; yet notwithstanding, he professes that he would walk in his house with a perfect heart. And, to instance but one more, holy *Joshua* was a person certainly engaged very much in temporal affairs; and yet he solemnly declares before all *Israel*, that as for him and his houshold, they would serve the Lord. And did persons but redeem their time, as *Abraham*, *David*, or *Joshua* did, they would no longer complain, that family duties kept them too long from the business of the world.

III. But my Third and Last general head, under which I was to offer some motives, in order to excite all governors, with their respective housholds, to serve the Lord in the manner before recommended, I hope, will serve instead of a thousand arguments, to prove the weakness and folly of any such objection.

1. And the first motive I shall mention is the duty of *gratitude*, which you that are governors of families owe to God. Your lot, every one must confess, is cast in a fair ground: providence hath given you a goodly heritage, above many of your fellow-creatures; and therefore, out of a principle of gratitude, you ought to endeavour, as much as in you lies, to make every person of your respective housholds to call upon him as long as they live: not to mention, that the authority, with which God has invested you as parents and governors of families, is a talent committed to your trust, and which you are bound to improve to your Master's honour. In other things we find governors and parents can exercise lordship over their children and servants

readily, and frequently enough can say to one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; to a third, Do this, and he doeth it. And shall this power be so often employed in your own affairs, and never exerted in the things of God? Be astonished, O heavens, at this!

Thus did not faithful *Abraham*; no, God says, that he knew *Abraham* would command his servants and children after him. Thus did not *Joshua*: no, he was resolved not only to walk with God himself, but to improve his authority in making all about him do so too: "As for me and my houshold, we will serve the Lord." Let us go and do likewise.

2. But *Secondly*, If gratitude to God will not, methinks love and pity to your children should move you, with your respective families, to serve the Lord.

Most people express a great fondness for their children: nay so great, that very often their own lives are wrapped up in those of their offspring. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" says God by his Prophet *Isaiah*. He speaks of it as a monstrous thing, and scarce credible; but the words immediately following, affirm it to be possible, "Yea, they may forget:" and experience also assures us they may. Father and mother may both forsake their children: for what greater degree of forgetfulness can they express towards them, than to neglect the improvement of their better part, and not bring them up in the knowledge and fear of God?

It is true indeed, parents seldom forget to provide for their childrens bodies, (though, it is to be feared, some men are so far sunk beneath the beasts that perish, as to neglect even that) but then how often do they forget, or rather, when do they remember, to secure the salvation of their immortal souls? But is this their way of expressing their fondness for the fruit of their

bodies? Is this the best testimony they can give of their affection to the darling of their hearts? Then was *Dalilah* fond of *Samson*, when she delivered him up into the hands of the *Philistines*: then were those ruffians well affected to *Daniel*, when they threw him into a den of lions.

3. But *Thirdly*, If neither gratitude to God, nor love and pity to your children, will prevail on you; yet let a principle of *common honesty* and *justice* move you to set up the holy resolution in the text.

This is a principle which all men would be thought to act upon. But certainly, if any may be truly censured for their injustice, none can be more liable to such censure, than those who think themselves injured if their servants withdraw themselves from their bodily work, and yet they in return take no care of their inestimable souls. For is it just that servants should spend their time and strength in their master's service, and masters not at the same time give them what is just and equal for their service?

It is true, some men may think they have done enough when they give unto their servants food and raiment, and say, "Did not I bargain with thee for so much a year?" But if they give them no other reward than this, what do they less for their very beasts? But are not servants better than they? Doubtless they are: and however masters may put off their convictions for the present, they will find a time will come, when they shall know they ought to have given them some spiritual as well as temporal wages; and the cry of those that have mowed down their fields, will enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

4. But *Fourthly*, If neither gratitude to God, pity to children, nor a principle of common justice to servants, are sufficient to balance all objections; yet let that darling, that prevailing motive of *self-interest* turn the scale, and engage you with your respective housholds to serve the Lord.

This weighs greatly with you in other matters: be then persuaded to let it have a due and full influence on you in this: and if it has, if you have but faith as a grain of mustard-seed, how can you avoid believing, that promoting family-religion, will be the best means to promote your own temporal, as well as eternal welfare? For “Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.”

Besides, you all, doubtless, wish for honest servants, and pious children: and to have them prove otherwise, would be as great a grief to you, as it was to *Elisha* to have a treacherous *Gehazi*, or *David* to be troubled with a rebellious *Absalom*. But how can it be expected they should learn their duty, except those set over them, take care to teach it to them? Is it not as reasonable to expect you should reap where you had not sown, or gather where you had not strawed?

Did Christianity, indeed, give any countenance to children and servants to disregard their parents and masters according to the flesh, or represent their duty to them, as inconsistent with their entire obedience to their father and master who is in heaven, there might then be some pretence to neglect instructing them in the principles of such a religion. But since the precepts of this pure and undefiled religion, are all of them holy, just, and good; and the more they are taught their duty to God, the better they will perform their duties to you; methinks, to neglect the improvement of their souls, out of a dread of spending too much time in religious duties, is acting quite contrary to your own interest as well as duty.

5. *Fifthly* and *Lastly*, If neither gratitude to God, love to your children, common justice to your servants, nor even that most prevailing motive self-interest, will excite; yet let a consideration of the *terrors of the* Lord persuade you to put in practice the pious resolution in the text. Remember,

the time will come, and that perhaps very shortly, when we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; where we must give a solemn and strict account how we have had our conversation, in our respective families in this world. How will you endure to see your children and servants (who ought to be your joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ) coming out as so many swift witnesses against you; cursing the father that begot them, the womb that bare them, the paps which they have sucked, and the day they ever entered into your houses? Think you not, the damnation which men must endure for their own sins, will be sufficient, that they need load themselves with the additional guilt of being accessary to the damnation of others also? O consider this, all ye that forget to serve the Lord with your respective housholds, "lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you!"

But God forbid, brethren, that any such evil should befal you: no, rather will I hope, that you have been in some measure convinced by what has been said of the great importance of *family-religion*; and therefore are ready to cry out in the words immediately following the text, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord;" and again, verse 21, "Nay, but we will (with our several housholds) serve the Lord."

And that there may be always such a heart in you, let me exhort all governors of families, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, often to reflect on the inestimable worth of their own souls, and the infinite ransom, even the precious blood of Jesus Christ, which has been paid down for them. Remember, I beseech you to remember, that you are fallen creatures; that you are by nature lost and estranged from God; and that you can never be restored to your primitive happiness, till by being born again of the Holy Ghost, you arrive at your primitive state of purity, have the image of God

restamped upon your souls, and are thereby made meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light. Do, I say, but seriously and frequently reflect on, and act as persons that believe such important truths, and you will no more neglect your family's spiritual welfare than your own. No, the love of God, which will then be shed abroad in your hearts, will constrain you to do your utmost to preserve them; and the deep sense of God's free grace in Christ Jesus, (which you will then have) in calling you, will excite you to do your utmost to save others, especially those of your own houshold. And though, after all your pious endeavours, some may continue unreformed; yet you will have this comfortable reflection to make, that you did what you could to make your families religious: and therefore may rest assured of sitting down in the kingdom of heaven, with *Abraham*, *Joshua*, and *Cornelius*, and all the godly housholders, who in their several generations shone forth as so many lights in their respective housholds upon earth. *Amen.*

SERMON V.

Christ the best Husband: Or an earnest Invitation to Young Women to come and see Christ.

Preached to a Society of Young Women, in *Fetter-Lane*.

Psalm xlv. 10, 11.

Hearken, O Daughter, and consider, and incline thine Ear: Forget also thine own People, and thy Father's House: So shall the King greatly desire thy Beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.

THIS psalm is called the song of loves, the most pure and spiritual, the most dear and delightful loves; namely, those which are between Christ the beloved, and his church, which is his spouse; wherein is set forth, first, the Lord Jesus Christ in regard of his majesty, power, and divinity, his truth, meekness and equity: And then the spouse is set forth, in regard of her ornaments, companions, attendants and posterity; and both in regard of their comeliness and beauty. After the description of Christ, an invitation to his espousals, is given the children of men, called by the name of daughter; and

therefore, particularly applicable unto you, my dear sisters, as being the daughters of men, yet not so as excluding the sons of men.

I shall now, therefore, consider the words, as spoken to you in particular, and containing this doctrine;

That the Lord Jesus Christ doth invite the daughters of men to be his spouse; and is exceeding desirous of their beauty; who, forgetting their people and father's house, do hearken, consider and incline to his invitation, and join themselves to him in this relation.

I shall shew,

I. How Christ doth espouse himself unto the children, but, more especially, unto the daughters of men.

The Lord Jesus Christ, doth espouse himself unto the children of men, in this world, but the public solemnization of the marriage, is reserved until the last day; when his spouse shall be brought forth to him, in white robes, and a raiment of perfect righteousness, more rich and curious, my dear sisters, than any of your needle-work; and the marriage feast will be kept in his Father's house, in heaven, where they shall be received into the nearest and closest embraces of his love. The marriage knot is tied here, in which are included four things:

First, Mutual Choice.

Secondly, Mutual Affection.

Thirdly, Mutual Union.

Fourthly, Mutual Obligation.

First, My dear sisters, there is a *mutual choice*, which is not only in Christ, as Mediator, but also by Christ as the eternal Son of God, yea, God himself; notwithstanding all that the polite *Arians* and *Socinians* say to the contrary. The Lord Jesus Christ, my dear sisters, doth chuse you merely by

his free grace; it is freely of his own mercy, that he brings you into the marriage covenant: You, who have so grievously offended him, yet, the Lord Jesus Christ hath chosen you; you did not, you would not have chosen him; but when once, my dear sisters, he hath chosen you, then, and not till then, you make choice of him for your Lord and Husband.

The Lord Jesus Christ when he first comes to you, finds you full of sin and pollution; you are deformed, defiled, enslaved, poor, miserable and wretched, very despicable and loathsome, by reason of sin; and he maketh choice of you, not because of your holiness, nor of your beauty, nor of your being qualified for them; no, the Lord Jesus Christ puts those qualifications upon you, as may make you meet for his embrace; and you are drawn to make choice of this Lord Jesus Christ because he first chose you.

Secondly, In this espousal of your's, my dear sisters, there is a *mutual affection*; this doth accompany the choice. Your hearts are drawn out after Christ; your souls pant and long for him; you cannot be at rest until you are engaged to this Jesus: You are ready to cry out continually, none but Christ, none but Christ: this is the language of your hearts, if you are truly sensible of your need of him. The more acquaintance you have of this Lord Jesus, the more pleased you are with your choice, and the more your affections are drawn towards him. And where can you place your affections better than upon that Jesus who shed his blood for your sakes? Surely he deserves both your loves and affections: Go on, go on, my dear sisters, that your affections may grow stronger and stronger.

Thirdly, There is not only mutual choice, and mutual affection, but likewise *mutual Union*: And here doth the marriage lie chiefly, in this union; Christ and souls are contracted, and the knot is tied so fast, that neither men on earth, how great soever they be, nor devils in hell, though

they should combine all their wrath and rage together, still they cannot dissolve, they cannot untie it; no, my dear sisters, it is indissolvable, for the union is, by the spirit, on Christ's part, and by faith on your's: By the spirit, Christ doth lay hold on you; and by faith, you do lay hold on him; and thus the match is made; Christ becomes your's, his person, portion, and all his benefits are your's; and you become Christ's, your persons, your hearts, and all that you have is resigned up unto him; and O that they may be so more and more.

Fourthly, There is a *mutual Obligation* between Christ and his spouse. Christ obliges himself to love you here; he will not, indeed he never will leave you, he will protect you from the malice of the *Pharisees* of this generation, he will provide for you in all difficulties; he will live with you here, and at last he will take you to himself, to live with him for ever. And you are engaged to him to be loving, loyal, faithful, obedient; and you are to stick close to him as long as you live; and then you will find yourselves to be married to the best advantage, both for soul and body, for time and for eternity.

II. Christ doth Invite all of you to be his spouse.

And it is on this account that he sends forth his ministers to preach. It is this, that makes me thus come among you; that you would accept of this invitation, to which, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I do call and intreat you to take him, on his own terms. He calls all of you, my sisters, whether elder or younger, whether married or unmarried, of higher degree, or of the meanest quality, the poorest servants, yea, the rabble of this world, as the world calls you, who are willing to be espoused unto the Lord Jesus Christ. I say, the poor are as welcome to be Christ's spouse as those that are rich. He regardeth not the rich more than the poor: he chose a mean virgin,

espoused to a carpenter, to be his mother; and he chuseth and calleth all such to be his spouse; then be not discouraged at your being despised in the world; for if you are but loved by Christ, and espoused to him, it will be an over-sufficiency for all the trouble that you have met with here.

III. Those who would be espoused unto Christ, must hearken, consider, and incline to his invitation, and forget even their father's house.

Such as would be espoused unto Christ must hearken. "Hearken, O daughter." Many amongst you, my sisters, stop their ears against the calls of the gospel; they shut their ears like the deaf adder, which will not hearken unto the voice of the charmer, though he charm never so wisely. You will not hearken unto the invitations of Christ; you can hearken unto the vanities of the world, and be delighted with the espousals of the world, but never think, or are delighted with the espousals of Christ.

It was by the ear, that the temptation of sin was received by the first man, when he departed from God; and by the ear, the invitation to be Christ's spouse must be received, before the heart will be opened to receive Jesus Christ in this conjugal relation.

If you would, my dear sisters, be espoused to Christ, you must consider Christ's invitation. It is not a slight or bare hearing of Christ's invitation, which will be of any service to you, or make up the match between Christ and your souls; no, you must receive Christ in the heart; you must consider the thing itself, the advantages of it, the difference between Christ's invitations and the devil's temptations, or any of the world's proffers.

Those who would be espoused to Christ, must be inclined to accept of Christ's invitation. "Hearken, O daughter, consider and incline thine ear." This is to incline your hearts: You must consent with your wills; there must be a compliance to the motion of Christ, and you must have desires after

Christ, and then your hearts will say, ‘Lord, let us be thy spouse, and be thou our beloved.’

You must likewise forget your father’s house. “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and forget thy father’s house.” You are not here to cast off all affections unto natural relations; but you must forget all relations, so as to be ready to forego all their favour, when it standeth in competition with that of the Lord Jesus Christ; and do not let your carnal friends and relations hinder you from closing with, and espousing the Lord Jesus. I earnestly beseech you to suffer the loss of any thing, rather than to lose his favours; you must indeed forget your own people, that is, you must forget all your evil customs which you have learned in your father’s house, and forsake all your vain conversation, your reading of plays, novels, or romances; and you must keep from learning to sing the songs of the drunkard; for Christ, if you are his spouse, hath redeemed you.

Such of you, my dear sisters, as are espoused to the Lord Jesus Christ are very beautiful. I do not mean in respect of your bodies; you may have less of external comeliness than others, in respect of your bodies, but as to your souls you will exceed in beauty, not so much in the eyes of man, as in the eyes of God; such have the most beautiful image of God stamped upon them; none in the world, beside them, have the least spark of spiritual beauty. Such as are not married to Christ, are unregenerated, they are not born again, nor brought from sin unto God, which must be done before you be espoused to Christ.

And the Lord Jesus Christ desireth to see this beauty in his spouse, for he cries out, “O my dove, thou art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” He calleth his spouse his love,

being the dear object of his love; and he admireth her loveliness; he repeats it twice in one verse, “Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair.” Thus you see he describes their beauty. And then, my sisters, we have a wonderful expression of Christ to his spouse, “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.” Thus you see how pleased the Lord Jesus Christ is with his spouse; and will not you, therefore, be espoused unto the Lord Jesus? I offer Jesus Christ to all of you; if you have been never so notorious for sin, if you have been as great a harlot as *Mary Magdalen* was, when once you are espoused to Christ, you shall be forgiven. Therefore be not discouraged, at whatever slights and contempts the world may pass upon you, but come and join yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and all your sins shall be washed away in his blood; and when once you are espoused to Jesus, you are disjoined from sin, you are born again. You are now, as it were, espoused unto sin; sin is your husband, and you are too fond of it, but when once you are married to Christ, when you are born again, then you may be said to die unto sin; but till then, sin liveth in your affections; therefore, my sisters, give sin its death-wound in your hearts; you have been called by the word time after time, and it has had no effect upon you; but when you are espoused unto the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will be brought to him by his Spirit: You will then lay hold on him by faith, his Spirit will draw you unto himself; he will make you to be willing in the day of his power; he will give you faith in him. Faith is the hand of the soul which layeth hold on Christ; therefore, do not rest contented till you have this grace of faith wrought in you with power; do not be contented till you have received the Lord Jesus Christ.

Embrace Christ in the arms of your dearest love; then you love the Lord Jesus Christ with sincerity, when you love and esteem him before father, mother, or all the delights and pleasures of this life; but if you do delight in any thing that this world can produce, more than in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have no true love to him.

If you are espoused to Christ, you have acquaintance and converse with him; you will endeavour to promote his interest, and advance his name in the world; when others are going to the polite and fashionable diversions of life, you will be labouring to bring honour to the Lord Jesus Christ; you will commend your beloved above all other beloveds, and endeavour to bring others into love to him. Can you, my dear sisters, who are now assembled to worship God, shew such evidence of your espousals unto the Lord Jesus Christ? O! how joyful, how comfortable an estate is this! Surely this is a marriage worth seeking after; this is the only desirable marriage, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the only lover that is worth seeking after.

Now, my dear sisters, I shall speak a few words to those of you who have not yet espoused yourselves to the Lord Jesus. It is a great sin, and surely you highly affront the Lord that bought you. It is likewise your folly to refuse and neglect the gracious proffers of being the spouse of Christ; hereby you forfeit all that love which he would bestow upon you; hereby you chuse rags before robes, dross before gold, pebbles before jewels, guilt before a pardon, wounds before healing, defilement before cleansing, deformity before comeliness, trouble before peace, slavery before liberty, the service of the devil before the service of Christ. Hereby you chuse dishonour before a crown, death before life, hell before heaven, eternal misery and torment before everlasting joy and glory. And need there a

farther evidence of your folly and madness, in refusing and neglecting Christ to be your spouse.

My dear sisters, I should exceed the limits of your time, should I particularize all the advantages which you would obtain by being espoused to the Lord Jesus. This is your wisdom; they are foolish virgins who refuse; but you are the wise virgins who have accepted of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have disposed of yourselves to him; you have made the wisest choice; and however the blind world may deem you fools, and despise you as being methodically mad, yet you are wise in the esteem of God, and will, one day, appear so in the esteem of them that now despise you. It is your glory that you are espoused unto the Lord Jesus; and therefore glory in your espousal; glory not in yourselves, but in the Lord who hath thus freely and graciously bestowed these favours upon you. It is your safety to be espoused unto the Lord Jesus Christ, he will protect and defend you even from sin and satan, and eternal ruin; and therefore thus far you are safe; he hath a regard for you in times of danger from men, and these times of danger seem to be hastening; it is now arising as a black cloud no bigger than a man's hand, and by and by it will overspread the heavens, and when it is full it will burst; but if you are espoused to Christ, you are safe.

Now, my dear sisters, I shall conclude with an earnest exhortation to high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to be espoused unto Christ.

Let me speak unto you, young women, who are not yet espoused unto Christ, in an especial manner. It may be to satisfy your curiosity, has brought many of you here; though, perhaps, this may be the time when you shall be brought home to embrace the Lord Jesus, and be espoused to him. And O, that I may persuade you, by his Spirit, to espouse yourselves unto the Lord of life.

And if you are but brought to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, I shall attain my end, and then both you and I shall rejoice that I preached this sermon to you.

Come virgins, will you give me leave to be a suitor unto you, not in my own name, but in the name of the Lord? O! that I may prevail with you for your affections, and persuade you to give them unto Christ! May I be instrumental of bringing your souls to Christ! May I be instrumental to join you and Christ together this day!

Be not coy, as some of you possibly are in other loves: modesty and the virgin blush may very well become you, when proposals of another kind are made unto you; but here coyness is folly, and backwardness to accept of this motion, is shame: you have ten thousand times more reason to blush at the refusal of Christ for your beloved, than at the acceptance; when otherwise the devil and sin would ravish your virgin affections. Never had you a better motion made to you; never was such a match proffered to you as this, of being matched and espoused unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider who the Lord Jesus is, whom you are invited to espouse yourselves unto; he is the best husband; there is none comparable to Jesus Christ.

Do you desire one that is great? He is of the highest dignity, he is the glory of heaven, the darling of eternity, admired by angels, dreaded by devils, and adored by saints. For you to be espoused to so great a king, what honour will you have by this espousal?

Do you desire one that is rich? None is comparable to Christ, the fulness of the earth belongs to him. If you be espoused to Christ, you shall share in his unsearchable riches; you shall receive of his fulness, even grace for

grace here, and you shall hereafter be admitted to glory, and shall live with this Jesus to all eternity.

Do you desire one that is wise? There is none comparable to Christ for wisdom. His knowledge is infinite, and his wisdom is correspondent thereto. And if you are espoused to Christ, he will guide and counsel you, and make you wise unto salvation.

Do you desire one that is potent, who may defend you against your enemies, and all the insults and reproaches of the Pharisees of this generation? There is none that can equal Christ in power; for the Lord Jesus Christ hath all power.

Do you desire one that is good? There is none like unto Christ in this regard; others may have some goodness, but it is imperfect; Christ's goodness is compleat and perfect, he is full of goodness, and in him dwelleth no evil.

Do you desire one that is beautiful? His eyes are most sparkling, his looks and glances of love are ravishing, his smiles are most delightful and refreshing unto the soul: Christ is the most lovely person of all others in the world.

Do you desire one that can love you? None can love you like Christ: His love, my dear sisters, is incomprehensible; his love passeth all other loves: The love of the Lord Jesus is first, without beginning; his love is free without any motive; his love is great without any measure; his love is constant without any change, and his love is everlasting.

It was the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, my dear sisters, which brought him down from heaven; and which veiled his divinity in a human soul and body; for he is God over all blessed for ever: It was love that made him subject to hunger, thirst and sorrow; he was humbled, even unto death for

you; for you who are espoused to him, he underwent the painful, shameful and ignominious death of the cross: and can you, my sisters, hear this, and not be concerned to think that the blessed Jesus underwent all this for such sinful creatures as you and I are? And when out of love he had finished the redemption on earth, as to what was needful for satisfaction; it was his love that carried him back to heaven, where he was before, that he might make application of what he had purchased, that there he might make intercession for those whom he had redeemed, and prepare a place for them, even glorious mansions with himself, in the house not made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens. It is out of love that he sendeth such tokens to his people from heaven to earth, which he conveyeth through his ordinances, by his Spirit unto them. Surely then none is so deserving as the Lord Jesus Christ for you to espouse yourselves unto: if you be espoused unto Christ he is your's, all that he is, all that he hath; you shall have his heart, and share in the choicest expressions of his dearest love.

The Lord Jesus Christ, my dear sisters, doth beseech you to be his spouse. We ministers have a commission from the Lord Jesus Christ to invite you, in his name, unto this very thing; and Christ's invitations are real; general; frequent; earnest; free.

Christ's invitations of you, to be his spouse, are *real*; and as the thing is real, so you, my dear sisters, are really invited unto it. The Lord doth not mock and dissemble with you, as some pretending lovers, who dissemble love unto virgins, until they have gained their affections, and then falsely and basely relinquish them, never really intending either to espouse, or marry them: but the Lord doth really intend the thing, in his invitations of you; he never cast off any whose consent and affections he had gained. Again,

Christ's invitations of you, my dear sisters, are *general*. All of you are invited, none of you are excluded; all sorts of sinners are invited; the most vile and abominable sinners, the most notorious transgressors are invited to be Christ's spouse, and shall be as welcome as any unto the embraces of his love.

Christ's invitations of you are *frequent*: Jesus Christ calls on you frequently; he hath waited on you time after time, one year after another; and he doth now invite you, by me this day, to come unto Him. Do not slight this invitation, but receive it with joy and thankfulness. Come, I beseech you, to this Jesus, who thus invites you to be his spouse. Again,

Christ's invitations to be his spouse are *earnest*; he doth call upon you, and not only call, but call earnestly too; yea, he useth many arguments with you: he will press you to come unto him; he is loth to take any denial from you: he knocks, and knocks hard at the door of your hearts for entertainment; and surely you will not deny the Lord of life and glory who died for you, and gave himself for you: O my dear sisters, let this be the evening of your espousals to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He invites you *freely* to be his spouse, for all his invitations are free; he doth not expect a portion with you, as worldly lovers do; He wants nothing of you: nay, you must have nothing, if you be espoused unto the Lord Jesus Christ. If you be poor, miserable, blind, naked, Jesus Christ will supply all these defects of his own free mercy; he will fill and supply you with all things out of his treasury; he will make you meet for himself; he will prepare you to live with him for ever.

Consider, if you be once espoused unto Christ, if once joined in this relation, you shall never be separated from him; neither men nor devils shall be able to separate you: none, none, shall disjoin you; and when death doth

break all other bonds, it shall not break the conjugal bond between you and Christ, but bring you unto the most full and everlasting possession of your beloved.

And what do you now say, young women? shall I have a grant for my master, or be sent away with a repulse and refusal; no, I cannot carry such a message to my master; I hope better things of you, my sisters, and things which accompany salvation: methinks by this time ye should begin to have a mind unto Jesus Christ; you look as if you did desire; you hearken as if you would consent. What do you say? Shall the match be made up this evening between Christ and your souls? O that I may be instrumental in joining your hands, or rather your hearts together: O that I may be instrumental to tie that knot, which never can be unloosed.

Some marry in haste, and repent at leisure; but if you were once espoused unto Jesus Christ, you would never repent; nothing would grieve you, but that you were not joined to him sooner; and you would not be disjoined again for all the world.

Shall this be the day of your espousals? Some of you have stayed a long time; and will you defer any longer? If you will not now, perhaps you may never have another opportunity; this may be the last time of asking; and therefore it is dangerous to refuse: some of you are very young, too young for other espousals; but none of you, my dear sisters, are too young to be espoused unto the Lord Jesus Christ: in other espousals, you must have the consent of your parents; but in this you are at your own disposal; you may give, and ought to match yourselves to Christ, whether parents do consent or not.

But if any of you should ask, what you must do that you may be espoused unto Christ? You must be sensible of your need of being espoused to him;

and untill you are sensible of your need of the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot be espoused to him: You must have desires after this Jesus, and seek unto him for an interest in him; you must cry nightly unto him to espouse you to himself: put off the filthiness of sin and all its defilements; and then, my sisters, put on the white raiment, and clean garments, which Christ hath provided for you, the robes of his righteousness; in these garments you shall be beautiful; and in these garments you shall be accepted: you must have the wedding garment on; you must put off all your own good works, for they will be but a means to keep you from Christ; no, you must come as not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but you must have the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, come unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will give it to you; he will not send you away without it. Receive him upon his own terms, and he is your's for ever: O devote yourselves to him, soul and body, and all, to be his for ever; and Christ will be your's, and then happy, happy you, that ever you were born! But if any of you die before this espousal unto the Lord Jesus Christ, then woe, woe, unto you, that ever you had a being in life; but if you go to Christ you shall be espoused unto the Lord Jesus: though your sins have been never so great, yea, the blood of Christ will cleanse you from them; the marriage covenant between Christ and your souls will dissolve all your sins; you will then be weary of your old ways, for all things will become new in your souls.

Now, my dear Sisters, I shall conclude by just speaking a word or two to those of you, who are already espoused unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

O admire, admire the rich and free grace, which hath brought you to this relation: Is not this an instance of the greatest of love, that you should be the spouse of the Lord Jesus Christ? You that had no beauty, you that had no comeliness, that was full of sin, that He should embrace such as you and I

are; that we should be taken into the embrace of this Lord Jesus. O infinite condescending kindness! O amazing love! Reverence, reverence, I beseech you, this Lord Jesus Christ.

He is your Lord, and you must reverence him, love and be faithful unto him, be subject to him, and careful to please him in every thing; endeavour to keep up a daily communion with him; look, long and prepare for Christ's second appearance, when the nuptials between you shall be solemnized, and you live with him in mansions of everlasting joys, where you shall love and live with this king of glory for ever and ever.

I know not how to conclude; methinks I could speak to you till midnight, if it would bring you unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and make you be espoused to him, for indeed, that will be the espousal which will turn to the greatest advantage, as you will find by experience, if you will but make the trial; and that you may do so, my prayers and my constant endeavours shall be used.

I will, my dear sisters, spend and be spent for you, and by the assistance of God, will persevere in this that I have begun; and as many of you may have opportunity some evening in the week, without breaking in on the business of life; I shall therefore, my sisters, either be here, or where you shall be publicly acquainted with: I will not mind being reproached or despised: the men of this world may use what language they please; they may say I am a Methodist. Indeed, my sisters, I am resolved, by the grace of God, to use all methods I can, to pluck you from Satan, that you may be as brands plucked from the burning fire: this shall be my method, which I hope will be the means of effectually saving your precious and immortal souls.

And if I am the instrument of this, I shall rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice in spight of what men, or devils, can say or do to the contrary: and may the Lord Jesus Christ direct, and assist me at all times, to act what will be most for his glory, and the welfare of your souls: and may you all say a hearty Amen thereto.

"Now the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever, assist and watch over you, keep you from all evil and sin here, and present you before his Father faultless at the great day of account! To this Lord Jesus Christ, the Father, and the blessed Spirit, three persons and but one eternal and invisible God, be ascribed all honour, power, glory, might, majesty and dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever more. Amen, Amen."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all, to comfort under, and deliver you from tribulation; to preserve you to your respective places of abode; and when there, to keep you in his fear, that you may live to his glory; that to live may be Christ's, and to die be your eternal gain; so that you may live with him through eternal ages, and sing Hallelujahs to him for ever. Amen."

SERMON VI.

Britain's Mercies, and *Britain*'s Duty.

Preached at *Philadelphia*, on *Sunday, August 24, 1746*. and occasioned by the Suppression of the late unnatural Rebellion.

Psalm cv. 45.

That they might observe his Statutes and keep his Laws.

MEN, brethren, and fathers, and all ye to whom I am about to preach the kingdom of God, I suppose you need not be informed, that being indispensibly obliged to be absent on your late thanksgiving-day, I could not shew my obedience to the governor's proclamation, as my own inclination led me, or as might justly be expected from, and demanded of me. But as the occasion of that day's thanksgiving is yet, and I trust ever will be, fresh in our memory, I cannot think that a discourse on that subject can even now be altogether unseasonable. I take it for granted, further, that you need not be informed, that among the various motives which are generally urged to enforce obedience to the divine commands, that of love is the most powerful and cogent. The terrors of the law may affright and

awe, but love dissolves and melts the heart. “The love of Christ,” says the great apostle of the *Gentiles*, “constraineth us.” Nay, love is so absolutely necessary for those that name the name of Christ, that without it, their obedience cannot truly be stiled evangelical, or be acceptable in the sight of God. “Although, (says the apostle) I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burnt, and have not charity,” (i. e. unless unfeigned love to God, and to mankind for his great name’s sake, be the principle of such actions, howsoever it may benefit others) “it profiteth me nothing.” This is the constant language of the lively oracles of God. And, from them it is equally plain, that nothing has a greater tendency to beget and excite such an obediential love in us, than a serious and frequent consideration of the manifold mercies we receive time after time from the hands of our heavenly Father. The royal psalmist, who had the honour of being stiled, “the man after God’s own heart,” had an abundant experience of this. Hence it is, that whilst he is musing on the divine goodness, the fire of divine love kindles in his soul; and, out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth speaketh such grateful and extatic language as this. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his mercies? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” And why? “who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.” And when the same holy man of God had a mind to stir up the people of the *Jews* to set about a national reformation, as the most weighty and prevailing argument he could make use of for that purpose, he lays before them, as it were, in a draught, many national mercies, and distinguishing deliverances, which have been conferred upon and wrought out for them, by the most high God. The psalm to which the words of our text belong, is a pregnant

proof of this; it being a kind of epitome or compendium of the whole *Jewish* history: at least it contains an enumeration of many signal and extraordinary blessings the *Israelites* had received from God, and also the improvement they were in duty bound to make of them, "Observe his statutes and keep his laws."

To run through all the particulars of the psalm, or draw a parallel (which might with great ease and justice be done) between God's dealings with us and the *Israelites* of old: To enumerate all the national mercies bestowed upon, and remarkable deliverances wrought out for the kingdoms of *Great-Britain* and *Ireland*, from the infant state of *William* the *Norman* to their present manhood, and more than *Augustan* maturity, under the auspicious reign of our rightful Sovereign King *George* the second; howsoever pleasing and profitable it might be at any other time, would, at this juncture, prove, if not an irksome, yet an unreasonable undertaking.

The occasion of the late solemnity, I mean the suppression of a most horrid and unnatural rebellion, will afford more than sufficient matter for a discourse of this nature, and furnish us with abundant motives to love and obey that glorious *Jehovah*, who giveth salvation unto kings, and delivers his people from the hurtful sword.

Need I make an apology, before this auditory, if, in order to see the greatness of our late deliverance, I should remind you of the many unspeakable blessings which we have for a course of years enjoyed, during the reign of his present Majesty, and the gentle, mild administration under which we live? Without justly incurring the censure of giving flattering titles, I believe all who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and are but a little acquainted with our public affairs, must acknowledge, that we have one of the best of Kings. It is now above nineteen years since he began to reign

over us. And yet, was he seated on a royal throne, and were all his subjects placed before him, was he to address them as *Samuel* once addressed the *Israelites*, "Behold here I am, old and grey-headed, witness against me before the Lord, whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed?" They must, if they would do him justice, make the same answer as was given to *Samuel*, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us." What *Tertullus*, by way of flattery, said to *Felix*, may with the strictest justice be applied to our sovereign, "By thee we enjoy great quietness, and very worthy deeds have been done unto our nation by thy providence." He has been indeed *Pater Patriæ*, a father to our country, and though old and grey-headed, has jeoparded his precious life for us in the high places of the field. Nor has he less deserved the great and glorious title, which the Lord promises, that kings should sustain in the latter days, I mean, "a nursing father of the church." For not only the Church of *England*, as by law established, but all denominations of Christians whatsoever, have enjoyed their religious as well as civil liberties. As there has been no authorized oppression in the state, so there has been no publicly allowed persecution in the church. We breathe indeed in free air; as free (if not freer) both as to temporals and spirituals, as any nation under heaven. Nor is the prospect likely to terminate in his majesty's death, which I pray God to defer. Our princesses are disposed of to protestant powers. And we have great reason to be assured, that the present heir apparent, and his consort, are like minded with their royal father. And I cannot help thinking, that it is a peculiar blessing vouchsafed us by the King of kings, that his present Majesty has been continued so long among us. For now, his immediate successor (though his present situation obliges him, as it were, to lie dormant) has great and

glorious opportunities, which we have reason to think he daily improves, of observing and weighing the national affairs, considering the various steps and turns of government, and consequently of laying in a large fund of experience, to make him a wise and great prince, if ever God should call him to sway the *British* sceptre. Happy art thou, O *England*! Happy art thou, O *America*, who on every side art thus highly favoured!

But, alas! how soon would this happy scene have shifted, and a melancholy gloomy prospect have succeeded in its room, had the rebels gained their point, and a popish abjured pretender been forced upon the *British* throne! For, supposing his birth not to be spurious, (as we have great reason to think it really was) what could we expect from one, descended from a father, who, when Duke of *York*, put all *Scotland* into confusion; and afterwards, when crowned King of *England*, for his arbitrary and tyrannical government, both in church and state, was justly obliged to abdicate the throne, by the assertors of *British* liberty? Or, supposing the horrid plot, first hatched in hell, and afterwards nursed at *Rome*, had taken place; supposing, I say, the old Pretender should have obtained the triple crown, and have transferred his pretended title (as it is reported he has done) to his eldest son, what was all this for, but that, by being advanced to the popedom, he might rule both son and subjects with less controul, and by their united interest, keep the three kingdoms of *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*, in greater vassallage to the see of *Rome*? Ever since this unnatural rebellion broke out, I have looked upon the young Pretender as the phaeton of the present age. He is ambitiously and presumptuously aiming to seat himself in the throne of our rightful sovereign King *George*, which he is no more capable of keeping, than *Phaeton* was to guide the chariot of the sun; and had he succeeded in his attempt, like him, would only have set the

world on fire. It is true, to do him justice, he has deserved well of the Church of *Rome*, and, in all probability, will hereafter be canonized amongst the noble order of their fictitious saints. But, with what an iron rod we might expect to have been bruised, had his troops been victorious, may easily be gathered from those cruel orders said to be found in the pockets of some of his officers, "Give no quarters to the Elector's troops." Add to this, that there was great reason to suspect, that, upon the first news of the success of the rebels, a general massacre was intended. So that if the Lord had not been on our side, *Great Britain*, not to say *America*, would, in a few weeks or months, have been an *Aceldama*, a field of blood.

Besides, was a *Popish* Pretender to rule over us, instead of being represented by a free parliament, and governed by laws made by their consent, as we now are; we should shortly have had only the shadow of one, and it may be, no parliament at all. This is the native product of a *Popish* government, and what the unhappy family, from which this young adventurer pretends he descended, has always aimed at. Arbitrary principles he has sucked in with his mother's milk, and if he had been so honest, instead of that immature motto upon his standard, *Tandem triumphans*, only to have put, *Stet pro ratione Voluntas*, he had given us a short, but true portrait of the nature of his intended, but blessed be God, now defeated reign. And why should I mention, that the sinking of the national debt, or rending away the funded property of the people, and the dissolution of the present happy union between the two kingdoms, would have been the immediate consequences of his success, as he himself declares in his second manifesto, dated from *Holy-rood House*? These are evils, and great ones too; but then they are only evils of a temporary nature. They chiefly concern the body, and must necessarily terminate in the grave. But, alas! what an

inundation of spiritual mischiefs, would soon have overflowed the Church, and what unspeakable danger should we and our posterity have been reduced to in respect to our better parts, our precious and immortal souls? How soon would whole swarms of monks, dominicans and friars, like so many locusts, have overspread and plagued the nation; with what winged speed would foreign titular bishops have posted over, in order to take possession of their respective sees? How quickly would our universities have been filled with youths who have been sent abroad by their *Popish* parents, in order to drink in all the superstitions of the church of *Rome*? What a speedy period would have been put to societies of all kinds, for promoting Christian knowledge, and propagating the gospel in foreign parts? How soon would our pulpits have every where been filled with these old antichristian doctrines, free-will, meriting by works, transubstantiation, purgatory, works of supererogation, passive-obedience, non-resistance, and all the other abominations of the whore of *Babylon*? How soon would our protestant charity schools in *England*, *Scotland* and *Ireland*, have been pulled down, our Bibles forcibly taken from us, and ignorance every where set up as the mother of devotion? How soon should we have been deprived of that invaluable blessing, liberty of conscience, and been obliged to commence (what they falsely call) catholicks, or submit to all the tortures which a bigoted zeal, guided by the most cruel principles, could possibly invent? How soon would that mother of harlots have made herself once more drunk with the blood of the saints? And the whole tribe even of free-thinkers themselves, been brought to this dilemma, either to die martyrs for, (although I never yet heard of one that did so) or, contrary to all their most avowed principles, renounce their great *Diana*, unassisted, unenlightened reason? But I must have done, lest while I am speaking against antichrist, I

should unawares fall myself, and lead my hearers into an antichristian spirit. True and undefiled religion will regulate our zeal, and teach us to treat even the man of sin with no harsher language than that which the angel gave to his grand employer Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee."

Glory be to God's great name! the Lord has rebuked him; and that too at a time when we had little reason to expect such a blessing at God's hands. My dear hearers, neither the present frame of my heart, nor the occasion of your late solemn meeting, lead me to give you a detail of our public vices. Though, alas! they are so many, so notorious, and withal of such a crimson-dye, that a gospel minister would not be altogether inexcusable, was he, even on such a joyful occasion, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, to shew the British nation their transgression, and the people of *America* their sin. However, though I would not cast a dismal shade upon the pleasing picture the cause of our late rejoicings set before us; yet thus much may, and ought to be said, that as God has not dealt so bountifully with any people as with us, so no nation under heaven has dealt more ungratefully with Him. We have been like *Capernaum*, lifted up to heaven in privileges, and for the abuse of them, like her, have deserved to be thrust down into hell. How well soever it may be with us, in respect to our civil and ecclesiastical constitution, yet in regard to our morals, *Isaiah*'s description of the *Jewish* polity is too applicable, "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the crown of the head to the sole of our feet, we are full of wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores." We have, *Jeshurun*-like, waxed fat and kicked. We have played the harlot against God, both in regard to principles and practices. "Our gold is become dim, and our fine gold changed." We have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. Nay, Christ has been wounded in the house of his friends. And every thing long

ago seemed to threaten an immediate storm. But, O the long-suffering and goodness of God to us-ward! When all things seemed ripe for destruction, and matters were come to such a crisis, that God's praying people began to think, that though *Noah*, *Daniel* and *Job*, were living, they would only deliver their own souls; yet then in the midst of judgment the Most High remembered mercy, and when a popish enemy was breaking in upon us like a flood, the Lord himself graciously lifted up a standard.

This to me does not seem to be one of the most unfavourable circumstances which have attended this mighty deliverance; nor do I think you will look upon it as a circumstance altogether unworthy your observation. Had this cockatrice indeed been crushed in the egg, and the young Pretender driven back upon his first arrival, it would undoubtedly have been a great blessing. But not so great as that for which you lately assembled to give God thanks: for then his Majesty would not have had so good an opportunity of knowing his enemies, or trying his friends. The *British* subjects would in a manner have lost the fairest occasion that ever offered to express their loyalty and gratitude to the rightful sovereign. *France* would not have been so greatly humbled; nor such an effectual stop have been put, as we trust there now is, to any such further *Popish* plot, to rob us of all that is near and dear to us. "Out of the eater therefore hath come forth meat, and out of the strong hath come forth sweetness." The Pretender's eldest son is suffered not only to land in the *North-West Highlands* in *Scotland*, but in a little while he becomes a great band. This for a time is not believed, but treated as a thing altogether incredible. The friends of the government in those parts, not for want of loyalty, but of sufficient authority to take up arms, could not resist him. He is permitted to pass on with his terrible banditti, and, like the comet that was lately seen,

spreads his baleful influences all around him. He is likewise permitted to gain a short-liv'd triumph by a victory over a body of our troops at *Preston-Pans*, and to take a temporary possession of the metropolis of *Scotland*. Of this he makes his boast, and informs the public, that "Providence had hitherto favoured him with wonderful success, led him in the way to victory, and to the capital of the antient kingdom, though he came without foreign aid." Nay, he is further permitted to press into the very heart of *England*. But now the Almighty interposes. Hitherto he was to go, and no further. Here were his malicious designs to be staid. His troops of a sudden are driven back. Away they post to the *Highlands*, and there they are suffered not only to increase, but also to collect themselves into a large body, that having, as it were, what *Caligula* once wished *Rome* had, but one neck, they might be cut off with one blow.

The time, manner, and instrument of this victory, deserves our notice. It was on a general fast-day, when the clergy and good people of *Scotland* were lamenting the disloyalty of their perfidious countrymen, and, like *Moses*, lifting up their hands, that *Amalek* might not prevail. The victory was total and decisive. Little blood was spilt on the side of the Royalists. And, to crown all, Duke *William*, his Majesty's youngest son, has the honour of first driving back, and then defeating the rebel-army. A prince, who in his infancy and youth, gave early proofs of an uncommon bravery and nobleness of mind; a prince, whose courage has increased with his years. Who returned wounded from the battle of *Dettingen*, behaved with surprizing bravery at *Fontenoy*, and now, by a conduct and magnanimity becoming the high office he sustains, like his glorious predecessor the Prince of *Orange*, has delivered three kingdoms from the dread of popish cruelty, and arbitrary power. What renders it still more remarkable is, The

day on which his Highness gained this victory, was the day after his birth-day, when he was entering on the 26th year of his age; and when *Sullivan*, one of the Pretender's privy-council, like another *Ahitophel*, advised the rebels to give our soldiers battle, presuming they were surfeited and over-charged with their yesterday's rejoicings, and consequently unfit to make any great stand against them. But, glory be to God, who catches the wise in their own craftiness! his counsel, like *Ahitophel*'s, proves abortive. Both General and soldiers were prepared to meet them. "God taught their hands to war, and their fingers to fight," and brought the Duke, after a deserved slaughter of some thousands of the rebels, with most of his brave soldiers, victorious from the field.

If we then take a distinct view of this notable transaction, and trace it in all the particular circumstances that have attended it, I believe we must with one heart and voice confess, that if it be a mercy for a state to be delivered from a worse than a *Catiline*'s conspiracy, or a church to be rescued from a hotter than a *Dioclesian* persecution; if it be a mercy to be delivered from a religion that turns plough-shares into swords, and pruning-hooks into spears, and makes it meritorious to shed protestant blood; if it be a mercy to have all our present invaluable privileges, both in church and state, secured to us more than ever; if it be a mercy to have these great things done for us, at a season, when for our crying sins, both church and state justly deserved to be overturned; and if it be a mercy to have all this brought about for us, under God, by one of the blood-royal, a prince acting with an experience far above his years; if any, or all of these are mercies, then have you lately commemorated one of the greatest mercies that ever the glorious God vouchsafed to the *British* nation.

And shall we not rejoice and give thanks? Should we refuse, would not the stones cry out against us? Rejoice then we may and ought: but, O let our rejoicing be in the Lord, and run in a religious channel. This, we find, has been the practice of God's people in all ages. When he was pleased, with a mighty hand, and out-stretched arm, to lead the *Israelites* through the *Red-Sea*, as on dry ground, "Then sang *Moses* and the children of *Israel*; and *Miriam* the prophetess, the sister of *Aaron*, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her. And *Miriam* answered them, Sing ye to the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously." When God subdued *Jabin*, the King of *Canaan*, before the children of *Israel*, "then sang *Deborah* and *Barak* on that day, saying, 'Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of *Israel*.'" When the ark was brought back out of the hands of the *Philistines*, *David*, though a king, danced before it. And, to mention but one instance more, which may serve as a general directory to us on this and such-like occasions: when the great Head of the church had rescued his people from the general massacre intended to be executed upon them by a cruel and ambitious *Haman*, "*Mordecai* sent letters unto all the *Jews* that were in all the provinces of the King *Ahasuerus* both nigh and far, to establish among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month *Adar*, and the fifteenth day of the same yearly, as the days wherein the *Jews* rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow unto joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor." And why should we not go and do likewise?

And shall we not also, on such an occasion, express our gratitude to, and make honourable mention of, those worthies who have signalized

themselves, and been ready to sacrifice both lives and fortunes at this critical juncture?

This would be to act the part of those ungrateful *Israelites*, who are branded in the book of God, for not shewing kindness to the house of "*Jerub-Baal*, namely *Gideon*, according to all the goodness which he shewed unto *Israel*." Even a *Pharaoh* could prefer a deserving *Joseph*, *Ahasuerus* a *Mordecai*, and *Nebuchadnezzar* a *Daniel*, when made instruments of signal service to themselves and people. "My heart, says *Deborah*, is towards (*i. e.* I have a particular veneration and regard for) the Governors of *Israel* that offered themselves willingly. And blessed above women shall *Jael* the wife of *Heber* the *Kenite* be; for she put her hand to the nail, and her right-hand to the workman's hammer, and with the hammer she smote *Sisera*, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples." And shall we not say, "Blessed above men let his Royal Highness the Duke of *Cumberland* be; for through his instrumentality, the great and glorious Jehovah hath brought mighty things to pass?" Should not our hearts be towards the worthy Archbishop of *York*, the Royal Hunters, and those other *English* heroes who offered themselves so willingly? Let the names of *Blakeney*, *Bland*, and *Rea*, and all thole who waxed valiant in fight on this important occasion, live for ever in the *British* annals. And let the name of that great, that incomparable brave soldier of the King, and a good soldier of Jesus Christ, Colonel *Gardiner*, (excuse me if I here drop a tear: he was my intimate friend) let his name, I say, be had in everlasting remembrance.

But, after all, is there not an infinitely greater debt of gratitude and praise due from us, on this occasion, to Him that is higher than the highest, even the King of kings and Lord of Lords, the blessed and only Potentate? Is it

not his arm, his strong and mighty arm, (what instruments soever may have been made use of) that hath brought us this salvation? And may I not therefore address you, in the exulting language of the beginning of this psalm, from which we have taken our text? “O give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him; sing psalms unto him; talk ye of all his wondrous works; glory ye in his holy name; remember his marvellous work which he hath done.”

But shall we put off our good and gracious benefactor with mere lip-service? God forbid. Your worthy Governor has honoured God in his late excellent proclamation, and God will honour him. But shall our thanks terminate with the day? No, in no wise. Our text reminds us of a more noble sacrifice, and points out to us the great end the Almighty Jehovah proposes, in bestowing such signal favours upon a people, “That they should observe his statutes, and keep his laws.”

This is the return we are all taught to pray, that we may make to the Most High God, the Father of mercies, in the daily office of our church, “That our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days.” O that these words were the real language of all that use them! O that there were in us such a mind! How soon would our enemies then flee before us? And God, even our own God, would yet give us more abundant blessings!

And why should not we “observe God’s statutes, and keep his laws?” Dare we say, that any of his commands are grievous? Is not Christ’s yoke, to a renewed soul, as far as renewed, easy; and his burden comparatively light? May I not appeal to the most refined reasoner, whether the religion of Jesus Christ be not a social religion? Whether the Moral Law, as explained

by the Lord Jesus in the gospel, has not a natural tendency to promote the present good and happiness of a whole commonwealth, supposing they were obedient to them, as well as the happiness of every individual? From whence come wars and fighting amongst us? From what fountain do all those evils, which the present and past ages have groaned under, flow, but from a neglect of the laws and statutes of our great and all-wise law-giver Jesus of *Nazareth*? Tell me, ye men of letters, whether *Lycurgus* or *Solon*, *Pythagoras* or *Plato*, *Aristotle*, *Seneca*, *Cicero*, or all the antient lawgivers and heathen moralists; put them all together, ever published a system of ethics, any way worthy to be compared with the glorious system laid down in that much despised book, (to use Sir *Richard Steel*'s expression) emphatically called, the Scriptures? Is not the divine image and superscription written upon every precept of the gospel? Do they not shine with a native intrinsic lustre? And, though many things in them are above, yet, is there any thing contrary to the strictest laws of right reason? Is not Jesus Christ, in scripture, stiled the Word, the Logos, the Reason? And is not his service a reasonable service? What if there be mysteries in his religion? Are they not without all controversy great and glorious? Are they not mysteries of godliness, and worthy of that God who reveals them? Nay, is it not the greatest mystery, that men, who pretend to reason, and call themselves philosophers, who search into the *arcana naturæ*, and consequently find a mystery in every blade of grass, should yet be so irrational as to decry all mysteries in religion? Where is the scribe? where is the wise? where is the disputer against the Christian revelation? Does not every thing without and within us, conspire to prove its divine original? And would not self-interest, if there was no other motive, excite us to observe God's statutes, and keep his laws?

Besides, considered as a protestant people, do we not lie under the greatest obligations of any nation under heaven, to pay a chearful, unanimous, universal, persevering obedience to the divine commands.

The wonderful and surprising manner of God's bringing about a reformation, in the reign of King *Henry the Eighth*; his carrying it on in the blessed reign of King *Edward the Sixth*; his delivering us out of the bloody hands of Queen *Mary*, and destroying the *Spanish* invincible armada, under her immediate protestant successor Queen *Elizabeth*; his discovery of the popish plot under King *James*; the glorious revolution by King *William*; and, to come nearer to our own times, his driving away four thousand five hundred *Spaniards*, from a weak (though important) frontier colony, when they had, in a manner, actually taken possession of it; his giving us *Louisbourg*, one of the strongest fortresses of our enemies, contrary to all human probability, but the other day, into our hands: these, I say, with the victory which you have lately been commemorating, are such national mercies, not to mention any more, as will render us utterly inexcusable, if they do not produce a national reformation, and incite us all, with one heart, to keep God's statutes, and observe his laws.

Need I remind you further, in order to excite in you a greater diligence to comply with the intent of the text, that though the storm, in a great measure, is abated by his Royal Highness's late success, yet we dare not say, it is altogether blown over?

The clouds may again return after the rain; and the few surviving rebels (which I pray God avert) may yet be suffered to make head against us. We are still engaged in a bloody, and, in all probability, a tedious war, with two of the most inveterate enemies to the interests of *Great-Britain*. And, though I cannot help thinking, that their present intentions are so iniquitous,

their conduit so perfidious, and their schemes so directly derogatory to the honour of the Most High God, that he will certainly humble them in the end, yet, as all things in this life happen alike to all, they may for a time, be dreadful instruments of scourging us. If not, God has other arrows in his quiver to smite us with, besides the *French* King, his Catholick Majesty, or an abjured Pretender. Not only the sword, but plague, pestilence, and famine, are under the divine command. Who knows but he may say to them all, "Pass through these lands?" A fatal murrain has lately swept away abundance of cattle at home and abroad. A like epidemical disease may have a commission to seize our persons as well as our beasts. Thus God dealt with the *Egyptians*: who dare say, he will not deal so with us? Has he not already given some symptoms of it? What great numbers upon the continent have been lately taken off by the bloody-flux, small-pox, and yellow-fever? Who can tell what further judgments are yet in store? However, this is certain, the rod is yet hanging over us: and I believe it will be granted on all sides, that if such various dispensations of mercy and judgment do not teach the inhabitants of any land to learn righteousness, they will only ripen them for a greater ruin. Give me leave, therefore, to dismiss you at this time with that solemn awful warning and exhortation, with which the venerable *Samuel*, on a public occasion, took leave of the people of *Israel*: "Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, [I will not say as the Prophet did, You shall be consumed; but] ye know not but you may provoke the Lord Almighty to consume both you and your king." Which God of his infinite mercy prevent, for the sake of Jesus Christ: to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, three

persons, but one God, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. *Amen, Amen.*

SERMON VII.

Thankfulness for Mercies received, a necessary Duty.

A Farewel Sermon, preached on board the *Whitaker*, at Anchor near *Savannah*, in *Georgia*, *Sunday, May 17, 1738*.

Psalm, cvii. 30, 31.

Then are they glad, because they are at rest, and so he bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.

O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!

NUMBERLESS marks does man bear in his soul, that he is fallen and estranged from God; but nothing gives a greater proof thereof, than that backwardness, which every one finds within himself, to the duty of praise and thanksgiving.

When God placed the first man in paradise, his soul no doubt was so filled with a sense of the riches of the divine love, that he was continually employing that *breath of life*, which the Almighty had not long before

breathed into him, in blessing and magnifying that all-bountiful, all-gracious God, in whom he lived, moved, and had his being.

And the brightest idea we can form of the angelical hierarchy above, and the spirits of just men made perfect, is, that they are continually standing round the throne of God, and cease not day and night, saying, "Worthy art thou, O Lamb that wast slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." *Revelation* v. 12.

That then, which was man's perfection when time first began, and will be his employment when death is swallowed up in victory, and time shall be no more, without controversy, is part of our perfection, and ought to be our frequent exercise on earth: and I doubt not but those blessed spirits, who are sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation, often stand astonished when they encamp around us, to find our hearts so rarely enlarged, and our mouths so seldom opened, to shew forth the loving-kindness of the Lord, or to speak of all his praise.

Matter for praise and adoration, can never be wanting to creatures redeemed by the blood of the Son of God; and who have such continual scenes of his infinite goodness presented to their view, that were their souls duly affected with a sense of his universal love, they could not but be continually calling on heaven and earth, men and angels, to join with them in praising and blessing that "high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity, who maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good," and daily pours down his blessings on the whole race of mankind.

But few are arrived to such a degree of charity or love, as to rejoice with those that do rejoice, and to be as thankful for others mercies, as their own. This part of Christian perfection, though begun on earth, will be consummated only in heaven; where our hearts will glow with such fervent

love towards God and one another, that every fresh degree of glory communicated to our neighbour, will also communicate to us a fresh topic of thankfulness and joy.

That which has the greatest tendency to excite the generality of fallen men to praise and thanksgiving, is a sense of God's private mercies, and particular benefits bestowed upon ourselves. For as these come nearer our own hearts, so they must be more affecting; and as they are peculiar proofs, whereby we may know, that God does in a more especial manner favour us above others, so they cannot but sensibly touch us; and if our hearts are not quite frozen, like coals of a refiner's fire, they must melt us down into thankfulness and love. It was a consideration of the distinguishing favours God had shewn to his chosen people *Israel*, and the frequent and remarkable deliverances wrought by him in behalf of "those who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters," that made the holy Psalmist break out so frequently as he does in this psalm, into this moving, pathetical exclamation, "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!"

His expressing himself in so fervent a manner, implies both the importance and neglect of the duty. As when *Moses* on another occasion cried out, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would *practically* consider their latter end!" *December* xxxii. 29.

I say, importance and neglect of the duty; for out of those many thousands that receive blessings from the Lord, how few give thanks in remembrance of his holiness? The account given us of the ungrateful lepers, is but too lively a representation of the ingratitude of mankind in general; who like them, when under any humbling providence, can cry, "Jesus, Master, have

mercy on us!" *Luke* xvii. 13. but when healed of their sickness, or delivered from their distress, scarce one in ten can be found "returning to give thanks to God."

And yet as common as this sin of ingratitude is, there is nothing we ought more earnestly to pray against. For what is more absolutely condemned in holy scripture than ingratitude? Or what more peremptorily required than the contrary temper? Thus says the Apostle, "Rejoice evermore; in every thing give thanks," 1 *Thessalonians* v. 16, 18. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," *Philippians* iv. 6.

On the contrary, the Apostle mentions it as one of the highest crimes of the *Gentiles*, that they were not thankful. "Neither were they thankful," *Romans* i. 21. as also in another place, he numbers the "unthankful," 2 *Timothy* iii. 2. amongst those unholy, prophane persons, who are to have their portion in the lake of fire and brimstone.

As for our sins, God puts them behind his back; but his mercies he will have acknowledged, "There is virtue gone out of me," says Jesus Christ, *Luke* viii. 46. and the woman who was cured of her bloody issue, must confess it. And we generally find, when God sent any remarkable punishment upon a particular person, he reminded him of the favours he had received, as so many aggravations of his ingratitude. Thus when God was about to visit *Eli*'s house, he thus expostulates with him by his prophet: "Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy fathers, when they were in *Egypt*, in *Pharaoh*'s house? And did I chuse him out of all the tribes of *Israel*, to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before me? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice, and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honourest thy sons

above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of *Israel* my people? Wherefore the Lord God of *Israel* saith, I said indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me, for them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." 1 *Samuel* ii. 27, 28, 29, 30.

It was this and such like instances of God's severity against the unthankful, that inclined me to chuse the words of the text, as the most proper subject I could discourse on at this time.

Four months, my good friends, we have now been upon the sea in this ship, and "have occupied our business in the great waters." At God Almighty's word, we have seen "the stormy wind arise, which hath lifted up the waves thereof. We have been carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep, and some of our souls melted away because of the trouble; but I trust we cryed earnestly unto the Lord, and he delivered us out of our distress. For he made the storm to cease; so that the waves thereof were still. And now we are glad, because we are at rest, for God hath brought us to the haven where we would be. O that you would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he hath done for us, the unworthiest of the sons of men."

Thus *Moses*, thus *Joshua* behaved. For when they were about to take their leaves of the children of *Israel*, they recounted to them what great things God had done for them, as the best arguments and motives they could urge to engage them to obedience. And how can I copy after better examples? What fitter, what more noble motives, to holiness and purity of living, can I lay before you, than they did?

Indeed, I cannot say, that we have seen the “pillar of a cloud by day, or a pillar of fire by night,” going visibly before us to guide our course; but this I can say, that the same God who was in that pillar of a cloud, and pillar of fire, which departed not from the *Israelites*, and who has made the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night, has, by his good providence, directed us in our right way, or else the pilot had steered us in vain.

Neither can I say, That we have seen the “sun stand still,” as the children of *Israel* did in the days of *Joshua*. But surely God, during part of our voyage, has caused it to withhold some of that heat, which it usually sends forth in these warmer climates, or else it had not failed, but some of you must have perished in the sickness that has been, and does yet continue among us.

We have not seen the waters stand purposely on an heap, that we might pass through, neither have we been pursued by *Pharaoh* and his host, and delivered out of their hands; but we have been led through the sea as through a wilderness, and were once remarkably preserved from being run down by another ship; which had God permitted, the waters, in all probability, would immediately have overwhelmed us, and like *Pharaoh* and his host, we should have sunk, as stones, into the sea.

We may, indeed, atheist like, ascribe all these things to natural causes, and say, “Our own skill and foresight has brought us hither in safety.” But as certainly as Jesus Christ, the angel of the covenant, in the days of his flesh, walked upon the water, and said to his sinking disciples, “Be not afraid, it is I,” so surely has the same everlasting I AM, “who decketh himself with light as with a garment, who spreadeth out the heavens like a curtain, who claspeth the winds in his fist, who holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hands,” and guided the wise men by a star in the east; so surely, I say, has

he spoken, and at his command the winds have blown us where we are now arrived. For his providence ruleth all things; “Wind and storms obey his word:” he saith to it at one time, Go, and it goeth; at another, Come, and it cometh; and at a third time, Blow this way, and it bloweth.

It is he, my brethren, and not we ourselves, that has of late sent us such prosperous gales, and made us to ride, as it were, on the wings of the wind, into the haven where we would be.

“O that you would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness,” and by your lives declare, that you are truly thankful for the wonders he had shewn to us, who are less than the least of the sons of men.

I say, declare it by your lives. For to give him thanks, barely with your lips, while your hearts are far from him, is but a mock sacrifice, nay, an abomination unto the Lord.

This was the end, the royal Psalmist says, God had in view, when he shewed such wonders, from time to time, to the people of *Israel*, “That they might keep his statutes, and observe his laws,” *Psalm* cv. 44. and this, my good friends, is the end God would have accomplished in us, and the only return he desires us to make him, for all the benefits he hath conferred upon us.

O then, let me beseech you, give to God your hearts, your whole hearts; and suffer yourselves to be drawn by the cords of infinite love, to honour and obey him.

Assure yourselves you can never serve a better master; for his service is perfect freedom; his yoke, when worn a little while, is exceeding easy, his burden light; and in keeping his commandments there is great reward; love, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away, hereafter.

You may, indeed, let other lords have dominion over you, and Satan may promise to give you all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, if you will fall down and worship him; but he is a liar, and was so from the beginning; he has not so much to give you, as you may tread on with the sole of your foot; or could he give you the whole world, yet, that could not make you happy without God. It is God alone, my brethren, whose we are, in whose name I now speak, and who has of late shewed us such mercies in the deep, that can give solid lasting happiness to your souls; and he for this reason only desires your hearts, because without him you must be miserable.

Suffer me not then to go away without my errand; as it is the last time I shall speak to you, let me not speak in vain; but let a sense of the divine goodness lead you to repentance.

Even *Saul*, that abandoned wretch, when *David* shewed him his skirt, which he had cut off, when he might have also taken his life, was so melted down with his kindness, that he lifted up his voice and wept. And we must have hearts harder than *Saul*'s, nay, harder than the nether milstone, if a sense of God's late loving kindnesses, notwithstanding he might so often have destroyed us, does not even compel us to lay down our arms against him, and become his faithful servants and soldiers unto our lives end.

If they have not this effect upon us, we shall, of all men, be most miserable; for God is just, as well as merciful; and the more blessings we have received here, the greater damnation, if we do not improve them, shall we incur hereafter.

But God forbid that any of those should ever suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, amongst whom, I have, for these four months, been preaching the gospel of Christ; but yet thus must it be, if you do not improve the

divine mercies: and instead of your being my crown of rejoicing in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, I must appear as a swift witness against you.

But, brethren, I am persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

Blessed be God, some marks of a partial reformation at least, have been visible amongst all you that are soldiers. And my weak, though sincere endeavours, to build you up in the knowledge and fear of God, have not been altogether in vain in the Lord.

Swearing, I hope is, in a great measure, abated with you; and God, I trust, has blessed his late visitations, by making them the means of awakening your consciences, to a more solicitous enquiry about the things which belong to your everlasting peace.

Fulfil you then my joy, by continuing thus minded, and labour to go on to perfection. For I shall have no greater pleasure than to see, or hear, that you walk in the truth.

Consider, my good friends, you are now, as it were, entering on a new world, where you will be surrounded with multitudes of heathens; and if you take not heed to "have your conversation honest amongst them," and to "walk worthy of the holy vocation wherewith you are called," you will act the hellish part of *Herod*'s soldiers over again; and cause Christ's religion, as they did his person, to be had in derision of those that are round about you.

Consider further, what peculiar privileges you have enjoyed, above many others that are entering on the same land. They have had, as it were, a famine of the word, but you have rather been in danger of being surfeited with your spiritual manna. And, therefore, as more instructions have been

given you, so from you, men will most justly expect the greater improvement in goodness.

Indeed, I cannot say, I have discharged my duty towards you as I ought. No, I am sensible of many faults in my ministerial office, and for which I have not failed, nor, I hope, ever shall fail, to humble myself in secret before God. However, this I can say, that except a few days that have been spent necessarily on other persons, whom God immediately called me to write and minister unto, and the two last weeks wherein I have been confined by sickness; all the while I have been aboard, I have been either actually engaged in, or preparing myself for instructing you. And though you are now to be committed to the care of another (whose labours I heartily beseech God to bless amongst you) yet I trust I shall, at all seasons, if need be, willingly spend, and be spent, for the good of your souls, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I should be loved.

As for your military affairs, I have nothing to do with them. Fear God, and you must honour the King. Nor am I well acquainted with the nature of that land which you are now come over to protect; only this I may venture to affirm in the general, that you must necessarily expect upon your arrival at a new colony, to meet with many difficulties. But your very profession teaches you to endure hardship; “be not, therefore, faint-hearted, but quit yourselves like men, and be strong,” *Numbers* xiv. Be not like those cowardly persons, who were affrighted at the report of the false spies, that came and said, that there were people tall as the *Anakims* to be grappled with, but be ye like unto *Caleb* and *Joshua*, all heart; and say, we will act valiantly, for we shall be more than conquerors over all difficulties through Jesus Christ that loved us. Above all things, my brethren, take heed, and beware of murmuring, like the perverse *Israelites*, against those that are set

over you; and “learn, whatsoever state you shall be in, therewith to be content,” *Philippians* iv. 11.

As I have spoken to you, I hope your wives also will suffer the word of exhortation,

Your behaviour on shipboard, especially the first part of the voyage, I chuse to throw a cloak over; for to use the mildest terms, it was not such as became the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, of late, blessed be God, you have taken more heed to your ways, and some of you have walked all the while, as became “women professing godliness.” Let those accept my hearty thanks, and permit me to intreat you all in general, as you are all now married, to remember the solemn vow you made at your entrance into the marriage state, and see that you be subject to your own husbands, in every lawful thing: Beg of God to keep the door of your lips, that you offend not with your tongues; and walk in love, that your prayers be not hindered. You that have children, let it be your chief concern to breed them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And live all of you so holy and unblameable, that you may not so much as be suspected to be unchaste; and as some of you have imitated *Mary Magdalen* in her sin, strive to imitate her also in her repentance.

As for you, sailors, what shall I say? How shall I address myself to you? How shall I do that which I so much long to do; touch your hearts? Gratitude obliges me to wish thus well to you. For you have often taught me many instructive lessons, and reminded me to put up many prayers to God for you, that you might receive your spiritual sight.

When I have seen you preparing for a storm, and reefing your sails to guard against it; how have I wished that you and I were as careful to avoid that storm of God’s wrath, which will certainly, without repentance, quickly

overtake us? When I have observed you catch at every fair gale, how have I secretly cried, O that we were as careful to know the things that belong to our peace, before they are for ever hid from our eyes! And when I have taken notice, how steadily you eyed your compass in order to steer aright, how have I wished, that we as steadily eyed the word of God, which alone can preserve us from "making shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience?" In short, there is scarce any thing you do, which has not been a lesson of instruction to me; and, therefore, it would be ungrateful in me, did I not take this opportunity of exhorting you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be as wise in the things which concern your soul, as I have observed you to be in the affairs belonging to your ship.

I am sensible, that the sea is reckoned but an ill school to learn Christ in: and to see a devout sailor, is esteemed as uncommon a thing, as to see a *Saul* amongst the prophets. But whence this wondering? Whence this looking upon a godly sailor, as a man to be wondered at, as a speckled bird in the creation? I am sure, for the little time I have come in and out amongst you, and as far as I can judge from the little experience I have had of things, I scarce know any way of life, that is capable of greater improvements than yours.

The continual danger you are in of being overwhelmed by the great waters; the many opportunities you have of beholding God's wonders in the deep; the happy retirement you enjoy from worldly temptations; and the daily occasions that are offered you, to endure hardships, are such noble means of promoting the spiritual life, that were your hearts bent towards God, you would account it your happiness, that his providence has called you, to "go down to the sea in ships, and to occupy your business in the great waters."

The royal Psalmist knew this, and, therefore, in the words of the text, calls more especially on men of your employ, to “praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders he doth for the children of men.”

And O that you would be wise in time, and hearken to his voice to-day, “whilst it is called to-day!” For ye yourselves know how little is to be done on a sick bed. God has, in an especial manner, of late, invited you to repentance: two of your crew he has taken off by death, and most of you he has mercifully visited with a grievous sickness. The terrors of the Lord have been upon you, and when burnt with a scorching fever, some of you have cried out, “What shall we do to be saved?” Remember then the resolutions you made, when you thought God was about to take away your souls; and see that according to your promises, you shew forth your thankfulness, not only with your lips, but in your lives. For though God may bear long, he will not forbear always; and if these signal mercies and judgments do not lead you to repentance, assure yourselves there will at last come a fiery tempest, from the presence of the Lord, which will sweep away you, and all other adversaries of God.

I am positive, neither you nor the soldiers have wanted, nor will want any manner of encouragement to piety and holiness of living, from those two persons who have here the government over you; for they have been such helps to me in my ministry, and have so readily concurred in every thing for your good, that they may justly demand a public acknowledgment of thanks both from you and me.

Permit me, my honoured friends, in the name of both classes of your people, to return you hearty thanks for the care and tenderness you have expressed for the welfare of their better parts.

As for the private favours you have shewn to my person, I hope so deep a sense of them is imprinted on my heart, that I shall plead them before God in prayer, as long as I live.

But I have still stronger obligations to intercede in your behalf. For God, ever adored be his free grace in Christ Jesus! has set his seal to my ministry in your hearts. Some distant pangs of the new-birth I have observed to come upon you; and God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, by ceasing to pray, that the good work begun in your souls, may be carried on till the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The time of our departure from each other is now at hand, and you are going out into a world of temptations. But though absent in body, let us be present with each other in spirit; and God, I trust, will enable you to be singularly good, to be ready to be accounted fools for Christ's sake; and then we shall meet never to part again in the kingdom of our Father which is in heaven.

To you, my companions and familiar friends, who came over with me to sojourn in a strange land, do I in the next place address myself. For you I especially fear, as well as for myself; because as we take sweet counsel together oftner than others, and as you are let into a more intimate friendship with me in private life, the eyes of all men will be upon you to note even the minutest miscarriage; and, therefore, it highly concerns you to "walk circumspectly towards those that are without," I hope, that nothing but a single eye to God's glory and the salvation of your own souls, brought you from your native country. Remember then the end of your coming hither, and you can never do amiss. Be patterns of industry, as well as of piety, to those who shall be around you; and above all things let us have

such fervent charity amongst ourselves, that it may be said of us, as of the primitive Christians, “See how the Christians love one another.”

And now I have been speaking to others particularly, I have one general request to make to all, and that with reference to myself.

You have heard, my dear friends, how I have been exhorting every one of you to shew forth your thankfulness for the divine goodness, not only with your lips, but in your lives: But “physician heal thyself,” may justly be retorted on me. For (without any false pretences to humility) I find my own heart so little inclined to this duty of thanksgiving for the benefits I have received, that I had need fear sharing *Hezekiah*’s fate, who because he was lifted up by, and not thankful enough for, the great things God had done for him, was given up a prey to the pride of his own heart.

I need, therefore, and beg your most importunate petitions at the throne of grace, that no such evil may befal me; that the more God exalts me, the more I may debase myself; and that after I have preached to others, I myself may not be cast away.

And now, brethren, into God’s hands I commend your spirits, who, I trust, through his infinite mercies in Christ Jesus, will preserve you blameless, till his second coming to judge the world.

Excuse my detaining you so long; perhaps it is the last time I shall speak to you: my heart is full, and out of the abundance of it, I could continue my discourse until midnight. But I must away to your new world; may God give you new hearts, and enable you to put in practice what you have heard from time to time, to be your duty, and I need not wish you any thing better. For then God will so bless you, that “you will build you cities to dwell in; then will you sow your lands and plant vineyards, which will yield you fruits of increase,” *Psalm* cvii. 36, 37. “Then your oxen shall be strong to

labour, there shall be no leading into captivity, and no complaining in your streets; then shall your sons grow up as the young plants, and your daughters be as the polished corners of the temple: then shall your garners be full and plenteous with all manner of store, and your sheep bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in your streets," *Psalm* cxliv. In short, then shall the Lord be your God; and as surely as he has now brought us to this haven, where we would be, so surely, after we have past through the storms and tempests of this troublesome world, will he bring us to the haven of eternal rest, where we shall have nothing to do, but to praise him for ever for his goodness, and declare, in never-ceasing songs of praise, the wonders he has done for us, and all the other sons of men.

"To which blessed rest, God of his infinite mercy bring us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord! to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen, Amen.*"

SERMON VIII.

The Necessity and Benefits of Religious Society.

Ecclesiastes iv. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Two are better than One, because they have a good Reward for their Labour.

For if they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow: But woe be to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

Again, if Two lie together, then they have heat; but how can One be warm alone?

And if One prevail against him, Two shall withstand him; and a threefold Cord is not quickly broken.

AMONG the many reasons assignable for the sad decay of *true Christianity*, perhaps the neglecting to assemble ourselves together, in *religious societies*, may not be one of the least. That I may therefore do my endeavour towards promoting so excellent a means of piety, I have selected a passage of scripture drawn from the experience of the wisest of men, which being a little enlarged on and illustrated, will fully answer my present

design; being to shew, in the best manner I can, the necessity and benefits of society in general, and of religious society in particular.

"Two are better than one, &c."

From which words I shall take occasion to prove,

First, The truth of the wise man's assertion, "Two are better than one," and that in reference to society in general, and religious society in particular.

Secondly, To assign some reasons why two are better than one, especially as to the last particular. 1. Because men can raise up one another when they chance to slip: "For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow." 2. Because they can impart heat to each other: "Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone?" 3. Because they can secure each other from those that do oppose them: "And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." From hence,

Thirdly, I shall take occasion to shew the duty incumbent on every member of a *religious society*.

And *Fourthly*, I shall draw an inference or two from what may be said; and then conclude with a word or two of exhortation.

First, I am to prove the truth of the wise man's assertion, that "two are better than one," and that in reference to society in general, and religious societies in particular.

And how can this be done better, than by shewing that it is absolutely necessary for the welfare both of the bodies and souls of men? Indeed, if we look upon man as he came out of the hands of his Maker, we imagine him to be perfect, entire, lacking nothing. But God, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, saw something still wanting to make *Adam* happy. And what

was that? Why, an help meet for him. For thus speaketh the scripture: “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make an help meet for him.”

Observe, God said, “It is not good,” thereby implying that the creation would have been imperfect, in some sort, unless an help was found out meet for *Adam*. And if this was the case of man before the fall; if an help was meet for him in a state of perfection; surely since the fall, when we come naked and helpless out of our mother’s womb, when our wants increase with our years, and we can scarcely subsist a day without the mutual assistance of each other, well may we say, “It is not good for man to be alone.”

Society then, we see, is absolutely necessary in respect to our bodily and personal wants. If we carry our view farther, and consider mankind as divided into different cities, countries, and nations, the necessity of it will appear yet more evident. For how can communities be kept up, or commerce carried on, without society? Certainly not at all, since providence seems wisely to have assigned a particular product to almost each particular country, on purpose, as it were, to oblige us to be social; and hath so admirably mingled the parts of the whole body of mankind together, “that the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the hand to the foot, I have no need of thee.”

Many other instances might be given of the necessity of society, in reference to our bodily, personal, and national wants. But what are all these when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, in comparison of the infinite greater need of it, with respect to the soul? It was chiefly in regard to this better part, no doubt, that God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” For, let us suppose *Adam* to be as happy as may be, placed as the Lord of

the creation in the paradise of God, and spending all his hours in adoring and praising the blessed Author of his being; yet as his soul was the very copy of the divine nature, whose peculiar property it is to be communicative, without the divine all-sufficiency he could not be compleatly happy, because he was alone and incommunicative, nor even content in paradise, for want of a partner in his joys. God knew this, and therefore said, “It is not good that the man shall be alone, I will make a help meet for him.” And though this proved a fatal means of his falling; yet that was not owing to any natural consequence of society; but partly to that cursed apostate, who craftily lies in wait to deceive; partly to *Adam*’s own folly, in rather chusing to be miserable with one he loved, than trust in God to raise him up another spouse.

If we reflect indeed on that familiar intercourse, our first parent could carry on with heaven, in a state of innocence, we shall be apt to think he had as little need of society, as to his soul, as before we supposed him to have, in respect to his body. But yet, as God and the holy angels were so far above him on the one hand, and the beasts so far beneath him on the other, there was nothing like having one to converse with, who was “bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.”

Man, then, could not be fully happy, we see, even in paradise, without a companion of his own species, much less now he is driven out. For, let us view him a little in his natural estate now, since the fall, as “having his understanding darkened, his mind alienated from the life of God;” as no more able to see his way wherein he should go, than a blind man to describe the sun: that notwithstanding this, he must receive his sight ere he can see God: and that if he never sees him, he never can be happy. Let us view him in this light (or rather this darkness) and deny the necessity of society if we

can. A divine revelation we find is absolutely necessary, we being by nature as unable to know, as we are to do our duty. And how shall we learn except one teach us? But was God to do this himself, how should we, but with *Moses*, exceedingly quake and fear? Nor would the ministry of angels in this affair, be without too much terror. It is necessary, therefore (at least God's dealing with us hath shewed it to be so) that we should be drawn with the cords of a man. And that a divine revelation being granted, we should use one another's assistance, under God, to instruct each other in the knowledge, and to exhort one another to the practice of those things which belong to our everlasting peace. This is undoubtedly the great end of society intended by God since the fall, and a strong argument it is, why "two are better than one," and why we should "not forsake the assembling ourselves together."

But farther, let us consider ourselves as Christians, as having this natural veil, in some measure, taken off from our eyes by the assistance of God's holy Spirit, and so enabled to see what he requires of us. Let us suppose ourselves in some degree to have tasted the good word of life, and to have felt the powers of the world to come, influencing and moulding our souls into a religious frame: to be fully and heartily convinced that we are soldiers listed under the banner of Christ, and to have proclaimed open war at our baptism, against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and have, perhaps, frequently renewed our obligations so to do, by partaking of the Lord's supper: that we are surrounded with millions of foes without, and infested with a legion of enemies within: that we are commanded to shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: that we are travelling to a long eternity, and need all imaginable helps to shew, and encourage us in our way thither. Let us, I say, reflect on all this,

and then how shall each of us cry out, brethren, what a necessary thing it is to meet together in religious societies?

The primitive Christians were fully sensible of this, and therefore we find them continually keeping up communion with each other: for what says the scripture? They continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, *Acts* ii. 42. *Peter* and *John* were no sooner dismissed by the great council, than they haste away to their companions. "And being set at liberty they came to their own, and told them all these things which the high priest had said unto them," *Acts* iv. 23. *Paul*, as soon as converted, "tarried three days with the disciples that were at *Damascus*," *Acts* ix. 19. And *Peter* afterwards, when released from prison, immediately goes to the house of *Mary*, where there were "great multitudes assembled, praying," *Acts* xii. 12. And it is reported of the Christians in after-ages, that they used to assemble together before day-light, to sing a psalm to Christ as God. So precious was the *Communion of Saints* in those days.

If it be asked, what advantages we shall reap from such a procedure now? I answer, much every way. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour: for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe be to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Which directly leads me to my Second general head, under which I was to assign some reasons why "two are better than one," especially in *Religious Society*.

1. As man in his present condition cannot always stand upright, but by reason of the frailty of his nature cannot but fall; one eminent reason why

two are better than one, or, in other words, one great advantage of religious society is, “That when they fall, the one will lift up his fellow.”

And an excellent reason this, indeed! For alas! when we reflect how prone we are to be drawn into error in our judgments, and into vice in our practice; and how unable, at least how very unwilling, to espy or correct our own miscarriages; when we consider how apt the world is to flatter us in our faults, and how few there are so kind as to tell us the truth; what an inestimable privilege must it be to have a set of true, judicious, hearty friends about us, continually watching over our souls, to inform us where we have fallen, and to warn us that we fall not again for the future. Surely it is such a privilege, that (to use the words of an eminent Christian) we shall never know the value thereof, till we come to glory.

But this is not all; for supposing that we could always stand upright, yet whosoever reflects on the difficulties of religion in general, and his own propensity to lukewarmness and indifference in particular, will find that he must be zealous as well as steady, if ever he expects to enter the kingdom of heaven. Here, then, the wise man points out to us another excellent reason why two are better than one. “Again, if two lye together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone?” Which was the next thing to be considered.

2. A second reason why two are better than one, is because they can impart heat to each other.

It is an observation no less true than common, that kindled coals, if placed asunder, soon go out, but if heaped together, quicken and enliven each other, and afford a lasting heat. The same will hold good in the case now before us. If Christians kindled by the grace of God, unite, they will quicken and enliven each other; but if they separate and keep asunder, no

marvel if they soon grow cool or tepid. If two or three meet together in Christ's name, they will have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

Observe, "How can one be warm alone?" The wise man's expressing himself by way of question, implies an impossibility, at least a very great difficulty, to be warm in religion without company, where it may be had. Behold here, then, another excellent benefit flowing from religious society; it will keep us zealous, as well as steady, in the ways of godliness.

But to illustrate this a little farther by a comparison or two. Let us look upon ourselves (as was above hinted) as soldiers listed under Christ's banner; as going out with "ten thousand, to meet one that cometh against us with twenty thousand;" as persons that are to "wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places." And then tell me, all ye that fear God, if it be not an invaluable privilege to have a company of fellow soldiers continually about us, animating and exhorting each other to stand our ground, to keep our ranks, and manfully to follow the captain of our salvation, though it be through a sea of blood?

Let us consider ourselves in another view before mentioned, as persons travelling to a long eternity; as rescued by the free grace of God, in some measure, from our natural *Egyptian* bondage, and marching under the conduct of our spiritual *Joshua*, through the wilderness of this world, to the land of our heavenly *Canaan*. Let us farther reflect how apt we are to startle at every difficulty; to cry, "There are lions! There are lions in the way! There are the sons of *Anak*" to be grappled with, ere we can possess the promised land: How prone we are, with *Lot*'s wife, to look wishfully back on our spiritual *Sodom*, or, with the foolish *Israelites*, to long again for the flesh-pots of *Egypt*; and to return to our former natural state of bondage and

slavery. Consider this, my brethren, and see what a blessed privilege it will be to have a set of *Israelites* indeed about us, always reminding us of the folly of any such cowardly design, and of the intolerable misery we shall run into, if we fall in the least short of the promised land.

More might be said on this particular, did not the limits of a discourse of this nature oblige me to hasten,

3. To give a third reason, mentioned by the wise man in the text, why two are better than one; because they can secure each other from enemies without. "And if one prevail against him, yet two shall withstand him: and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Hitherto we have considered the advantages of religious societies, as a great preservative against falling (at least dangerously falling) into sin and lukewarmness, and that too from our own corruptions. But what says the wise son of *Sirach*? "My son, when thou goest to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation:" and that not only from inward, but outward foes; particularly from those two grand adversaries, the world and the devil: for no sooner will thine eye be bent heavenward, but the former will be immediately diverting it another way, telling thee thou needest not be singular in order to be religious; that you may be a Christian without going so much out of the common road.

Nor will the devil be wanting in his artful insinuations, or impious suggestions, to divert or terrify thee from pressing forwards, "that thou mayst lay hold on the crown of life." And if he cannot prevail this way, he will try another; and, in order to make his temptation the more undiscerned, but withal more successful, he will employ, perhaps, some of thy nearest relatives, or most powerful friends, (as he set *Peter* on our blessed Master) who will always be bidding thee to spare thyself; telling thee thou needest

not take so much pains; that it is not so difficult a matter to get to heaven as some people would make of it, nor the way so narrow as others imagine it to be.

But see here the advantage of religious company; for supposing thou findest thyself thus surrounded on every side, and unable to withstand such horrid (though seemingly friendly) counsels, haste away to thy companions, and they will teach thee a truer and better lesson; they will tell thee, that thou must be singular if thou wilt be religious; and that it is as impossible for a Christian, as for a city set upon a hill, to be hidden: that if thou wilt be an almost Christian (and as good be none at all) thou mayest live in the same idle, indifferent manner as thou seest most other people do: but if thou wilt be not only almost, but altogether a Christian, they will inform thee thou must go a great deal farther: that thou must not only faintly seek, but "earnestly strive to enter in at the strait gate:" that there is but one way now to heaven as formerly, even through the narrow passage of a sound conversion: and that in order to bring about this mighty work, thou must undergo a constant, but necessary discipline of fasting, watching, and prayer. And therefore, the only reason why those friends give thee such advice, is, because they are not willing to take so much pains themselves; or, as our Saviour told *Peter* on a like occasion, because they "savour not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

This then, is another excellent blessing arising from religious society, that friends can hereby secure each other from those who oppose them. The devil is fully sensible of this, and therefore he has always done his utmost to suppress, and put a stop to the communion of saints. This was his grand artifice at the first planting of the gospel; to persecute the professors of it, in order to separate them. Which, though God, as he always will, over-ruled

for the better; yet, it shews, what an enmity he has against Christians assembling themselves together. Nor has he yet left off his old stratagem; it being his usual way to entice us by ourselves, in order to tempt us; where, by being destitute of one another's help, he hopes to lead us captive at his will.

But, on the contrary, knowing his own interest is strengthened by society, he would first persuade us to neglect the communion of saints, and then bid us "stand in the way of sinners," hoping thereby to put us into the seat of the scornful. *Judas* and *Peter* are melancholy instances of this. The former had no sooner left his company at supper, but he went out and betrayed his master: and the dismal downfal of the latter, when he would venture himself amongst a company of enemies, plainly shews us what the devil will endeavour to do, when he gets us by ourselves. Had *Peter* kept his own company, he might have kept his integrity; but a single cord, alas! how quickly was it broken? Our blessed Saviour knew this full well, and therefore it is very observable, that he always sent out his disciples "two by two."

And now, after so many advantages to be reaped from religious society, may we not very justly cry out with the wise man in my text, "Woe be to him that is alone; for when he falleth, he hath not another to lift him up?" When he is cold, he hath not a friend to warm him; when he is assaulted, he hath not a second to help him to withstand his enemy.

III. I now come to my third general head, under which was to be shewn the several duties incumbent on every member of a religious society, as such, which are three. 1. Mutual reproof; 2. Mutual exhortation; 3. Mutual assisting and defending each other.

1. *Mutual reproof.* “Two are better than one; for when they fall, the one will lift up his fellow.”

Now, reproof may be taken either in a more extensive sense, and then it signifies our raising a brother by the gentlest means, when he falls into sin and error; or in a more restrained signification, as reaching no farther than those miscarriages, which unavoidably happen in the most holy men living.

The wise man, in the text, supposes all of us subject to both: “For when they fall (thereby implying that each of us may fall) the one will lift up his fellow.” From whence we may infer, that “when any brother is overtaken with a fault, he that is spiritual (that is, regenerate, and knows the corruption and weakness of human nature) ought to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.” And why he should do so, the apostle subjoins a reason “considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted;” i.e. considering thy own frailty, lest thou also fall by the like temptation.

We are all frail unstable creatures; and it is merely owing to the free grace and good providence of God that we run not into the same excess of riot with other men. Every offending brother, therefore, claims our pity rather than our resentment; and each member should strive to be the most forward, as well as most gentle, in restoring him to his former state.

But supposing a person not to be overtaken, but to fall wilfully into a crime; yet who art thou that deniest forgiveness to thy offending brother? “Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.” Take ye, brethren, the holy apostles as eminent examples for you to learn by, how you ought to behave in this matter. Consider how quickly they joined the right hand of fellowship with *Peter*, who had so wilfully denied his master: for we find *John* and him together but two days after, *John* xx. 2. And verse 19, we find

him assembled with the rest. So soon did they forgive, so soon associate with their sinful, yet relenting brother. “Let us go and do likewise.”

But there is another kind of reproof incumbent on every member of a religious society; namely, a *gentle rebuke* for some miscarriage or other, which though not actually sinful, yet may become the occasion of sin. This indeed seems a more easy, but perhaps will be found a more difficult point than the former: for when a person has really sinned, he cannot but own his brethrens reproof to be just; whereas, when it was only for some little misconduct, the pride that is in our natures will scarce suffer us to brook it. But however ungrateful this pill may be to our brother, yet if we have any concern for his welfare, it must be administered by some friendly hand or other. By all means then let it be applied; only, like a skilful physician, gild over the ungrateful pill, and endeavour, if possible, to deceive thy brother into health and soundness. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and malice, and evil-speaking, be put away” from it. Let the patient know, his recovery is the only thing aimed at, and that thou delightest not causelesly to grieve thy brother; then thou canst not want success.

2. *Mutual exhortation* is the second duty resulting from the words of the text. “Again, if two lye together, then they have heat.”

Observe, the wise man supposes it as impossible for religious persons to meet together, and not to be the warmer for each other’s company, as for two persons to lye in the same bed, and yet freeze with cold. But now, how is it possible to communicate heat to each other, without mutually stirring up the gift of God which is in us, by brotherly exhortation? Let every member then of a religious society write that zealous apostle’s advice on the tables of his heart; “See that ye exhort, and provoke one another to love, and to good works; and so much the more, as you see the day of the Lord

approaching." Believe me, brethren, we have need of exhortation to rouse up our sleepy souls, to set us upon our watch against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; to excite us to renounce ourselves, to take up our crosses, and follow our blessed master, and the glorious company of saints and martyrs, "who through faith have fought the good fight, and are gone before us to inherit the promises." A third part, therefore, of the time wherein a religious society meets, seems necessary to be spent in this important duty: for what avails it to have our understandings enlightened by pious reading, unless our wills are at the same time inclined, and inflamed by mutual exhortation, to put it in practice? Add also, that this is the best way both to receive and impart light, and the only means to preserve and increase that warmth and heat which each person first brought with him; God so ordering this, as all other spiritual gifts, that "to him that hath, i.e. improves and communicates what he hath, shall be given; but from him that hath not, or does not improve the heat he hath, shall be taken away even that which he seemed to have." So needful, so essentially necessary, is exhortation to the good of society.

3. Thirdly, The text points out another duty incumbent on every member of a religious society, to defend each other from those that do oppose them. "And if one prevail against him, yet two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Here the wise man takes it for granted, that offences will come, nay, and that they may prevail too. And this is no more than our blessed master has long since told us. Not, indeed, that there is any thing in Christianity itself that has the least tendency to give rise to, or promote such offences: No, on the contrary, it breathes nothing but unity and love.

But so it is, that ever since the fatal sentence pronounced by God, after our first parents fall, “I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed;” he that is born after the flesh, the unregenerate unconverted sinner, has in all ages “persecuted him that is born after the spirit:” and so it always will be. Accordingly we find an early proof given of this in the instance of *Cain* and *Abel*; of *Ishmael* and *Isaac*; and of *Jacob* and *Esau*. And, indeed, the whole Bible contains little else but an history of the great and continued opposition between the children of this world, and the children of God. The first Christians were remarkable examples of this; and though those troublesome times, blessed be God, are now over, yet the apostle has laid it down as a general rule, and all who are sincere experimentally prove the truth of it; that “they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must (to the end of the world, in some degree or other) suffer persecution.” That therefore this may not make us desert our blessed master’s cause, every member should unite their forces, in order to stand against it. And for the better effecting this, each would do well, from time to time, to communicate his experiences, grievances, and temptations, and beg his companions (first asking God’s assistance, without which all is nothing) to administer reproof, exhortation, or comfort, as his case requires: so that “if one cannot prevail against it, yet two shall withstand it; and a threefold (much less a many-fold) cord will not be quickly broken.”

IV. But it is time for me to proceed to the fourth general thing proposed, to draw an inference or two from what has been said.

1. And first, if “two are better than one,” and the advantages of religious society are so many and so great; then it is the duty of every true Christian to set on foot, establish and promote, as much as in him lyes, societies of this nature. And I believe we may venture to affirm, that if ever a spirit of

true Christianity is revived in the world, it must be brought about by some such means as this. Motives, surely, cannot be wanting, to stir us up to this commendable and necessary undertaking: for, granting all hitherto advanced to be of no force, yet methinks the single consideration, that great part of our happiness in heaven will consist in the *Communion of Saints*; or that the interest as well as piety of those who differ from us, is strengthened and supported by nothing more than their frequent meetings; either of these considerations, I say, one would think, should induce us to do our utmost to copy after their good example, and settle a lasting and pious communion of the saints on earth. Add to this, that we find the kingdom of darkness established daily by such like means; and shall not the kingdom of Christ be set in opposition against it? Shall the children of *Belial* assemble and strengthen each other in wickedness; and shall not the children of God unite, and strengthen themselves in piety? Shall societies on societies be countenanced for midnight revellings, and the promoting of vice, and scarcely one be found intended for the propagation of virtue? Be astonished, O heavens at this!

2. But this leads me to a second inference; namely, to warn persons of the great danger those are in, who either by their subscriptions, presence, or approbation, promote societies of a quite opposite nature to religion.

And here I would not be understood, to mean only those public meetings which are designed manifestly for nothing else but revellings and banquetings, for chambering and wantonness, and at which a modest heathen would blush to be present; but also those seemingly innocent entertainments and meetings, which the politer part of the world are so very fond of, and spend so much time in: but which, notwithstanding, keep as many persons from a sense of true religion, as doth intemperance,

debauchery, or any other crime whatever. Indeed, whilst we are in this world, we must have proper relaxations, to fit us both for the business of our profession, and religion. But then, for persons who call themselves Christians, that have solemnly vowed at their baptism, to renounce the vanities of this sinful world; that are commanded in scripture “to abstain from all appearance of evil, and to have their conversation in heaven:” for such persons as these to support meetings, which (to say no worse of them) are vain and trifling, and have a natural tendency to draw off our minds from God, is absurd, ridiculous, and sinful. Surely two are not better than one in this case: No; it is to be wished there was not one to be found concerned in it. The sooner we forsake the assembling ourselves together in such a manner, the better; and no matter how quickly the cord that holds such societies (was it a thousand-fold) is broken.

But you, brethren, have not so learned Christ: but, on the contrary, like true disciples of your Lord and Master, have by the blessing of God (as this evening’s solemnity abundantly testifies) happily formed yourselves into such societies, which, if duly attended on, and improved, cannot but strengthen you in your Christian warfare, and “make you fruitful in every good word and work.”

What remains for me, but, as was proposed, in the last place, to close what has been said, in a word or two, by way of exhortation, and to beseech you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to go on in the way you have begun; and by a constant conscientious attendance on your respective societies, to discountenance vice, encourage virtue, and build each other up in the knowledge and fear of God.

Only permit me to “stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance,” and to exhort you, “if there be any consolation in Christ, any fellowship of

the spirit," again and again to consider, that as all Christians in general, so all members of religious societies in particular, are in an especial manner, as houses built upon an hill; and that therefore it highly concerns you to walk circumspectly towards those that are without, and to take heed to yourselves, that your conversation, in common life, be as becometh such an open and peculiar profession of the gospel of Christ: knowing that the eyes of all men are upon you, narrowly to inspect every circumstance of your behaviour: and that every notorious wilful miscarriage of any single member will, in some measure, redound to the scandal and dishonour of your whole fraternity.

Labour, therefore, my beloved brethren, to let your practice correspond to your profession: and think not that it will be sufficient for you to plead at the last day, Lord have we not assembled ourselves together in thy name, and enlivened each other, by singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs? For verily, I say unto you, notwithstanding this, our blessed Lord will bid you depart from him; nay, you shall receive a greater damnation, if, in the midst of these great pretensions, you are found to be workers of iniquity.

But God forbid that any such evil should befal you; that there should be ever a *Judas*, a traitor, amongst such distinguished followers of our common master. No, on the contrary, the excellency of your rules, the regularity of your meetings, and more especially your pious zeal in assembling in such a public and solemn manner so frequently in the year, persuade me to think, that you are willing, not barely to seem, but to be in reality, Christians; and hope to be found at the last day, what you would be esteemed now, holy, sincere disciples of a crucified Redeemer.

Oh, may you always continue thus minded! and make it your daily, constant endeavour, both by precept and example, to turn all your converse with, more especially those of your own societies, into the same most blessed spirit and temper. Thus will you adorn the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things: Thus will you anticipate the happiness of a future state; and by attending on, and improving the communion of saints on earth, be made meet to join the communion and fellowship of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the holy angels, nay, of the ever-blessed and eternal God in heaven.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and praise, might, majesty and dominion, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON IX.

The Folly and Danger of being not righteous enough.

Ecclesiastes vii. 16.

Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?

NOTHING is more frequent, than while people are living in a course of sin, and after the fashion and manner of the world, there is no notice taken of them; neither are their ways displeasing to their companions and carnal relations: but if they set their faces Zion-ward, and begin to feel the power of God on their hearts; then they are surrounded with temptations from their friends, who thus act the devil's part. The enemies, the greatest enemies a young convert meets with, my dear brethren, are those of his own house. They that will be godly, must suffer persecution; so it was in Christ's time, and so it was in the Apostles time too; for our Lord came not to send peace, but a sword. Our relations would not have us sit in the scorner's chair; they would not have us be prodigals, consuming our substance upon harlots; neither would they have us rakes or libertines, but they would have us be

contented with an almost Christianity. To keep up our reputation by going to church, and adhering to the outward forms of religion, saying our prayers, reading the word of God, and taking the sacraments; this, they imagine, is all that is necessary for to be Christians indeed; and when we go one step farther than this, their mouths are open against us, as *Peter*'s was to Christ: "Spare thyself, do thyself no harm."

And of this nature are the words of the text. They are not the words of *Solomon* himself, but the words of an infidel speaking to him, whom he introduces in several parts of this book; for *Solomon* had been shewing the misfortunes which attended the truly good, as in the verse before our text.

Upon this the infidel says, "Be not righteous over-much, neither be thou over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" i.e. Why shouldst thou bring these misfortunes upon thyself, by being over-strict? Be not righteous over-much; eat, drink, and be merry, live as the world lives, and then you will avoid those misfortunes which may attend you, by being righteous over-much.

This text has another meaning; but take it which way you will, my brethren, it was spoken by an unbeliever; therefore it was no credit for the person who lately preached upon this text, to take it for granted, that these were the words of *Solomon*: the words of an infidel was not a proper text to a Christian congregation. But as *David* came out against *Goliah*, not armed as the champion was, with sword and spear, but with a sling and stone, and then cut off his head with his own sword; so I come out against these letter-learned men, in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, my dear brethren, I trust he will direct me to use my sling, so that our enemies may not gainsay us; and by the sword of God's word, cut off the heads of our Redeemer's enemies.

But though they are not the words of *Solomon*, yet we will take them in the same manner the late writer did; and, from the words, shall,

First, Shew you what it is, not to be righteous over-much, that we may not destroy ourselves.

Secondly, I shall let you see what it is to be righteous over-much. And then,

Thirdly, Conclude with an exhortation to all of you, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, The first thing proposed, is to shew you what it is not to be righteous over-much. And here,

It is by no means to be righteous over-much, to affirm we must have the same Spirit of God as the first Apostles had, and must feel that Spirit upon our hearts.

By receiving the Spirit of God, is not to be understood, that we are to be inspired to shew outward signs and wonders, to raise dead bodies, to cure leprous persons, or to give sight to the blind; these miracles were only of use in the first ages of the church; and therefore Christians (nominal Christians, for we have little else but the name) may have all the gifts of the Spirit, and yet none of the graces of it: Thou, O man, mayest be enabled by faith to remove mountains; thou, by the power of God, mayest cast out devils; thou, by that power, mayest speak with the tongues of men and angels; yea, thou mayest, by that power, hold up thy finger and stop the sun in the firmament; and if all these are unsanctified by the Spirit of God, they would be of no service to thee, but would hurry thee to hell with the greater solemnity. *Saul* received the spirit of prophesying, and had another heart, yet *Saul* was probably a cast-away. We must receive the Spirit of God in its sanctifying graces upon our souls; for Christ says, “Unless a man be born

again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We are all by nature born in sin, and at as great a distance from God, as the devils themselves. I have told you often, and now tell you again, that you are by nature a motley mixture of the beast and devil, and we cannot recover ourselves from the state wherein we have fallen, therefore must be renewed by the Holy Ghost. By the Holy Ghost, I mean, the third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, co-equal, co-essential, co-eternal, and consubstantial with the Father and the Son; and therefore, when we are baptized, it is into the nature of the Father, into the nature of the Son, and into the nature of the Holy Ghost: and we are not true Christians, till we are sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Though our modern preachers do not actually deny the Spirit of God, yet they say, "Christians must not feel him;" which is in effect to deny him. When *Nicodemus* came to Christ, and the Lord Jesus was instructing him, concerning the new birth, says he to our Lord, "How can these things be?" *Nicodemus*, though a master of *Israel*, acts just as our learned Rabbi's do now. The answer that Christ gave him should stop the mouths of our letter-learned pharisees: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth." Now till the Spirit of God is felt on our souls as the wind on our bodies, indeed, my dear brethren, you have no interest in him: religion consists not in external performance, it must be in the heart, or else it is only a name, which cannot profit us, a name to live whilst we are dead.

A late preacher upon this text, seems to laugh at us, for talking of the Spirit in a sensible manner, and talks to us as the *Jews* did to Christ: They said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So he asks, "What sign or proof do we give of it?" We do not imagine, that God must appear to us, and give it us: no; but there may be, and is, a frequent receiving, when no

seeing of it; and it is as plainly felt in the soul, as any impression is, or can be, upon the body. To what a damnable condition should we bring poor sinners, if they could not be sensible of the Spirit of God; namely, a reprobate mind and past feeling?

"What proof do they give?" says the writer. What sign would they have? Do they expect us to raise the dead, to give sight to the blind, to cure lepers, to make the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear? If these are what they expect, I speak with humility, God, by us, hath done greater things than these: many, who were dead in sin, are raised to scripture-life: those, who were leprous by nature, are cleansed by the Spirit of God; those, who were lame in duty, now run in God's commands; those, who were deaf, their ears are unstopped to hear his discipline, and hearken to his advice; and the poor have the gospel preached to them. No wonder people talk at this rate, when they can tell us, "That the Spirit of God, is a good conscience, consequent thereupon." My dear brethren, *Seneca*, *Cicero*, *Plato*, or any of the heathen philosophers, would have given as good a definition as this: It means no more, than reflecting that we have done well. This, this is only Deism refined: Deists laugh at us, when we pretend to be against their notions, and yet these men use no other reason for our differing from them, than what is agreeable to Deists principles.

This writer tells us, "It is against common-sense to talk of the feeling of the Spirit of God." Common-sense, my brethren, was never allowed to be a judge; yea, it is above its comprehension, neither are, nor can the ways of God be known by common-sense. We should never have known the things of God at all by our common senses: no; it is the revelation of God which is to be our judge; it is that we appeal to, and not to our weak and shallow conceptions of things. Thus we may see, it is by no means to be righteous

over-much, to affirm we must have the Spirit of God as the Apostles had. Nor,

Secondly, Is it to be righteous over-much to frequent religious assemblies.

The preacher, upon this text, aims at putting aside all the religious societies that are in the kingdom: Indeed, he says, "You may go to church as often as opportunity serves, and on *Sundays*; say your prayers, read the word of God; and, in his opinion, every thing else had better be let alone: and as for the Spirit of God upon your souls, you are to look upon it as useless and unnecessary." If this, my brethren, is the doctrine we have now preached, Christianity is at a low ebb indeed: but God forbid you should thus learn Jesus Christ. Do you not forbear the frequenting of religious assemblies; for as nothing helps to build up the devil's kingdom more than the societies of wicked men, nothing would be more for pulling of it down, than the people of God meeting to strengthen each others hands; and as the devil has so many friends, will none of you be friends to the blessed Jesus? Yes, I hope many of you will be of the Lord's side, and build each other up in Christian love and fellowship. This is what the primitive Christians delighted in; and shall not we follow so excellent an example? My brethren, till Christian conversation is more agreeable to us, we cannot expect to see the gospel of Christ run and be glorified. Thus it is by no means to be righteous over-much, to frequent religious assemblies. Nor,

Thirdly, Is it to be righteous over-much, to abstain from the diversions and entertainments of the age.

We are commanded to "abstain from the appearance of evil," and that "whatsoever we do, whether we eat or drink, we shall do all to the glory of God." The writer upon this text tells us, "That it will be accounted unlawful to smell to a rose:" no, my dear brethren, you may smell to a pink and rose

too if you please, but take care to avoid the appearance of sin. They talk of innocent diversions and recreations; for my part, I know of no diversion, but that of *doing good*: if you can find any diversion which is not contrary to your baptismal vow, of renouncing the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; if you can find any diversion which tends to the glory of God; if you can find any diversion, which you would be willing to be found at by the Lord Jesus Christ, I give you free licence to go to them and welcome; but if, on the contrary, they are found to keep sinners from coming to the Lord Jesus Christ; if they are a means to harden the heart, and such as you would not willingly be found in when you come to die, then, my dear brethren, keep from them: for, indeed, the diversions of this age are contrary to Christianity. Many of you may think I have gone too far, but I shall go a great deal farther yet: I will attack the devil in his strongest holds, and bear my testimony against our fashionable and polite entertainments. What satisfaction can it be, what pleasure is there in spending several hours at *cards*? Strange! that even people who are grown old, can spend whole nights in this diversion: perhaps many of you will cry out, "What harm is there in it?" My dear brethren, whatsoever is not of faith, or for the glory of God, is a sin: Now does cards tend to promote this? Is it not mispending your precious time, which should be employed in working out your salvation with fear and trembling? Do *play-houses*, *horse-racing*, *balls* and *assemblies*, tend to promote the glory of God? Would you be willing to have your soul demanded of you, while you are at one of those places? Many of these are, (I must speak, I cannot forbear to speak against these entertainments; come what will, I will declare against them) many, I say, of these are kept up by public authority: the play-houses are supported by a public fund, and our newspapers are full of horse-races all through the

kingdom: these things are sinful; indeed they are exceeding sinful. What good can come from a horse-race; from abusing God Almighty's creatures, and putting them to that use he never designed for them: the play-houses, are they not nurseries of debauchery in the age? and the supporters and patrons of them, are encouragers and promoters of all the evil that is done by them; they are the bane of the age, and will be the destruction of those who frequent them. Is it not high time for the true ministers of Jesus Christ, who have been partakers of the heavenly gift, to lift up their voices as a trumpet, and cry aloud against these diversions of the age? Are they not earthly, sensual, devilish? If you have tasted of the love of God, and have felt his power upon your souls, you would no more go to a play, than you would run your head into a furnace.

And what occasions these places to be so much frequented, is the clergy's making no scruple to be at these polite places: they frequent play-houses, they go to horse-races, they go to balls and assemblies, they frequent taverns, and follow all the entertainments that the age affords; and yet these are the persons who should advise their hearers to refrain from them; but instead thereof, they encourage them by their example. Persons are too apt to rely upon, and believe their pastors, rather than the scriptures; they think that there is no crime in going to plays or horse-races, to balls and assemblies; for if there were, they think those persons, who are their ministers, would not frequent them: but, my dear brethren, observe they always go disguised, the ministers are afraid of being seen in their gowns and cassocks; the reason thereof is plain, their consciences inform them, that it is not an example fit for the ministers of the gospel to set; thus, they are the means of giving that offence to the people of God, which I would not for ten thousand worlds: they lay a stumbling-block in the way of their

weak brethren, which they will not remove, though it is a stumbling-block of offence. “Woe unto the world because of offences, but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh.” The polite gentlemen of the age, spend their time in following these diversions, because the love of God is not in their hearts; they are void of Christ, and destitute of the Spirit of God; and not being acquainted with the delight there is in God and his ways, being strangers to these things, they run to the devil for diversions, and are pleased and delighted with the silly ones he shews them.

My dear brethren, I speak of these things, these innocent diversions, as the polite part of the world calls them, by experience; perhaps none, for my age, hath read or seen more plays than I have: I took delight in, and was pleased with them. It is true, I went to church frequently, received the sacrament, and was diligent in the use of the forms of religion, but I was all this while ignorant of the power of God on my heart, and unacquainted with the work of grace; but when God was pleased to shine with power upon my soul, I could no longer be contented to feed on husks, or what the swine did eat: the Bible then was my food; there, and there only I took delight: and till you feel this same power, you will not abstain from the earthly delights of this age, you will take no comfort in God’s ways, nor receive any comfort from him; for you are void of the love of God, having only the form of godliness, while you are denying the power of it; you are nominal Christians, when you have not the power of Christianity.

The polite gentlemen say, “Are we to be always upon our knees? Would you have us be always at prayer, and reading or hearing the word of God?”

My dear brethren, the fashionable ones, who take delight in hunting, are not tired of being continually on horseback after their hounds; and when once you are renewed by the Spirit of God, it will be a continual pleasure to

be walking with, and talking of God, and telling what great things Jesus Christ hath done for your souls; and till you can find as much pleasure in conversing with God, as these men do of their hounds, you have no share in him; but when you have tasted how good the Lord is, you will shew forth his praise; out of the abundance of your heart your mouth will speak.

This brings me to the second thing proposed, which is an extream that very seldom happens:

Secondly, To shew what it is to be righteous over-much. And here,

First, When we confine the Spirit of God to this or that particular church; and are not willing to converse with any but those of the same communion; this is to be righteous over-much with a witness: and so it is, to confine our communion within church-walls, and to think that Jesus could not preach in a field as well as on consecrated-ground; this is *judaism*, this is *bigotry*: this is like *Peter*, who would not go to preach the gospel to the *Gentiles*, till he had a vision from God: and when his conduct was blamed by the disciples, he could not satisfy them till he had acquainted them with the vision he had seen. And, therefore, we may justly infer, the Spirit of God is the center of unity; and wherever I see the image of my Master, I never enquire of them their opinions; I ask them not what they are, so they love Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, but embrace them as my brother, my sister, and my spouse: and this is the spirit of Christianity. Many persons, who are bigots to this or that opinion, when one of a different way of thinking hath come where they were, have left the room or place on the account: this is the spirit of the devil; and if it was possible that these persons could be admitted into heaven with such tempers, that very place would be hell to them. Christianity will never flourish, till we are all of one heart and of one

mind; and this would be the only means of seeing the gospel of Jesus to flourish, more than ever it will by persecuting those who differ from us.

This may be esteemed as enthusiasm and madness, and as a design to undermine the established church: No; God is my judge, I should rejoice to see all the world adhere to her articles; I should rejoice to see the ministers of the Church of *England*, preach up those very articles they have subscribed to; but those ministers who do preach up the articles, are esteemed as madmen, enthusiasts, schismatics, and underminers of the established church: and though they say these things of me, blessed be God, they are without foundation. My dear brethren, I am a friend to her articles, I am a friend to her homilies, I am a friend to her liturgy; and, if they did not thrust me out of their churches, I would read them every day; but I do not confine the Spirit of God there; for I say it again, I love all that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and esteem him my brother, my friend, my spouse; aye, my very soul is knit to that person. The spirit of persecution will never, indeed it will never make any to love Jesus Christ. The pharisees make this to be madness, so much as to mention persecution in a Christian country; but there is as much the spirit of persecution now in the world, as ever there was; their will is as great, but blessed be God, they want the power; otherwise, how soon would they send me to prison, make my feet fast in the stocks, yea, would think they did God service in killing me, and would rejoice to take away my life.

This is not the Spirit of Christ, my dear brethren; I had not come to have thus preached; I had not come into the highways and hedges; I had not exposed myself to the ill treatment of these letter-learned men, but for the sake of your souls: indeed, I had no other reason, but your salvation; and for that (I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not) I would be content to go to prison;

yea, I would rejoice to die for you, so I could but be a means to bring some of you to Jesus: I could not bear to see so many in the highway to destruction, and not shew them their danger: I could not bear, my brethren, to see you more willing to learn, than the teachers are to instruct you: and if any of them were to come and preach to you, I should not envy them, I should not call them enthusiasts or madmen; I should rejoice to hear they had ten thousand times more success than I have met with; I would give them the right-hand of fellowship; I would advise them to go on; I would wish them good luck in the name of the Lord, and say as Christ did, when the disciples informed him of some casting out devils in his name, and were for rebuking of them, "Forbid them not, for they that are not against us are for us;" or as St. *Paul* says, "Some preach Christ of envy, and some of good-will; notwithstanding, so Christ is but preached, I rejoice; yea, and will rejoice." The gospel of Jesus, is a gospel of peace. Thus you may see, that to be righteous over-much, is to be uncharitable, censorious, and to persecute persons for differing from us in religion.

Secondly, Persons are righteous over-much, when they spend so much time in religious assemblies, as to neglect their families. There is no licence given by the blessed Jesus, for idleness; for in the very infancy of the world, idleness was not allowed of. In paradise, *Adam* and *Eve* dressed the garden, *Cain* was a tiller of the ground, and *Abel* was a keeper of sheep; and there is a proverb amongst the *Jews*, "That he who brings his son up without a business, brings him up to be a thief:" and therefore our Saviour was a carpenter; "Is not this the carpenter's son," said the *Jews*: and St. *Paul*, though brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, was a tent-maker. Labour, my brethren, is imposed on all mankind as part of the divine curse; and you are called to be useful in the society to which you belong: take care first for the

kingdom of God, and all things necessary shall be added. To labour for the meat that perisheth, is your duty; only take care, that you do not neglect getting the meat for the soul: that is of the greatest consequence, for this plain reason, the things of this life are temporal, but those of the next are eternal. I would have rich men to work as well as poor: it is owing to their idleness, that the devil hurries them to his diversions; they can be in their beds all the morning, and spend the afternoon and evening in dressing, visiting, and at balls, plays, or assemblies, when they should be working out their salvation with fear and trembling. Such a life as this, occasions a spiritual numbness in the soul; and if Jesus Christ was not to stop those who thus spend their time, they would be hurried into eternity, without once thinking of their immortal souls. But Jesus Christ has compassion upon many of them, and while they are in their blood, he bids them "live." And though I preach this doctrine to you, yet I do not bid you be idle; no, they that do not work should not eat. You have two callings, a general one, and a special one: as we are to regard the one in respect of our bodies, so we are to regard the other on account of our souls. Take heed, my brethren, I beseech you, take heed, lest you labour so for the meat that perisheth, as to forget that meat which endureth for ever. Seek the things of God first; look well to obtain oil in your lamps, grace in your hearts. I am not persuading you to take no care about the things of the world, but only not to be encumbered with them, so as to neglect your duty towards God, and a proper concern for your souls. It is meet, it is right, it is your bounden duty, to mind the callings wherein God hath placed you; and you may be said to be righteous over-much not to regard them. This brings me,

Thirdly, To give you another sign of being righteous over-much; and that is, when we fast and use corporal austerities, so as to unfit us for the service

of God.

This, my brethren, you may think there is no occasion at all to caution you against, and indeed there is not a great necessity for it; however, many persons, upon their first being awakened to a sense of their sin, are tempted to use austerities to that excess which is sinful. It is our duty to fast, it is our duty to fast often, and it is what we are directed to by Jesus Christ himself; but then we are to take care to do it in a proper manner: to bring our bodies under for the service of God, is that which we are commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The late preacher upon this text, runs into great extremes, and charges us with saying and acting things, of which we never thought; but I do not regard what he said of me: I do not mind his bitter invectives against my ministry; I do not mind his despising my youth, and calling me novice and enthusiast; I forgive him from my very heart: but when he reflects on my Master; when he speaks against my Redeemer; when Jesus Christ is spoken against, I must speak, (I must speak indeed, or I should burst:) when he gives liberty to persons to take a chearful glass, and alledges Christ for an example, as in the marriage-feast, saying, "Christ turned water into wine, when it is plain there had been more drank than was necessary before;" what is this, but to charge Christ with encouraging drunkenness? It is true, the Governor says, "Every man in the beginning sets forth good wine, and when men have well drank, that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now:" but it does not at all follow, that it was not necessary, or that there had been a sufficient quantity before: I would not speak thus slightingly of one of my Master's miracles, for the whole world. And we may observe, that as Christ chiefly visited poor people, they might not have wherewithal to buy a sufficient quantity of wine; or having more guests

than were expected, the wine was expended sooner than they thought; then the Mother of Jesus tells him, “They have no wine;” he answers, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? My hour is not yet come.” After this he commanded them to fill the water-pots with water, and they filled them to the brim, and this water he turned into wine: now it does not at all follow, that there was more drank than was necessary; neither would the Lord Jesus Christ have continued in the house if there had. But we have an excellent lesson to learn from this miracle: by the water-pots being empty, we may understand, the heart of man being by nature destitute of his grace, his speaking and commanding to fill them, shews, that when Christ speaks, the heart that was empty of grace before, shall be filled; and the water-pots being filled to the brim, shews, that Christ will fill believers hearts brim full of the Holy Ghost: and from the Governor’s observing, that the last wine was the best, learn, that a believer’s best comforts, shall be the last and greatest, for they shall come with the greatest power upon the soul, and continue longest there: this, this my dear brethren, is the lesson we may learn from this miracle.

But one great inconsistency I cannot avoid taking notice of in this late learned preacher. In the beginning of his sermon, he charges us with “laying heavy burthens upon people, which they are not able to bear;” in the latter part he charges us with being Antinomians, whose tenets are, “So you say you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may live the life of devils.” Now, he charges us with being *too strict*, and by and by with being *too loose*. Which side, my brethren, will you take? Thus you see, when persons forsake Christ, they make strange mistakes; for there can be no greater opposition of sentiments than this letter-learned writer has made: as opposite as light and darkness, good and evil, sweet and bitter. And, on this

account, to find out these lettered-learned gentlemens notions of the new-birth, I put a paragraph in my Journal; and, blessed be God, I have obtained my desires, and have plainly perceived, that the persons who have lately written concerning the new-birth, know no more of it than a blind man does of colours, nor can they have any more notion of it, (by all their learning, falsely so called) than the blind man, who was to give an account what the sun was, and, after a considerable time allowed for study, he said, "It was like the sound of a trumpet." And till they are taught of God, they will be unacquainted with the new-birth: therefore, if you have a mind to know what the devil has to say against us, read Dr. *Trapp*'s sermons.

It is with grief I speak these things, and were not the welfare of your souls, and my Redeemer's honour at stake, I would not now open my mouth, yea I would willingly die (God is my judge) for the person who wrote such bitter things against me, so it would be a means of saving his soul. If he had only spoken against me, I would not have answered him; but, on his making my Redeemer a pattern of vice, if I was not to speak, the very stones would cry out; therefore, the honour of my Redeemer, and love to you, constrains me to speak. It is of necessity that I speak, when the divinity of Jesus Christ is spoken against, it is the duty of ministers to cry aloud, and spare not. I cannot forbear, come what will; for I know not what kind of divinity we have now among us: we must have a righteousness of our own, and do our best endeavours, and then Christ will make up the deficiency; that is, you must be your own Saviour, in part. This is not the doctrine of the gospel; this is not the doctrine of Jesus: no; Christ is all in all; Jesus Christ must be your whole wisdom; Jesus Christ must be your whole righteousness, Jesus Christ must be your whole sanctification; or Jesus Christ will never be your eternal redemption and sanctification.

Inward holiness is looked on, by some, as the effect of enthusiasm and madness; and preachers of the necessity of the new-birth, are esteemed as persons fit for *Bedlam*. Our polite and fashionable doctrine, is, "That there is a fitness in man, and that God, seeing you a good creature, bestows upon you his grace." God forbid, my dear brethren, you should thus learn Jesus Christ!

This is not the doctrine I preach to you: I say, salvation is the free gift of God. It is God's free grace, I preach unto you, not of works, lest any one should boast. Jesus Christ justifies the ungodly; Jesus Christ passed by, and saw you polluted with your blood, and bid you live. It is not of works, it is of faith: we are not justified for our faith, for faith is the instrument, but by your faith, the active as well as the passive obedience of Christ, must be applied to you. Jesus Christ hath fulfilled the law, he hath made it honourable; Jesus Christ hath made satisfaction to his Father's justice, full satisfaction; and it is as compleat as it is full, and God will not demand it again. Jesus Christ is the way; Jesus Christ is the truth; and Jesus Christ is the life. The righteousness of Jesus Christ, my brethren, must be imputed to you, or you can never have any interest in the blood of Jesus; your own works are but as filthy rags, for you are justified before God, without any respect to your works past, present, or to come. This doctrine is denyed by the learned rabbi's; but if they deny these truths of the gospel, they must not be offended, though a child dare speak to a doctor; and, in vindication of the cause of Jesus Christ, a child, a boy, by the Spirit of God, can speak to the learned clergy of this age.

If I had a voice so great, and could speak so loud, as that the whole world could hear me, I would cry, "Be not righteous over-much," by bringing your

righteousness to Christ, and by being righteous in your own eyes. Man must be abased, that God may be exalted.

The imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is a comfortable doctrine to all real Christians; and you sinners, who ask what you must do to be saved? how uncomfortable would it be, to tell you by good works, when, perhaps, you have never done one good work in all your life: this would be driving you to despair, indeed: no; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved:" therefore none of you need go away despairing. Come to the Lord Jesus by faith, and he shall receive you. You have no righteousness of your own to depend on. If you are saved, it is by the righteousness of Christ, through his atonement, his making a sacrifice for sin: his righteousness must be imputed to you, otherwise you cannot be saved. There is no difference between you, by nature, and the greatest malefactor that ever was executed at *Tyburn*: the difference made, is all owing to the free, the rich, the undeserved grace of God; this has made the difference. It is true, talking at this rate, will offend the pharisees, who do not like this levelling doctrine, (as they call it); but if ever you are brought to Jesus Christ by faith, you will experience the truth of it. Come by faith to Jesus Christ; do not come, pharisee-like, telling God what you have done, how often you have gone to church, how often you have received the sacrament, fasted, prayed, or the like: no; come to Christ as poor, lost, undone, damned sinners; come to him in this manner, and he will accept of you: do not be rich in spirit, proud and exalted, for there is no blessing attends such; but be ye poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God; they shall be made members of his mystical body here, and shall be so of the church triumphant hereafter. Acknowledge yourselves as nothing at all, and when you have done all, say, "You are unprofitable servants." There is no

salvation but by Jesus Christ; there is no other name given under heaven amongst men, whereby we may be saved, but that of the Lord Jesus. God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire; therefore strive for an interest in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ; take him on the terms offered to you in the gospel; accept of him in God's own way, lay hold on him by faith.

Do not think you are Christians; do not flatter yourselves with being righteous enough, and good enough, because you lead moral decent lives, do no one any harm, go to church, and attend upon the outward means of grace; no, my brethren, you may do this, and a great deal more, and yet be very far from having a saving, experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Beg of Christ to strike home upon your hearts, that you may feel the power of religion. Indeed, you must feel the power of God here, or the wrath of God hereafter. These are truths of the utmost consequence; therefore, do not go contradicting, do not go blaspheming away. Blessed be God, you are not such cowards to run away for a little rain. I hope good things of you; I hope you have felt the power of God; and if God should bring any of you to himself through this foolishness of preaching, you will have no reason to complain it was done by a youth, by a child: no; if I could be made an instrument to bring you to God, they may call me novice, enthusiast, or what they please, I should rejoice; yea, and I would rejoice.

O that some sinner might be brought to Jesus Christ! Do not say I preach despair: I despair of no one, when I consider God had mercy on such a wretch as I, who was running in a full career to hell: I was hasting thither, but Jesus Christ passed by and stopped me; Jesus Christ passed by me while I was in my blood, when I was polluted with filth; he passed by me, and bid me live. Thus I am a monument of God's free grace; and therefore, my brethren, I despair of none of you, when I consider, I say, what a wretch I

was. I am not speaking now out of a false humility, a pretended sanctity, as the pharisees call it: no, the truth in Christ I speak, and therefore, men and devils do your worst; I have a gracious Master will protect me; it is his work I am engaged in, and Jesus Christ will carry me above their rage.

Those who are come here this night out of curiosity to hear what the babbler says; those who come to spend an idle hour to find something for an evening-conversation at a coffee-house; or you who have stopped in your coaches as you passed by, remember that you have had Jesus Christ offered to you; I offer Jesus Christ to every one of you: perhaps you may not regard it because it is in a field. But Jesus Christ is wherever his people meet in sincerity and truth to worship him: he is not confined to church walls: he has met us here; many, very many of you know he has; and therefore you may believe on him with greater confidence.

Can you bear to think of a bleeding, panting, dying Jesus, offering himself up for sinners, and you will not accept of him? Do not say, you are poor, and therefore are ashamed to go to church, for God has sent the gospel out unto you. Do not harden your hearts: oppose not the will of Jesus.

O that I could speak to your hearts, that my words would centre there. My heart is full of love to you. I would speak, till I could speak no more, so I could but bring you to Christ. I may never meet you all, perhaps, any more. The cloud of God's providence seems to be moving. God calls me by his providence away from you, for a while. God knows whether we shall ever see each other in the flesh. At the day of judgment we shall all meet again. I earnestly desire your prayers. Pray that I may not only begin, *Jehu*-like, in the spirit, but that I may continue in it. Pray that I may not fall away, that I may not decline suffering for you, if I should be called to it. Be earnest, O be earnest with God in my behalf, that while I am preaching to others, I

may not be a cast-away. Put up your prayers for me, I beseech you. Go not to the throne of grace, without carrying me upon your heart; for you know not what influence your prayers may have. As for you, my dear brethren, God knows my heart, I continually bear you on my mind, when I go in and out before the Lord; and it is my earnest desire, you may not perish for lack of knowledge, but that he would send out more ministers to water what his own right-hand hath planted. May the Antient of Days come forth upon his white horse, and may all opposition fall to the ground. As we have begun to bruise the serpent's head, we must expect he will bruise our heel. The devil will not let his kingdom fall without raging horribly. He will not suffer the ministers of Christ to go on, without bringing his power to stop them. But fear not, my dear brethren, *David*, though a stripling, encountered the great *Goliah*; and if we pray, God will give us strength against all our spiritual enemies. Shew your faith by your works. Give the world the lye. Press forward. Do not stop, do not linger in your journey, but strive for the mark set before you. Fight the good fight of faith, and God will give you spiritual mercies. I hope we shall all meet at the right-hand of God. Strive, strive to enter in at the strait gate, that we may be borne to *Abraham*'s bosom, where sin and sorrow shall cease. No scoffer will be there, but we shall see Jesus, who died for us; and not only see him, but live with him for ever.

Which God, of his infinite mercy, &c.

SERMON X.

A Preservative against unsettled Notions, and want of Principles, in regard to Righteousness and Christian Perfection.

Being a more particular Answer to Doctor *Trapp*'s Four Sermons upon the same Text.

To all the True Members of Christ's Holy Church.

Dear Fellow Christians,

THE great, and indeed the only motive which prompted me to publish this sermon, was the desire of providing for your security from error, at a time when the deviators from, and false pretenders to truth, are so numerous, that the most discerning find it a matter of the greatest difficulty to avoid being led astray by one or by other into downright falshood. There is no running divisions upon truth; like a mathematical point, it will neither admit of subtraction nor addition: And as it is indivisible in its nature, there is no splitting the difference, where truth is concerned. Irreligion and enthusiasm are diametrical opposites, and true piety between both, like the center of an infinite line, is at an equal infinite distance from the one and the other, and

therefore can never admit of a coalition with either. The one erring by defect, the other by excess. But whether we err by defect, or excess, is of little importance, if we are equally wide of the mark, as we certainly are in either case. For whatever is less than truth, cannot be truth; and whatever is more than true must be false.

Wherefore, as the whole of this great nation seems now more than ever in danger of being hurried into one or the other of these equally pernicious extremes, irreligion or fanaticism, I thought myself more than ordinarily obliged to rouze your, perhaps, drowsy vigilance, by warning you of the nearness of your peril; cautioning you from leaning towards either side, though but to peep at the slippery precipice; and stepping between you and error, before it comes nigh enough to grapple with you. The happy medium of true Christian piety, in which it has pleased the mercy of God to establish you, is built on a firm rock, "and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it." While then you stand steadily upright in the fulness of the faith, falshood and sin shall labour in vain to approach you; whereas, the least familiarity with error, will make you giddy, and if once you stagger in principles, your ruin is almost inevitable.

But now I have cautioned you of the danger you are in from the enemies who threaten your subversion, I hope your own watchfulness will be sufficient to guard you from any surprise. And from their own assaults you have nothing to fear, since while you persist in the firm resolution, through God's grace, to keep them out, irreligion and enthusiasm, falshood and vice, impiety and false piety, will combine in vain to force an entrance into your hearts.

Take then, my dearly beloved fellow-members of Christ's mystical body, take the friendly caution I give you in good part, and endeavour to profit by

it: attend wholly to the saving truths I here deliver to you, and be persuaded, that they are uttered by one who has your eternal salvation as much at heart as his own.

"And thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, fountain of all truth, whence all wisdom flows, open the understandings of thy people to the light of thy true faith, and touch their hearts with thy grace, that they may both be able to see, and willing to perform what thou requirest of them. Drive away from us every cloud of error and perversity; guard us alike from irreligion and false pretensions to piety; and lead us on perpetually towards that perfection to which thou hast taught us to aspire; that keeping us here in a constant imitation of thee, and peaceful union with each other, thou mayest at length bring us to that everlasting glory, which thou hast promised to all such as shall endeavour to be perfect, even as the Father who is in heaven is perfect, who with thee and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns one God, world without end! *Amen, Amen.*"

Ecclesiastes vii. 16.

Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

RIGHTEOUS over-much! may one say; Is there any danger of that? Is it even possible? Can we be too good? If we give any credit to the express word of God, we cannot be too good, we cannot be righteous over-much. The injunction given by God to *Abraham* is very strong: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." The same he again lays upon all *Israel*, in the eighteenth of *Deuteronomy*: "Thou shalt be perfect, and without blemish, with the Lord thy God." And lest any should think to excuse themselves from this obligation, by saying, it ceased when the old law was abolished, our blessed Saviour ratified and explained it: "Be ye, therefore, perfect,

even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." So that until our perfection surpasses that of our heavenly Father, we can never be too good nor righteous over-much; and as it is impossible we should ever surpass, or even come up to him in the perfection of goodness and righteousness, it follows in course that we never can be good or righteous in excess. Nevertheless Doctor *Trapp* has found out that we may be righteous over-much, and has taken no small pains, with much agitation of spirit, to prove that it is a *great folly and weakness*, nay, a *great sin*. "O Lord! rebuke thou his spirit, and grant that this false doctrine may not be published to his confusion in the day of judgment!"

But if what this hasty, this deluded man advances had been true, could there be any occasion, however, of warning against it in these times, "when the danger (as he himself to his confusion owns) is on the contrary extreme; when all manner of vice and wickedness abounds to a degree almost unheard of?" I answer for the present, that "there must be heresies amongst you, that they who are approved may be made manifest."

However, this earthly-minded minister of a new gospel, has taken a text which seems to favour his naughty purpose, of weaning the well-disposed little ones of Christ from that perfect purity of heart and spirit, which is necessary to all such as mean to live to our Lord Jesus. O Lord, what shall become of thy flock, when their shepherds betray them into the hands of the ravenous wolf! when a minister of thy word perverts it to overthrow thy kingdom, and to destroy scripture with scripture!

Solomon, in the person of a desponding, ignorant, indolent liver, says to the man of righteousness: "Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" But must my angry, over-sighted brother *Trapp*, therefore, personate a character so

unbecoming his function, merely to overthrow the express injunction of the Lord to us; which obliges us never to give over pursuing and thirsting after the perfect righteousness of Christ, until we rest in him? Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he says!

What advantage might not satan gain over the elect, if the false construction, put upon this text by that unseeing teacher, should prevail! Yet though he blushes not to assist satan to bruise our heel, I shall endeavour to bruise the heads of both, by shewing,

I. *First*, The genuine sense of the text in question.

II. The character of the persons, who are to be supposed speaking here; And

III. The character of the persons spoken to.

From whence will naturally result these consequences.

First, That the Doctor was grosly (Lord grant he was not maliciously) mistaken in his explanatory sermon on this text, as well as in the application of it.

Secondly, That he is a teacher and approver of worldly maxims.

Thirdly, That he is of course an enemy to perfect righteousness in men, through Christ Jesus, and, therefore, no friend to Christ: And, therefore, that no one ought to be deluded by the false doctrine he advances, to beguile the innocent, and deceive, if possible, even the elect.

I. To come at the true sense of the text in question, it will be necessary to look back, to the preceding verse, where the wise man, reflecting on the vanities of his youth, puts on for a moment his former character. “All things, have I seen in the days of my vanity: (and among the rest) there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongeth his life in his wickedness.” Now it is very plain, that he is not

here talking of a man, who is righteous over-much, in the Doctor's manner of understanding the words, that is, "faulty, and criminal by excess." For on one side he commends him for being a just man, and full of righteousness, and yet on the other tells us, that his righteousness is the shortening of his life. Whereas, had he looked upon his perishing in righteousness to be an over-righteousness, he would never have called him a just man. Neither by a wicked man, can he mean a man given up to the utmost excess of wickedness, since he tells us, that he prolongeth his life in (or by) his wickedness. Who does not know, that the excess of almost every kind of vice, is of itself a shortener of life. So that the whole opposition and contrast lies between a good man, and a bad man. A good man whose goodness shortens his life, a bad man whose iniquity lengthens his life, or at least is not excessive enough to shorten the thread of it. *Solomon*, absorbed in these reflections, speaks here by way of *prosopopeia*, not the sense of *Solomon*, the experienced, the learned, the wise; but of the former *Solomon*, a vain young fellow, full of self-love, and the strong desires of life. In the quality of such a one then, he looks with the same eye upon the righteous man, who perishes in his righteousness, as he would on a wicked one, who should perish in his wickedness. For it is neither the righteousness of the one, nor the wickedness of the other, that offends him, but the superlative degrees of both; which tending equally to shorten life, he looks upon them as equally opposite to the self-love he fondles within him. And, therefore, he deems an excess of debauchery as great an enemy to the lasting enjoyment of the pleasures of life, as an extraordinary righteousness would be. Well then might he say to the latter, in this character, "Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish; why shouldst thou die before thy time?"

And to the former: “Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?”

What wonder then, that a youth of sprightliness and sense, but led away by self-love to be fond of the pleasures and enjoyments of life, when attained without hurry, and possessed without risk; what wonder, I say, that such a youth should conceive an equal dislike to the superlative degrees of virtue and vice, and, therefore, advise such of his companions as give into the excess of debauchery, to refrain from it: as it must infallibly tend to clog their understandings, stupify their senses, and entail upon their constitutions a train of infirmities, which cannot but debilitate their natural vigour, and shorten their days? “Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish: Why shouldst thou die before thy time?” What wonder, that the same self-love should prompt him to dissuade such of his friends or acquaintance, as he wishes to have for companions, and countenancers of his worldly-minded pursuits, from pursuing righteousness and wisdom to a degree that must destroy in them all taste of earthly pleasures, and may possibly impair their constitutions, and forward their end? “Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?”

This is the sense in which *Solomon* (placing himself in the state of vanity of his youth) speaks to the one, and the other: to the righteous, and to the ungodly. This is the true, genuine sense of the letter; and every other sense put upon it, is false and groundless, and wrested rather to pervert than explain the truth of the text. O Christian simplicity, whither art thou fled? Why will not the clergy speak truth? And why must this false prophet suffer thy people, O Lord, to believe a lye? they have held the truth in unrighteousness. Raise up, I beseech thee, O Lord, some true pastors, who may acquaint them with the nature and necessity of perfect righteousness,

and lead them to that love of Christian perfection which the angry-minded, pleasure-taking Doctor *Trapp*, labours to divert them from, by teaching, that "all Christians must have to do with some vanities."

Is not the meaning of this text plain to the weakest capacity? I have here given it to you, as I have it from the mouth of the royal preacher himself. I have made use of no "philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ," to impose a fleshly sense upon you, for the sense of the word of God. No, I have given you a natural exposition, obvious from the very words themselves. Hence you may see, my fellow-strugglers in righteousness, how grosly our angry adversary is mistaken in his explanation of this text. Lord! open his eyes, and touch his heart; and convert him, and all those erring ministers, who have seen vain and foolish things for thy people, and have not discovered their iniquity, to turn away thy captivity. For they have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way: The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink, they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

It is plain from the words of the text, that the royal Preacher was speaking in the person of a vain worldling, when he said, "Be not righteous over-much;" whereby he meant to exhort the truly righteous not to be dismayed, terrified, or disturbed from their constant pursuit of greater and greater perfection of righteousness, until they rest in Christ; notwithstanding the derision, fleshly persuasion, ill-treatment and persecution of worldly men: Who, one day, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, "These were they whom we had sometime in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools, accounted their lives madness; and their end

to be without honour. How are they numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints!"

How blind then is the application (not to say perverse) which this self-wise clergyman makes from the text, to such as, following the advice of the apostle, (*Colossians* iii. 2.) "set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Must hastiness in anger get the better of sense and truth? Must the people be misled because the pastor cannot, or will not see? Or must the injunction of Christ, "Be perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect," give place to the maxim of the heathen *Tully*: The greatest reproach to a philosopher, is to confute his doctrine by his practice; if this be the case, alas, what a deplorable, unspeakably deplorable condition is that of some Christians! Wherefore, "thus saith the Lord" concerning the prophets who make his people to err, that bite with their teeth and cry peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him: therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision, and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine, and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

But I will leave these lovers of darkness, and turn to you, O beloved, elect of God! I beseech you, by the bowels of Christ, suffer not yourselves to be deceived by their flattering, sin-soothing speeches. "Be not of that rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord: who say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." Follow not those, who flatter you in the vanities they practise themselves. O may you never be of the number of those, in the person of whom *Solomon* here says, "Be not righteous over-much;" for their character is the character of the beast.

II. The character of the persons, who are to be supposed speaking here in the text, is in a word the same with the character of those whom *Solomon* here personates: who, as is already shewn, are a vain set of men, neither righteous enough to have an habitual desire of improving virtue to its perfection, nor quite so flagitious as to give into self-destroying vices: in a word, they are self-lovers, the sole end of whose pursuits, whether indifferent, bad, or laudable in themselves, is self-enjoyment. Insomuch that they look upon virtue and vice, righteousness and wickedness, with the same eye, and their fondness or aversion for both is alike, as their different degrees appear to be the means to enhance and prolong the enjoyment of pleasure, or to lessen and shorten those pleasures. Thus any virtue, while it is kept within such bounds as may render it subservient to the pleasurable degrees of vice, will meet with no opposition from them; on the contrary, they will even commend it. But the moment it becomes a restraint to *vice in moderation* (if I may be allowed to make use of terms adequate to their system) from that moment it gives offence, and they put in their caveat, “Be not righteous over-much.” In like manner, vice, while confined to certain limits, which rather improve than obstruct pleasures, is with them a desirable good; but no sooner does it launch out into any depth, sufficient to drown and diminish the relish of those pleasures, than they declare open war against it; “Be not over-much wicked.” And the reason they assign for their opposition in both cases, is the same: “why shouldst thou destroy thyself? Why shouldst thou die before thy time?” Such is the prudence of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Such the maxims of these refined libertines, so much the more dangerous as they are less obvious; so much the more insinuating, as they are removed from certain extravagancies capable of shocking every man who has the least sense and delicacy. O

Lord, how true is it, that the sons of darkness are wiser in their generation than the sons of light!

You are not then, beloved in the Lord, to imagine that your greatest opposition, in struggling for perfect righteousness, is to come from profligates, from men whose enormous vices create horror even to themselves: no, your most dangerous, most formidable enemies, are the kind of men I have painted to you, who render vice relishable with a mixture of apparent virtue, and cloath wickedness in the apparel of righteousness; “Beware of them, for they come to you in the cloathing of sheep, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

This perverse generation will ensnare you into ungodliness, by seeming oppositions to vice, and allow you to swallow the seemings of virtue and righteousness like an emetic, only to puke forth the reality of them. They paint black, white, and the white they convert into black. Not content with seeming what they are not, they labour to make you, what they are. Righteousness and wickedness they interweave in an artful tissue, capable of deceiving the very elect, and difficult for the most discerning among them to unravel; as alms-giving and avarice, pride and humility, temperance and luxury, are dextrously blended together; while as mutual curbs to each other, they combine to stem the tide of impediments to worldly enjoyment, which might flow from extraordinary degrees on either side. Thus “Alms-giving (you are told) is very excellent,” and you believe the proposition, without knowing the particular sense it is spoken in, which is, that alms-giving is an excellent curb upon avarice, by preserving a rich man from such a superlative love of money as deprives him of the self-enjoyment of it. And upon the strength of this belief, the worldly-minded man, who labours to deceive you, gains credit enough with you to establish this

maxim, that all superlative degrees of alms-giving, are *great sins*, and that a man must never sell all he has and give it to the poor, because some may have families of their own, and ought to make sufficient provision for them, according to that proverb, "Charity begins at home;" when no one, at least scarce any one, is wise enough to know, when he has a sufficiency. O Lord, which are we to believe, these worldlings, or thee? If thou dost deceive us, why dost thou threaten us with punishments, if we do not heed thee? And if the world is deceitful, shall we not flee from it to cleave to thee?

"Pride is a great sin" even with these worldlings, inasmuch as the external excesses of it, may obstruct the way to many ambitious terminations of view, and its internal agitations are the destruction of that peace, to which even self-love aspires; besides, the frequent extravagancy of its motions may not only be prejudicial to health, but a shortner of life. And, therefore, no wonder they should object against it, "Be not over-much wicked: why shouldst thou die before thy time?" For this reason, they look upon a little mixture of humility to be not only commendable, but even necessary to curb the extravagant sallies of an over-bearing pride. But then a superlative degree of humility, that is, humility free from the least tincture of pride or vanity, which is the same with them, as "*an over-strained humility*, is a fault as well as folly;" because, forsooth, it is an expediment to the self-enjoyment of the world and its pleasures; "All Christians must have to do with some vanities, or else they must needs go out of the world indeed; for the world itself is all over vanity." 'Tis nothing, therefore, surprising, my brethren, to see a man of this cast of mind making a vain ostentation of his little superficial acquaintance, with the antient *Greeks* and *Romans*. What is this but acting conformably to his own principle, that "all Christians must have to do with some vanities?" And shall we wonder to hear such a one

prefer their writings, to those of an apostle; or be astonished to see him wound the apostle with raillery, through your sides, for wishing to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified? No, with him it is consistency to laugh and reprove you out of the perfection of righteousness, which, however he may play with terms, is with him the same as being righteous over-much; but with you it would be inconsistency, who ought to know no difference between being righteous, and living in a perpetual, habitual desire of being superlatively so. It is no more then, than you ought to expect to hear such advocates for the world cry out to you, "Be not righteous over-much: why should you destroy yourselves?" But, O Lord, surely this is not the same voice which tells us, that unless we humble ourselves like unto children, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, and that he is greatest there, who humbles himself the most like a child! But what will not men advance who are drunk with passion, and intoxicated with self-love?

"The vice of intemperance in eating, and drinking, is plain to every body," they own. And, therefore, they give it up as an excess which cannot but tend to the impairing of health, and shortening of life: nay, it drowns the very relish of pleasure in actual eating and drinking. Hence will every refined debauchee exclaim against it with Dr. *Trapp*: "Be not over-much wicked: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" Little sobriety, say they, is requisite to give a zest to luxury and worldly pleasures. But too much of it is too much, "to eat nothing but bread and herbs, and drink nothing but water, unless there be a particular reason for it (such perhaps as Doctor *Cheyne* may assign) is folly at best, (that is, even though it be done for Christ's sake) therefore no virtue:" "Be not then righteous over-much, why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" And if you should answer these carnally-minded men with the words of the apostle, *Romans* viii. "We are debtors, not to the flesh, to

live after the flesh: For if we live after the flesh, we shall die: but if we, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live." If you answer them thus, they will tell you, "this is teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." And it will be to as little purpose to answer them, with what St. *Paul* says elsewhere (*Romans* xiv. 17.) "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost:" They will not blush to tell you, that "our blessed Saviour came eating and drinking, nay worked a miracle to make wine (at an entertainment) when it is plain there had been more drank than was necessary." To such lengths does the love of the world hurry these self-fond, merry-making worldlings! Tell them of self-denial, they will not hear you, it is an encroachment upon the pleasures of life, and may shorten it of a few days, which you are never sure of possessing; it is being "righteous over-much: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" Jesus, you will say, tells us (*John* xii. 25.) "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." But this and the like, they will inform you, "are hyperbolical phrases." Now what signifies minding Jesus, when he speaks hyperbolically, that is, speaks more than is strictly true. Yet, O Lord Jesus, grant us to mind thee, whatever these worldlings may say; remind us, that if any man will come after thee, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow thee! O how enlarging is it to the soul, to take up the cross of Christ and follow him!

But you are charged, ye beloved lovers of perfect righteousness, with extravagances. You allow of "no sort of recreation or diversion; nothing but an universal mortification and self-denial; no pleasure but from religion only:" you teach "that the bodily appetites must not be in the least degree gratified, any farther than is absolutely necessary to keep body and soul

together, and mankind in being: No allowances are to be made for melancholy misfortunes, or human infirmity; grief must be cured only by prayer;" (a horrid grievance this, to such as think prayer burdensome at best) "To divert it by worldly amusements is carnal." A heavy charge this: but lest it should seem so only to those carnal persons, who are resolved to give way to their carnal appetites; what you look upon as advisable only, these perverters of truth insinuate to be looked upon by you as indispensable duties. And lest prevarication should fail, downright falshoods must be placed to your account, "so that to taste an agreeable fruit, or smell to a rose, must be unlawful with you," however you disown it. But O, my beloved Christians, be not discouraged from the pursuit of perfect righteousness by these or such vile misrepresentations. For "blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for the sake of Christ Jesus. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you."

Thus far, then, may suffice to shew clearly with what dangerous views the worldly-minded men, whom *Solomon* personates in the text before us, lay siege to your souls in fair speeches. What I have said, is enough to convince you, that their character is that of the beast, whom St. *John*, in the Revelations, "saw coming up from the sea (that is, the flagitious world) with seven heads." And what shall we say of a man, a clergyman, who teaches, and is an advocate for their perverse doctrines? May we not, nay, must we not, for the glory of God, and your good, inform you, that he is a "Teacher and approver of worldly maxims." May I not, nay, must I not, give you this caution with the royal preacher: "When he speaketh fair, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart?" But how different is

the character I have given you, from the character of the persons to whom the text under consideration is spoken: that is, the character of all such, as, like you, are resolved never to rest, ’till they rest in Christ Jesus. To shew this, I shall now pass to my third point.

III. To what sort of persons does *Solomon* in the character of a worldling address himself, when he says, “Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?” Not to the wicked, ’tis plain; for besides that it would have been an unnecessary precaution, he turns to these in the next verse with another kind of warning, which however has some analogy with this. “Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish, why shouldst thou die before thy time?” Was it then to the righteous, in a common way; that is, to such as content themselves with the observance of the absolute essentials of God’s laws? Surely our adversaries will not allow this, unless they be of opinion, that to be righteous at all, is to be righteous over-much. And yet it cannot possibly be supposed that the persons spoken to, are men perfectly righteous; since, as I proved to you, in the introduction of this discourse, till we come up to the perfection of our heavenly father, we can never be righteous *enough*, much less *perfectly* righteous: wherefore, as in this life, men cannot attain to the perfection of their heavenly father, it follows in course that the persons here spoken to, cannot be men perfectly righteous, there being no such men existing; for as St. *John* saith, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Alas, O Lord, when shall we be delivered from the body of this death?

It remains, that the persons spoken to, in the text, are such only, as persisting stedfastly in a firm adherence to all the essential laws of God, content not themselves with the practice of common virtues in a common

degree, but live in a perpetual habitude of desires, struggles, and yearnings towards an intimate union with Christ, the perfection of righteousness. They are not of the number of those righteous with indifference, who would fain blend the service of God and mammon, would fain have Christ and the world for their masters, and halting between two, like the children of *Israel* of old, with their faces to heaven, and their hearts to the earth, are neither hot nor cold. Alas, would they were cold or hot! But "because they are luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, the Lord shall spew them out of his mouth."

Not so the persons spoken to in my text; not so you, O beloved in God, who having shaken off the world and worldly affections, to run the more swiftly after righteousness, hate your own lives for the sake of Christ. Happy, happy are all you, who put on our Lord Jesus, and with him the new man! "You are the true circumcision which worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

What wonder then, Christians? To you I speak, all ye lovers and strugglers after the perfect righteousness of your divine Master Christ; what wonder is it, that you should be charged with enthusiasm, with folly, with fanaticism and madness? Were not the apostles so before you, when they preached Christ Jesus? Nay were they not reputed drunk with wine? Can you be amazed at it in an age, "when all manner of vice abounds to a degree almost unheard of," when the land is full of adulterers, and because of swearing the land mourneth. O how is the faithful city become an harlot! my heart within me is broken, because of the clergy, all my bones shake? I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome; because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness, perverted by this deluded clergyman.

When the clergy, whom Christ has appointed to teach his people "to walk before him and be perfect," become teachers of worldly maxims, what can be expected from the laity? It is notorious, that for the moralizing iniquity of the priest, the land mourns. They have preached and lived many sincere persons out of the church of *England*. They endeavour to make you vain: (as the prophets did in the days of *Jeremiah*) they speak a vision out of their own mouth, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. In a word, "both prophet and priest are prophane, and do wickedness in the very house of the Lord." Nay, they say still to them who despise the Lord, The Lord hath said, ye shall have peace; and they say to every one who walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

Such is the language, my beloved lovers of Christian perfection, which the indolent, earthly-minded, pleasure-taking clergy of the church of *England*, use to strengthen the hands of evil-doers, that none may return from his wickedness. Such is the doctrine of the letter-learned divine, who has dipped his pen in gall, to decry perfect righteousness, and to delude you from it, with a false application of that text so grosly misunderstood by him: "Be not righteous over-much, neither be thou over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" But suffer not yourselves, my fellow-christians, to be deluded by him. For as I have already shewn to you, he is grosly (Lord grant he was not maliciously) mistaken in his manner of explaining this text; and so far from making a right application of it according to the wise, the experienced *Solomon*'s intention, he acts the character of a vain libertine, full of self-love, and earthly desires, whom *Solomon* but personated, to ridicule. But the doctor by realizing that character in himself, becomes the teacher and approver of worldly maxims, which he applies to you, on purpose to destroy in you the yearnings after perfect righteousness

in Christ. May I not then, nay, must I not warn you, my beloved, that this man is an enemy to perfect righteous in men through Christ Jesus, and, therefore, no friend to Christ? O that my head was an ocean, and my eyes fountains of tears, to weep night and day for this poor creature, this hood-winked member of the clergy.

Pray you, O true Christians, pray and sigh mightily to the Lord; importune him in the behalf of this erring pastor; pray that he would vouchsafe to open the eyes, and touch the stubborn heart of this scribe, that he may become better instructed. Otherwise, as the Lord said by the mouth of his true prophet *Jeremiah*, "Behold, I will feed him with wormwood, and make him drink the water of gall; for from him is prophaneness gone forth into all the land."

This good, however, hath he done by attempting to shew the folly, sin, and danger of that which he miscalls being righteous over-much, that is, being superlatively righteous, in desire and habitual struggles; he has thereby given me the occasion to shew you, brethren, in the course of this sermon, the great and real folly, sin, and danger of not being righteous enough; which, perhaps, I should never have thought of doing, had not his false doctrine pointed out to me the necessity of doing it. Thus does the all-wise providence of God, make use of the very vices of men to draw good out of evil; and chuse their very errors to confound falsehood and make way for truth. Though this should be more than our angry adversary intended, yet, Lord, reward him according to his works; and suffer him no longer to be hasty in his words, that we may have room to entertain better hopes of him for the future.

Blessed be God for sending you better guides! I am convinced it was his divine will: our dear fellow-creature, Doctor *Trapp*, falling into such errors,

has given so great a shock to the sound religion of Christian *perfection*, that unless I had opposed him, I verily believe the whole flock who listened to his doctrine, would have been scattered abroad like sheep having no shepherd. “But woe to ye scribes and pharisees! Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord.”

Full well I know that this sermon will not be pleasing to my poor peevish adversary; but correction is not to pleasure but to profit: few children can be brought willingly to kiss the rod which rebuketh them; though, when they become of riper understanding, they will bless the hand that guided it. Thus shall this angry man, I trust, thank me one day for reproving him, when his reason shall be restored to him by the light of the holy spirit. O Lord, grant thou this light unto him, and suffer him to see with what bowels of pity and tenderness I love him in thee, even while I chasten him.

Neither am I insensible, brethren, how offensive my words will be to worldlings in general, who loving falsehood better than truth, and the flesh before the spirit, will still prefer the doctor’s sin-soothing doctrines to the plain gospel verities preached by me. O how my soul pities them. But I have done my duty, I wash my hands, and am innocent of the blood of all. I have not sought to please my hearers, but have spoken plain truth though it should offend. For what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; and hope I shall ever do so. Not that I presume to think myself already perfect. But “I press forward towards the mark, for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

None of us, as I before told you, can boast of having attained the summit of perfection; though, he is the nearest to it, who is widest from the appetites of the flesh, and he stands the highest, who is the lowliest in his own esteem: wherefore, as many of us as have made any advances towards

Christ and his kingdom, “whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

Walk not then, brethren, according to the ways of the world: but be followers of Christ together with me. And if any, even an angel of light, should presume to teach you any other gospel than that which I have here taught you, let him be accursed. “For you will find many walking, like such of whom I have told you already, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame, for they mind worldly things. But your conversation is in heaven, from whence also you look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change your vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue even all things unto himself,” even the stubborn heart of our perverse adversary.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

SERMON XI.

The Benefits of an Early Piety.

Preached at *Bow* Church, *London*, before the Religious Societies.

Ecclesiastes xii. I.

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.

THE amiableness of religion in itself, and the innumerable advantages that flow from it to society in general, as well as to each sincere professor in particular, cannot but recommend it to the choice of every considerate person, and make, even wicked men, as they wish to die the death, so in their more sober intervals, to envy the life of the righteous. And, indeed, we must do the world so much justice, as to confess, that the question about religion does not usually arise from a dispute whether it be necessary or not (for most men see the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their souls;) but when is the best time to set about it. Persons are convinced by universal experience, that the first essays or endeavours towards the attainment of religion, are attended with some difficulty and trouble, and therefore they would willingly defer the beginning of such a seemingly

ungrateful work, as long as they can. The wanton prodigal, who is spending his substance in riotous living, cries, a little more pleasure, a little more sensuality, and then I will be sober in earnest. The covetous worldling, that employs all his care and pains in "heaping up riches, though he cannot tell who shall gather them," does not flatter himself that this will do always; but hopes with the rich fool in the gospel, to lay up goods for a few more years on earth, and then he will begin to lay up treasures in heaven. And, in short, thus it is that most people are convinced of the necessity of being religious some time or another; but then, like *Felix*, they put off the acting suitably to their convictions, 'till, what they imagine, a more convenient season: whereas, would we be so humble as to be guided by the experience and counsel of the wisest men, we should learn that youth is the fittest season for religion; "Remember now thy creator, (says *Solomon*) in the days of thy youth." By the word *remember*, we are not to understand a bare speculative remembrance, or calling to mind, (for that, like a dead faith, will profit us nothing,) but such a remembrance as will constrain us to obedience, and oblige us out of gratitude, to perform all that the Lord our God shall require of us. For as the forgetting God in scripture language, implies a total neglect of our duty, in like manner remembring him signifies a perfect performance of it: so that, when *Solomon* says, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," it is the same as if he had said, keep God's commandments; or, in other words, be religious in the days of thy youth, thereby implying, that youth is the most proper season for it.

I shall in the following discourse,

First, Endeavour to make good the wise man's proposition, implied in the words of the text, and to shew that youth is the fittest season for religion.

Secondly, By way of motive, I shall consider the many unspeakable advantages that will arise from, "Remembering our Creator in the days of our youth." And,

Thirdly, I shall conclude with a word or two of exhortation to the younger part of this audience.

First, I am to make good the wise man's proposition, implied in the words of the text, and to shew that youth is the fittest season for religion: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." But to proceed more clearly in this argument, it may not be improper, first, to explain what I mean by the word *religion*. By this term, then, I would not be understood to mean a bare outward profession or naming the name of Christ; for we are told, that many who have even prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils, shall notwithstanding be rejected by him at the last day: nor would I understand by it, barely being admitted into Christ's church by baptism; for then *Simon Magus*, *Arius*, and the heresiarchs of old, might pass for religious persons; for these were baptized: nor yet the receiving the other seal of the covenant, for then *Judas* himself might be canonized for a saint; nor indeed do I mean any or all of these together, considered by themselves; but a thorough, real, inward change of nature, wrought in us by the powerful operations of the Holy Ghost, conveyed to and nourished in our hearts, by a constant use of all the means of grace, evidenced by a good life, and bringing forth the fruits of the spirit.

The attaining this real, inward religion, is a work of so great difficulty, that *Nicodemus*, a learned doctor and teacher in *Israel*, thought it altogether impossible, and therefore ignorantly asked our blessed Lord, "How this thing could be?" And, *truly*, to rectify a disordered nature, to mortify our corrupt passions, to turn darkness to light, to put off the old man, and put on

the new, and thereby to have the image of God reinstamped upon the soul, or, in one word, “to be born again,” however light some may make of it, must, after all our endeavours, be owned by man to be impossible. It is true, indeed, Christ’s yoke is said to be an easy or a gracious yoke, and his burthen light; but then it is to those only to whom grace has been given to bear and draw in it. For, as the wise son of *Sirach* observes, “At first wisdom walked with her children in crooked ways, and brings them into fear; and torments them with her discipline, and does not turn to comfort and rejoice them, ’till she has tried them and proved their judgment.” No; we must not flatter ourselves that we shall walk in wisdom’s pleasant ways, unless we first submit to a great many difficulties. The spiritual birth is attended with its pangs, as well as the natural: for they that have experienced it, (and they only are the proper judges,) can acquaint you, that in all things that are dear to corrupt nature, we must deny ourselves, lest, after all, when we come to the birth, we should want strength to bring forth.

But if these things are so; if there are difficulties and pangs attending our being born again; if we must deny ourselves, what season more proper than that of youth? When, if ever, our bodies are robust and vigorous, and our minds active and couragious; and, consequently, we are then best qualified to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

We find, in secular matters, people commonly observe this method, and send their children abroad among the toils and fatigues of business, in their younger years, as well knowing they are then fittest to undergo them. And why do they not act with the same consistency in the grand affair of religion? Because, as our Saviour has told us, “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.”

But, *Secondly*, If pure and undefiled religion consists in the renewal of our corrupted natures, then it is not only a work of difficulty, but, the perfection of it, of time.

And if this be the case, then it highly concerns every one to set about it betimes, and to "work their work while it is day, before the night cometh, when no man can work."

Could we, indeed, live to the age of *Methuselah*, and had but little business to employ ourselves in, we might then be more excusable, if we made no other use of this world, than what too many do, take our pastime therein: but since our lives are so very short, and we are called to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we have no room left for trifling, lest we should be snatched away while our lamps are untrimmed, and we are entirely unprepared to meet the Bridegroom.

Did we know a friend or neighbour, who had a long journey of the utmost importance to make, and yet should stand all the day idle, neglecting to set out till the sun was about to go down, we could not but pity and condemn his egregious folly. And yet it is to be feared most men are just such fools; they have a long journey to take, nay, a journey to eternity, a journey of infinite importance, and which they are obliged to dispatch before the sun of their natural life be gone down; and yet they loiter away the time allotted them to perform their journey in, till sickness or death surprizes them; and then they cry out, "What shall we do to inherit eternal life?" But leaving such to the mercies of God in Christ, who can call at the eleventh hour, I pass on to

The Second general thing proposed, To shew the advantages that will arise from remembering our Creator in the days of our youth; which may

serve as so many motives to excite and quicken all persons immediately to set about it.

And the first benefit resulting from thence is, that it will bring most honour and glory to God. This, I suppose, every serious person will grant, ought to be the point in which our actions should centre; for to this end were we born, and to this end were we redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, that we should promote God's eternal glory. And as the glory of God is most advanced by paying obedience to his precepts, they that begin soonest to walk in his ways, act most to his glory. The common objection against the divine laws in general, and the doctrines of the gospel in particular, is, that they are not practicable; that they are contrary to flesh and blood; and that all those precepts concerning self-denial, renunciation of and deadness to the world, are but so many arbitrary restraints imposed upon human nature: but when we see mere striplings not only practising, but delighting in such religious duties, and in the days of their youth, when, if ever, they have a relish for sensual pleasures, subduing and despising the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; this, this is pleasing to God; this vindicates his injured honour; this shews that his service is perfect freedom, "that his yoke is easy, and his burden light."

But, *Secondly*, as an early piety redounds most to the honour of God, so it will bring most honour to ourselves: for those that honour God, God will honour. We find it, therefore, remarked to the praise of *Obadiah*, that he served the Lord from his youth: of *Samuel*, that he stood, when young, before God in a linen ephod: of *Timothy*, that from a child he had known the holy scriptures: of St. *John*, that he was the youngest and most beloved disciple: and of our blessed Lord himself, that at twelve years old he went

up to the temple, and sat among the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions.

Nor, *Thirdly*, will an early piety afford us less comfort than honour, not only because it renders religion habitual to us, but also because it gives us a well-grounded assurance of the sincerity of our profession. Was there no other argument against a death-bed repentance, but the unsatisfactoriness and anxiety of such a state, that should be sufficient to deter all thinking persons from deferring the most important business of their life to such a dreadful period of it. For supposing a man to be sincere in his profession of repentance on a death-bed (which, in most cases, is very much to be doubted) yet, he is often afraid lest his convictions and remorse proceed not from a true sorrow for sin, but a servile fear of punishment. But one, who is a young saint, need fear no such perplexity; he knows that he loves God for his own sake, and is not driven to him by a dread of impending evil; he does not decline the gratifications of sense, because he can no longer "hear the voice of singing men and singing women;" but willingly takes up his cross, and follows his blessed Master in his youth, and therefore has reason to expect greater confidence of his sincerity towards God. But farther, as an early piety assures the heart of its sincerity, so, likewise, it brings its present reward with it, as it renders religion and all its duties habitual and easy. A young saint, was you to ask him, would joyfully tell you the unspeakable comfort of beginning to be religious betimes: as for his part, he knows not what men mean by talking of mortification, self-denial, and retirement, as hard and rigorous duties; for he has so accustomed himself to them, that, by the grace of God, they are now become even natural, and he takes infinitely more pleasure in practising the severest precepts of the gospel, than a luxurious *Dives* in a bed of state, or an ambitious *Haman* at a royal banquet.

And O how happy must that youth be, whose duty is become a second nature, and to whom those things, which seem terrible to others, are grown both easy and delightful!

But the greatest advantage of an early piety is still behind, *Fourthly*, It lays in the best provision of comfort and support against such times as we shall stand most in need thereof, viz. all times of our tribulation, and in particular, against the time of old age, the hour of death, and the day of judgment.

This is the argument the wise man makes use of in the words immediately following the text: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Observe, the time of old age, is an evil time, years wherein there is no pleasure: and ask those that are grown old, and they will inform you so. Cordials surely, then, must be exceeding proper to support our drooping spirits: and O what cordial comparable to the recollection of early piety, depending wholly on the righteousness of Christ? When the eyes, like *Isaac*'s, are grown dim with age; when "the keepers of the house, the hands, shall tremble," as the wise man goes on to describe the infirmities of old age; when "the strong men bow themselves," or the legs grow feeble; and the "grinders," the teeth, shall cease to do their proper office, because they are few; for a person then to hear the precepts of the gospel read over to him, and to be able to lay his hand on his heart, and to say sincerely, notwithstanding a consciousness of numberless short-comings, "All these have I endeavoured, through grace, to keep from my youth:" this must give him, through Christ who worketh all, comfort that I want words to express and thoughts to conceive. But, supposing it was possible for us to escape the inconveniences of old age, yet still death is a

debt, since the fall, we all must pay; and, what is worse, it generally comes attended with such dreadful circumstances, that it will make even a *Felix* to tremble. But as for the godly, that have been enabled to serve the Lord from their youth, it is not usually so with them; no, they have faith given them to look upon death, not as a king of terrors, but as a welcome messenger, that is come to conduct them to their wished-for home. All the days of their appointed time have they waited, and it has been the business of their whole lives to study to prepare themselves for the coming of their great change; and, therefore, they rejoice to hear that they are called to meet the heavenly Bridegroom. Thus dies the early pious, whose "path has been as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But follow him beyond the grave, and see with what an holy triumph he enters into his Master's joy; with what an humble boldness he stands at the dreadful tribunal of Jesus Christ; and can you then forbear to cry out, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end, and future state, be like his?"

Need I then, after having shewn so many advantages to arise from an early piety, use any more arguments to persuade the younger part of this audience, to whom, in the *Third* and last place, I address myself, to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth?"

What! will not all the arguments I have mentioned, prevail with them to leave their husks, and return home to eat of the fatted calf? What! will they thus requite our Saviour's love? That be far from them! Did he come down and shed his precious blood to deliver them from the power of sin; and will they spend their youthful strength and vigour in the service of it, and then think to serve Christ, when they can follow their lusts no longer? Is it fit, that many, who are endowed with excellent gifts, and are thereby qualified to be supports and ornaments of our sinking church, should,

notwithstanding, forget the God who gave them, and employ them in things that will not profit? O why will they not arise, and, like so many *Phineas's*, be zealous for the Lord of Hosts? Doubtless, when death overtakes them, they will wish they had: and what hinders them, but that they begin now? Think you that any one yet ever repented that he began to be religious too soon? But how many, on the contrary, have repented that they began when almost too late? May we not well imagine, that young *Samuel* now rejoices that he waited so soon at the tabernacle of the Lord? Or young *Timothy*, that from a child he knew the holy scriptures? And if you wish to be partakers of their joy, let me persuade you to be partakers of their piety.

I could still go on to fill my mouth with arguments; but the circumstances and piety of those amongst whom I am now preaching "the kingdom of God," remind me to change my style; and, instead of urging any more dissuasives from sin, to fill up what is behind of this discourse, with encouragements to persevere in holiness.

Blessed, for ever blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am not speaking to persons inflamed with youthful lusts, but to a multitude of young professors, who by frequently assembling together, and forming themselves into religious societies, are, I hope on good ground, in a ready way to be of the number of those "young men, who have overcome the wicked-one."

Believe me, it gladdens my very soul, to see so many of your faces set heaven-wards, and the visible happy effects of your uniting together, cannot but rejoice the hearts of all sincere Christians, and oblige them to wish you good luck in the name of the Lord. The many souls who are nourished weekly with the spiritual body and blood of Jesus Christ, by your means; the weekly and monthly lectures that are preached by your contributions;

the daily incense of thanksgiving and prayer which is publicly sent up to the throne of grace by your subscriptions; the many children which are trained up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” by your charities; and, lastly, the commendable and pious zeal you exert in promoting and encouraging divine psalmody, are such plain and apparent proofs of the benefit of your religious societies, that they call for a public acknowledgment of praise and thanksgiving to our blessed Master, who has not only put into your hearts such good designs, but enabled you also to bring the same to good effect.

It is true it has been objected, “That young mens forming themselves into religious societies, has a tendency to make them spiritually proud, and to ‘think more highly of themselves than they ought to think.’” And, perhaps, the imprudent, imperious behaviour of some novices in religion, who, “though they went out from you, were not of you,” may have given too much occasion for such an aspersion.

But you, brethren, have not so learned Christ. Far, far be it from you to look upon yourselves, as righteous, and despise others, because you often assemble yourselves together. No; this, instead of creating pride, ought to beget an holy fear in your hearts, lest your practice should not correspond with your profession, and that, after you have benefited and edified others, you yourselves should become cast-aways.

Worldly-mindedness, my brethren, is another rock against which we are in danger of splitting. For, if other sins have slain their thousands of professing Christians, this has slain its ten thousands. I need not appeal to past ages; your own experience, no doubt, has furnished you with many unhappy instances of young men, who, “after (as one would have imagined) they had escaped the pollutions which are in the world through lust,” and “had tasted

the good word of life," and endured for a season, whilst under the tuition and inspection of others: yet, when they have come to be their own masters, through a want of faith, and through too great an earnestness in "labouring for the meat which perisheth," have cast off their first love, been again entangled with the world, and "returned like the dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." You would, therefore, do well, my brethren, frequently to remind each other of this dangerous snare, and to exhort one another to begin, pursue, and end your Christian warfare, in a thorough renunciation of the world, and worldly tempers; so that, when you are obliged by Providence to provide for yourselves, and those of your respective housholds, you may continue to walk by faith, and still "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" not doubting, but all other things, upon your honest industry and endeavours, shall be added unto you.

And now, what shall I say more? To speak unto you, fathers, who have been in Christ so many years before me, and know the malignity of worldly-mindedness, and pride in the spiritual life, would be altogether needless. To you, therefore, O young men, (for whom I am distressed, for whom I fear as well as for myself) do I once more address myself, in the words of the beloved disciple, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but receive a full reward." Be ever mindful, then, of the words that have been spoken to us by the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Beware, lest ye also being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Be not high-minded, but fear. But we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is

not unrighteous, to forget your works and labours of love. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." It is true, we have many difficulties to encounter, many powerful enemies to overcome, ere we can get possession of the promised land. We have an artful devil, an ensnaring world, and above all, the treachery of our own hearts, to withstand and strive against. "For strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto eternal life." But wherefore should we fear, since he that is with us is far more powerful, than all who are against us? Have we not already experienced his almighty power, in enabling us to conquer some difficulties which seemed as insurmountable then, as those we struggle with now? And cannot he, who delivered us out of the paws of those bears and lions, preserve us also from being hurt by the strongest *Goliah*?

"Be stedfast therefore, my brethren, be immoveable." Be not "ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." Fear not man; fear not the contempt and revilings which you must meet with in the way of duty; for one of you shall chase a thousand; and two of you put ten thousand of your enemies to flight. And if you will be contented, through grace, to suffer for a short time here; I speak the truth in Christ, I lye not; then may ye hope, according to the blessed word of promise, that ye shall be exalted to sit down with the Son of Man, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels, to judgment hereafter. May Almighty God give every one of us such a measure of his grace, that we may not be of the number of those that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe and endure unto the end, to the saving of our souls, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Which God, &c.

SERMON XII.

Christ the Believer's Husband.

Isaiah liv. 5.

For thy Maker is thy Husband.

ALTHOUGH believers by nature, are far from God, and children of wrath, even as others, yet it is amazing to think how nigh they are brought to him again by the blood of Jesus Christ. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of any man living, fully to conceive, the nearness and dearness of that relation, in which they stand to their common head. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Behold, says the blessed Jesus in the days of his flesh, "my mother and my brethren." And again after his resurrection, "go tell my brethren." Nay sometimes he is pleased to term believers his *friends*. "Henceforth call I you no longer servants, but friends." "Our friend *Lazarus* sleepeth." And what is a friend? Why there is a friend that is nearer than a brother, nay, as near as one's own soul. And "thy friend, (says God in the book of *Deuteronomy*) which is as thy own soul." Kind and endearing appellations these, that undoubtedly

bespeak a very near and ineffably intimate union between the Lord Jesus and the true living members of his mystical body! But, methinks, the words of our text point out to us a relation, which not only comprehends, but in respect to nearness and dearness, exceeds all other relations whatsoever. I mean that of a *Husband*. "For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of *Israel*, the God of the whole earth shall he be called."

These words were originally spoken to the people of the *Jews*, considered collectively as a peculiar people, whom our Lord had betrothed and married to himself; and they seem to be spoken, when religion was on the decline among their churches; when they had, in a great measure, lost that life and power, which they once experienced; and their enemies began to insult them with a "where is now your God?" Such a state of things must undoubtedly be very afflicting to the true mourners in *Zion*; and put them upon crying unto the Lord in this their deep distress. He hears their prayer, his bowels yearn towards them; and in the preceding verse, he assures them, that though the enemy had broken in upon them like a flood, yet their extremity should be his opportunity to lift up a standard against him. "Fear not, (says the great Head and King of his church) for thou shalt not be ashamed (finally or totally); neither be thou confounded, (dissipated or dejected, giving up all for gone, as though thou never shouldst see better days, or another revival of religion) for thou shalt not (entirely) be put to shame;" though for a while, for thy humiliation, and the greater confusion of thy adversaries, I suffer them to triumph over thee: "For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widow-hood any more;" i.e. I will vouchsafe you such another glorious gale of my blessed Spirit, that you shall quite forget your former troubled widow-state,

and give your enemies no more occasion to insult you, on account of your infant-condition, but rather to envy you, and gnash their teeth, and melt away at the light of your unthought-of glory and prosperity. And why will the infinitely great and condescending Jesus deal thus with his people? Because the church is his spouse; "For, (as in the words just now read to you) thy Maker is thy husband; thy Redeemer, the Holy One of *Israel*;" and therefore he loves thee too well, to let thy enemies always trample thee under foot. "The Lord of Hosts is his name, the God of the whole earth shall he be called;" and therefore he is armed with sufficient power to relieve his oppressed people, and overcome and avenge himself of all their haughty and insulting foes.

This seems to be the prime and genuine interpretation of the text and context, especially if we add, that they may have a further view to the latter-day glory, and that blessed state of the church, which the people of God have been looking for in all ages, and the speedy approach of which, we undoubtedly pray for, when we put up that petition of our Lord's, "thy kingdom come."

But, though the words were originally spoken to the *Jews*, yet they are undoubtedly applicable to all believers in all ages, and, when inlarged on in a proper manner, will afford us suitable matter of discourse both for sinners and for saints; for such as know God, as well as for such who know him not; and likewise for those, who once walked in the light of his blessed countenance, but are now backslidden from him, have their harps hung upon the willows, and are afraid that their beloved is gone, and will return to their souls no more. Accordingly, without prefacing this discourse any farther, as I suppose that a mixed multitude of saints, unconverted sinners, and backsliders, are present here this day, I shall endeavour so to speak

from the words of the text, that each may have a proper portion, and none be sent empty away.

In prosecuting this design, I will,

I. Endeavour to shew, what must pass between Jesus Christ and our souls before we can say, “that our Maker is our husband.”

II. The duties of love which they owe to our Lord, who stand in so near a relation to him.

III. The miserable condition of such as cannot yet say, “their Maker is their husband.” And

IV. I shall conclude with a general exhortation to all such unhappy souls, to come and match with the dear Lord Jesus. And O! may that God who blessed *Abraham*’s servant, when he went out to seek a wife for his son *Isaac*, bless me, even me also, now I am come, I trust, relying on divine strength, to invite poor sinners, and recal backsliders, to my Master Jesus!

And *First*, I am to shew, what must pass between Jesus Christ and our souls before we can say, “Our Maker is our husband.”

But before I proceed to this, it may not be improper to observe, that if any of you, amongst whom I am now preaching the kingdom of God, are enemies to inward religion, and explode the doctrine of inward feelings, as enthusiasm, cant and nonsense, I shall not be surprized, if your hearts rise against me whilst I am preaching; for I am about to discourse on true, vital, internal piety; and an inspired apostle hath told us, “that the natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit, because they are spiritually discerned.” But, however, be noble as the *Bereans* were; search the Scriptures as they did; lay aside prejudice; hear like *Nathaniel*, with a true *Israelitish* ear; be willing to do the will of God; and then you shall,

according to the promise of our dearest Lord, “know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

I would further observe, that if any here do expect fine preaching from me this day, they will, in all probability, go away disappointed. For I came not here to shoot over people’s heads; but, if the Lord shall be pleased to bless me, to reach their hearts. Accordingly, I shall endeavour to cloath my ideas in such plain language, that the meanest negro or servant, if God is pleased to give a hearing ear, may understand me; for I am certain, if the poor and unlearned can comprehend, the learned and rich must.

This being premised, proceed we to shew what must pass between Jesus Christ and our souls, before we can say, “our Maker is our husband.”

Now, that we may discourse more pertinently and intelligibly upon this point, it may not be amiss to consider, what is necessary to be done, before a marriage between two parties amongst ourselves, can be said to be valid in the sight of God and man. And that will lead us in a familiar way, to shew what must be done, or what must pass between us and Jesus Christ, before we can say, “our Maker is our husband.”

And *First*, In all lawful marriages, it is absolutely necessary, that the parties to be joined together in that holy and honourable estate, are actually and legally freed from all pre-engagements whatsoever. “A woman is bound to her husband, (saith the apostle) so long as her husband liveth.” The same law holds good in respect to the man. And so likewise, if either party be betrothed and promised, though not actually married to another, the marriage is not lawful, till that pre-engagement and promise be fairly and mutually dissolved. Now, it is just thus between us and the Lord Jesus. For, we are all by nature born under, and wedded to the law, as a covenant of works. Hence it is that we are so fond of, and artfully go about, in order to

establish a righteousness of our own. It is as natural for us to do this, as it is to breathe. Our first parents, *Adam* and *Eve*, even after the covenant of grace was revealed to them in that promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," reached out their hands, and would again have taken hold of the tree of life, which they had forfeited, had not God drove them out of paradise, and compelled them, as it were, to be saved by grace. And thus all their descendants naturally run to, and want to be saved, partly at least, if not wholly, by their works. And even gracious souls, who are inwardly renewed, so far as the old man abides in them, find a strong propensity this way. Hence it is, that natural men are generally so fond of *Arminian* principles. "Do and live," is the native language of a proud, self-righteous heart. But before we can say, "our Maker is our husband," we must be divorced from our old husband the law; we must renounce our own righteousness, our own doings and performances, in point of dependence, whether in whole or part, as dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. For thus speaks the apostle *Paul* to the *Romans*, chapter vii. 4. "Ye also are become dead to the law (as a covenant of works) by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him, who is raised from the dead." As he also speaketh in another place, "I have espoused you, as a chaste virgin to Jesus Christ." This was the apostle's own case. Whilst he depended on his being a *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*, and thought himself secure, because, as to the outward observation of the law, he was blameless; he was an entire stranger to the divine life: but when he began to experience the power of Jesus Christ's resurrection, we find him, in his epistle to the *Philippians*, absolutely renouncing all his external privileges, and all his pharisaical righteousness; "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, nay but dung, that I may win

Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And thus it must be with us, ere we can say, "our Maker is our husband." Though we may not be wrought upon in that extraordinary way in which the apostle was, yet we must be dead to the law, we must be espoused as chaste virgins to Jesus Christ, and count all external privileges, and our most splendid performances (as was before observed) only "as dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord."

But further; before a marriage among us can stand good in law, both parties must not only be freed from all pre-engagements, but there must be a mutual consent on both sides. We are not used to marry people against their wills. This is what the *Jews* called betrothing, or espousing, a thing previous to the solemnity of marriage. Thus we find, the Virgin *Mary* is said to be espoused to *Joseph*, before they actually came together, *Matthew* i. 18. And thus it is among us. Both parties are previously agreed, and, as it were, espoused to each other, before we publish, what we call the banns of marriage concerning them. And so it will be in the spiritual marriage, between Jesus Christ and our souls. Before we are actually married or united to him by faith; or, to keep to the terms of the text, before we assuredly can say, that "our Maker is our husband," we must be made willing people in the day of God's power, we must be sweetly and effectually persuaded by the Holy Spirit of God, that the glorious *Emmanuel* is willing to accept of us, just as we are, and also that we are willing to accept of him upon his own terms, yea, upon any terms. And when once it comes to this, the spiritual marriage goes on apace, and there

is but one thing lacking to make it compleat. And what is that? An actual union.

This is absolutely necessary in every lawful marriage among men. There must be a joining of hands before witnesses, ere they can be deemed lawfully joined together. Some men indeed of corrupt minds, are apt to look upon this as a needless ceremony, and think it sufficient to be married, as they term it, in the sight of God. But whence men get such divinity, I know not. I am positive, not from the Bible; for we there read that even at the first marriage in paradise, there was something of outward solemnity; God himself (if I may so speak) being there the priest. For we are told, *Genesis* ii. 22. that, after God had made the woman, "he brought her unto the man." And indeed, to lay aside all manner of outward ceremony in marriage, would be to turn the world into a den of brute beasts. Men would then take, or forsake as many wives as they pleased, and we should soon sink into as bad and brutal a state, as those nations are, amongst whom such practices are allowed of, and who are utterly destitute of the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Whoever has experienced the power of his resurrection, I am persuaded will never plead for such a licentious practice. For the terms made use of in Scripture, to represent the mystical union between Christ and his church, such as, our being "joined to the Lord," and "married to Jesus Christ," are all metaphorical expressions, taken from some analogous practices amongst men. And as persons when married, though before twain, are now one flesh; so those that are joined to the Lord, and can truly say, "our Maker is our husband," are in the apostle's language, one spirit. This was typified in the original marriage of our first parents. When God brought *Eve* to *Adam*, he received her with joy at his hands, and said, "this is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." They had there,

primarily, but one name. For thus speaks the sacred Historian, *Genesis* v. 1, 2. “In the day that God created man, he blessed them, and called their name *Adam*.” And why? because they were one flesh, and were to have but one heart. The self-same terms are made use of in Scripture, to express the believer’s union with Jesus Christ. We are called Christians, after Christ’s name, because made partakers of Christ’s nature. Out of his fulness, believers receive grace for grace. And therefore, the marriage state, especially by the apostle *Paul*, is frequently made use of, to figure out to us the real, vital union, between Jesus Christ and regenerate souls. This is termed by the apostle, *Ephesians* v. 32. “A great mystery.” But great as it is, we must all experience it, before we can say assuredly, that “our Maker is our husband.” For what says our Lord, in that prayer he put up to his Father before his bitter passion? “Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, shall be where I am, that they may be one with thee; even as thou, O Father, and I are one, I in them, and they in me, that we all may be made perfect in one.” O infinite condescension! O ineffable union! Hence it is, that believers are said to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Hence it is, that the apostle speaking of himself, says, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” What an expression is that? How much does it comprehend? And, that we might not think this was something peculiar to himself, he puts this close question to the *Corinthians*; “Know ye not, that Christ is in you, unless you be reprobates?” Agreeable to what he says in his epistle to the *Colossians*, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” And hence it is, that our church, in the communion-office, directs the minister to acquaint all those who receive the sacrament worthily, that they are one with Christ, and Christ with them; that they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them. Words that deserve to be written in letters of gold, and which evidently shew, what

our reformers believed all persons must experience, before they could truly and assuredly say, that "their Maker is their husband."

From what has been delivered, may not the poorest and most illiterate person here present easily know whether or not he is really married to Jesus Christ. Some indeed, I am afraid, are so presumptuous as to affirm, at least to insinuate, that there is no such thing as knowing, or being fully assured, whilst here below, whether we are in Christ or not. Or at least, if there be such a thing, it is very rare, or was only the privilege of the primitive believers. Part of this is true, and part of this absolutely false. That this glorious privilege of a full assurance is very rare, is too, too true. And so it is equally too true, that real Christians, comparatively speaking, are very rare also. But that there is no such thing, or that this was only the privilege of the first followers of our blessed Lord, is directly opposite to the word of God. "We know (says St. *John*, speaking of believers in general) that we are his, by the spirit which he hath given us;" and, "He that believeth hath the witness in himself;" "because you are sons (saith St. *Paul*) God hath sent forth his Spirit into your hearts, even the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Not that I dare affirm, that there is no real Christian, but what has this full assurance of faith, and clearly knows, that his Maker is his husband. In speaking thus, I should undoubtedly condemn some of the generation of God's dear children, who through the prevalence of unbelief, indwelling sin, spiritual sloth, or it may be, for want of being informed of the privileges of believers, may walk in darkness, and see no light; therefore, though I dare not affirm, that a full assurance of faith is absolutely necessary for the very being, yet I dare assert, that it is absolutely necessary, for the well being of a Christian. And for my own part, I cannot conceive, how any persons, that pretend to Christianity, can rest satisfied or

contented without it. This is stopping short, on this side *Jordan*, with a witness. And gives others too much reason to suspect, that such persons, however high their profession may be, have, as yet, no true saving grace at all.

Men, whose hearts are set on this world's goods, or, to use our Lord's language, "the children of this world," act not so. I suppose there is scarce a single merchant in this great congregation, especially in these troublous times, that will venture out either his ship or cargo, without first insuring, both against the violence of an enemy, or a storm. And I suppose there is scarce a single house, of any considerable value, in any populous town or city, but the owner has taken out a policy from the fire-office, to insure it, in case of fire. And can I be so irrational as to think, that there is such a thing as securing my goods, and my house, and that there is no such thing as insuring, what is infinitely more valuable, my precious and immortal soul? Or if there be such a thing, as undoubtedly there is, what foolishness of folly must it needs be in men, that pretend to be men of parts, of good sense, and solid reasoning, to be so anxious to secure their ships against a storm, and their houses against a fire, and at the same time, not to be unspeakably more solicitous, to take a policy out of the assurance-office of heaven; even the seal and witness of the blessed Spirit of God, to insure their souls against that storm of divine wrath, and that vengeance of eternal fire, which will at the last decisive day come upon all those, who know not God, and have not obeyed his gracious gospel? To affirm therefore, that there is no such thing as knowing, that "our Maker is our husband;" or that it was a privilege peculiar to the first Christians, to speak in the mildest terms, is both irrational and unscriptural. Not that all who can say, their Maker is their husband, can give the same clear and distinct account of the

time, manner and means of their being spiritually united and married by faith, to the blessed bridegroom of the church. Some there may be now, as well as formerly, sanctified from the womb. And others in their infancy and non-age, as it were silently converted. Such perhaps may say, with a little *Scotch* maiden, now with God, when I asked her, whether Jesus Christ had taken away her old heart, and given her a new one? "Sir, it may be, (said she,) I cannot directly tell you the time and place, but this I know, it is done." And indeed it is not so very material, though no doubt it is very satisfactory, if we cannot relate all the minute and particular circumstances, that attended our conversion; if so be we are truly converted now, and can say, the work is done, and that, "our Maker is our husband." And I question, whether there is one single adult believer, now on earth, who lived before conversion, either in a course of secret or open sin, but can, in a good degree, give an account of the beginning and progress of the work of grace in his heart.

What think ye? Need I tell any married persons in this congregation, that they must go to the university, and learn the languages, before they can tell whether they are married or not? Or, if their marriage was to be doubted, could they not, think you, bring their certificates, to certify the time and place of their marriage; and the minister that joined them together in that holy state? And if you are adult, and are indeed married to Jesus Christ, though you may be unlearned, and what the world terms illiterate men, cannot you tell me the rise and progress, and consummation of the spiritual marriage, between Jesus Christ and your souls? Know you not the time, when you were first under the drawings of the Father, and Jesus began to woo you for himself? Tell me, O man, tell me, O woman, knowest thou not the time, or at least, knowest thou not, that there was a time, when the

blessed Spirit of God stripped thee of the fig-leaves of thy own righteousness, hunted thee out of the trees of the garden of thy performances, forced thee from the embraces of thy old husband the law, and made thee to abhor thy own righteousness, as so many filthy rags? Canst thou not remember, when, after a long struggle with unbelief, Jesus appeared to thee, as altogether lovely, mighty and willing to save? And canst thou not reflect upon a season, when thy own stubborn heart was made to bend; and thou wast made willing to embrace him, as freely offered to thee in the everlasting gospel? And canst thou not, with pleasure unspeakable, reflect on some happy period, some certain point of time, in which a sacred something (perhaps thou couldst not then well tell what) did captivate, and fill thy heart, so that thou could say, in a rapture of holy surprize, and extacy of divine love, “My Lord and my God! my beloved is mine, and I am his; I know that my Redeemer liveth;” or, to keep to the words of our text, “My Maker is my husband.” Surely, amidst this great and solemn assembly, there are many that can answer these questions in the affirmative. For these are transactions, not easily to be forgotten; and the day of our espousals is, generally, a very remarkable day; a day to be had in everlasting remembrance.

And can any of you indeed, upon good grounds say, that your Maker is your husband? May I not then (as it is customary to wish persons joy who are just entered into the marriage state) congratulate you upon your happy change, and wish you joy, with all my heart? Sure am I that there was joy in heaven on the day of your espousals: and why should not the blessed news occasion joy on earth? May I not address you in the language of our Lord to the women that came to visit his sepulchre, “All hail!” for ye are highly favoured. Blessed are ye among men, blessed are ye among women! All

generations shall call you blessed. What! “is your Maker your husband? the holy one of *Israel* your Redeemer?” Sing, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth! What an amazing stoop is this! What a new thing has God created on the earth! Do not your hearts, O believers, burn within you, when meditating on this unspeakable condescension of the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity? Whilst you are musing, does not the sacred fire of divine love kindle in your souls? And, out of the abundance of your hearts, do you not often speak with your tongues, and call upon all that is within you, to laud and magnify your Redeemer’s holy name? Is not that God-exalting, self-abasing expression frequently in your mouths, “Why me, Lord, why me?” And are you not often constrained to break out into that devout exclamation of *Solomon*, when the glory of the Lord filled the temple, “And will God indeed dwell with man?” ungrateful, rebellious, ill, and hell-deserving man! O, my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you! Tears, while I am speaking, are ready to gush out. But they are tears of love and joy. How shall I give it vent? How shall I set forth thy happiness, O believer, thou bride of God! And is thy Maker thy husband? Is his name “The Lord of hosts?” Whom then shouldst thou fear? And is thy Redeemer the holy one of *Israel*? the God of the whole earth should he be called! of whom then shouldst thou be afraid? He that toucheth thee, toucheth the very apple of God’s eye. “The very hairs of thy head are all numbered;” and “it is better that a man should have a milstone tied round his neck, and be drowned in the sea, than that he should justly offend thee.”

All hail, (I must again repeat it) thou Lamb’s bride! for thou art all glorious within, and comely, through the comeliness thy heavenly bridegroom hath put upon thee. Thy garment is indeed of wrought gold; and, ere long, the King shall bring thee forth with a raiment of needle-work,

and present thee blameless before his Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. In the mean while, well shall it be with you, and happy shall you be, who are married to Jesus Christ: for all that Christ has, is yours. "He is made of God to you, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal redemption." "Whether *Paul*, or *Cephas*, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." All his attributes are engaged for your preservation, and all things shall work together for your good, who love God, and, by being thus married to the Lord Jesus, give an evident proof that you are called according to his purpose. What say you? When you meditate on these things, are you not frequently ready to cry out, What shall we render unto the Lord for all these mercies, which, of his free unmerited grace, he hath been pleased to bestow upon us? For, though you are dead to the law, as a covenant of works, yet you are alive to the law as a rule of life, and are in, or under the law (for either expression seems to denote the same thing) to your glorious husband, Jesus Christ.

Pass we on therefore to the

Second general head, under which I was to shew, what duties of love they owe to Jesus Christ, who are so happy as to be able to say, "My Maker is my husband."

I say, duties of love. For being now married to Jesus Christ, you work not for life, but from life. The love of God constrains you, so that, if there was no written law, or supposing Jesus would set you at liberty from his yoke, so far as grace prevails in your hearts, you would say, we love our blessed bridegroom, and will not go from him.

And what does the Lord require of you? That we may speak on this head as plainly as may be, we shall pursue the method we begun with; and, by carrying on the allegory, and examining what is required of truly Christian

wives, under the gospel, infer what our Lord may justly demand of those who are united to him by faith, and can therefore say, “our Maker is our husband.”

And here let us go to the law and to the testimony. What says the scripture? “Let the wife see that she *reverence* her husband.” It is, no doubt, the duty of married women to think highly of their husbands. From whom may husbands justly command respect, if not from their wives? The apostle’s expression is emphatical. “Let the wife see that she reverence her husband;” thereby implying, that women, some of them at least, are too prone to disrespect their husbands; as *Michal*, *Saul*’s daughter, despised *David* in her heart, when she tauntingly said, 2 *Samuel* vi. 20. “How glorious was the king of *Israel* to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamlessly uncovereth himself.”

This is a source and fountain, from whence many domestic evils frequently flow. Women should remember the character that husbands sustain in scripture. They are to them, what Christ is to the church. And it is mentioned to the honour of *Sarah*, that she called *Abraham* “Lord.” “Shall I have a child who am old, *my Lord* being old also?” It is remarkable, there are but two good words in that whole sentence, “my Lord,” (for all the others are the language of unbelief) and yet those two words the Holy Ghost mentions to her eternal honour, and buries, as it were, the rest in oblivion. “Even as *Sarah* (says St. *Peter*) obeyed *Abraham*, calling him Lord.” An evident proof how pleasing it is in the sight of God, for women in the married state to reverence and respect their husbands. Not that husbands therefore should lord it over their wives, or require too much respect at their hands. This would be unchristian, as well as ungenerous, indeed. They

ought rather, as God has taken such care to keep up their authority, commanding their wives to reverence and respect them; they ought, I say, to be doubly careful, that they live so holy and unblameable, as to lay their wives under no temptation to despise them. But to return from this digression. Does the apostle say, “Let the wife see that she reverence her husband?” May I not pertinently apply this caution to you who are married to Jesus Christ? See to it that you reverence and respect your husband. I say, *see to it*. For the devil will be often suggesting to you hard and mean thoughts against your husband. It was thus he beset our mother *Eve*, even in a state of innocence. He would fain persuade her to entertain hard thoughts of her glorious benefactor. “What, has God said, ye shall not eat of the trees of the garden?” Has he been so cruel to put you here in a beautiful garden only to vex and teize you? This he made use of as an inlet to all his succeeding insinuations. And this trade he is still pursuing, and will be pursuing to the very end of time. Besides, in the eyes of the world, Jesus Christ has no form or comeliness that they should desire him; and therefore, unless you “watch and pray,” you will be led into temptation, and not keep up such high thoughts of your blessed Jesus as he justly deserves. In this you can never exceed. Women, perhaps, may sometimes think too highly of, and, through excess of love, idolize their earthly comforts. But it is impossible for you to think too highly of your heavenly husband, Jesus Christ.

Farther, what says the apostle in his epistle to the *Ephesians*? Speaking of the marriage state, he says, “The wife is the *glory* of her husband;” as though he had said, a Christian wife should so behave, and so walk, as to be a credit to her husband. As *Abigail* was an honour to *Nabal*, and by her sweet deportment made up, in some degree, for her husband’s churlishness.

This is to be a help-meet indeed. Such a woman will be praised in the gate; and her husband get glory, and meet with respect on her account. And ought a woman to be the glory of her husband? How much more ought you, that are the Lamb's bride, so to live, and so to walk, as to bring glory, and gain respect, to the cause and interest of your husband Jesus? This is what the apostle every where supposes, when he would draw a parallel between a temporal and spiritual marriage. "The woman, is the glory of her husband, even as the church is the glory of Christ." Agreeable to this, he tells the *Corinthians*, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God;" and as he also speaks to the *Thessalonians*, 1 *Thessalonians* ii. 11, 12. "As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you (as a father doth his children) that you would walk worthy of God who hath called you to his kingdom, and his glory." What an expression is here! "That you would walk worthy of God." O! how ought this, and such like texts, to stir up your pure minds, O believers, so to have your conversation in this world, that you may be what the apostle says some particular persons were, even "the glory of Christ." You are his glory; he rejoices over you with singing; and you should so walk, that all who know and hear of you, may glorify Christ in you.

Subjection, is another duty, that is enjoined married women, in the word of God. They are to "be subject to their own husbands in every thing," every lawful thing: "For, the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." And knowing how unapt some base minds would be to submit to the husband's authority, he takes care to enforce this duty of subjection by many cogent and powerful arguments. "For *Adam* was first made, and not *Eve*. Neither was the man made for the woman, but the woman for the man." And again, "The man was not first in the

transgression, but the woman." Upon which accounts, subjection was imposed on her as part of her punishment. "Thy desire (says God) shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule (though not tyrannize) over thee." So that, to use the words of pious Mr. *Henry*, those who attempt to usurp authority over their husbands, not only contradict a divine command, but thwart a divine curse. And if women are to be subject to their own husbands in every thing, how much more ought believers, whether men or women, to be subject to Jesus Christ: for he is the head of the church. He has bought her by his blood. Believers therefore are not their own, but are under the highest obligations to glorify and obey Jesus Christ, in their bodies and their souls, which are his. Add to this, that his service, as it is admirably expressed in one of our collects, is perfect freedom. His commandments holy, just, and good. And therefore it is your highest privilege, O believers, to submit to, and obey them. Earthly husbands may be so mean as to impose some things upon their wives, merely to shew their authority; but it is not so with Jesus Christ. He can and does impose nothing, but what immediately conduces to our present, as well as future good. In doing, nay, in suffering for Jesus Christ, there is a present unspeakable reward. And therefore I may say to believers, as the blessed Virgin said to the servants at the marriage in *Cana*, "Whatsoever he says unto you, do it." "For his yoke is easy, and his burden is light." And I believe it might easily be proved in a few minutes, that all the disorders which are now in the world, whether in church or state, are owing to a want of being universally, unanimously, chearfully, and perseveringly conformed to the laws and example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Again, *Faithfulness* in the marriage state, is strictly enjoined in the scriptures of truth. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.

But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Nay, adultery is an iniquity to be punished by the earthly judges; it dissolves the marriage relation. "For the man has not power over his own body, but the woman; neither has the woman power over her own body, but the man." The heathens themselves have been taught this by the light of nature; and adultery, among some of them, is punished with immediate death. And ought married persons to be thus careful to keep the marriage-bed undefiled, how carefully then ought believers to keep their souls chaste, pure, and undefiled, now they are espoused to Jesus Christ? For there is such a thing as spiritual adultery; "O ye adulterers and adulteresses," saith St. *James*. And God frequently complains of his people's playing the harlot. Hence it is, that St. *John*, in the most endearing manner, exhorts believers to "keep themselves from idols." For the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and pride of life, are always ready to steal away our hearts from Jesus Christ. And every time we place our affections upon any thing more than Christ, we do undoubtedly commit spiritual adultery. For we admit a creature to rival the Creator, who is God over all, blessed for evermore. "Little children, therefore, keep yourselves from idols."

But it is time for me to draw towards the close of this head. *Fruitfulness* was a blessing promised by God to the first happy pair; "Increase and multiply, and replenish the earth." "Lo, children, and the fruit of the womb, (says the Psalmist) are a gift and heritage, which cometh of the Lord." And so, if we are married to Jesus Christ, we must be fruitful. In what? In every good word and work: for thus speaks the Apostle, in his epistle to the *Romans*: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." What follows? "That we should bring forth fruit unto

God." Glorious words, and proper to be considered in a peculiar manner, by such who would explode the doctrine of free justification, as an *Antinomian* doctrine, and as though it destroyed good works. No; it establishes, and lays a solid foundation, whereon to build the superstructure of good works. *Titus* is therefore commanded to "exhort believers to be careful to maintain good works." And "herein (says our Lord) is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven:" with a multitude of passages to the same purpose.

Moreover, it is required of wives, that they not only love and reverence their husbands, but that they also love and respect their *husband's friends*. And if we are married to Jesus Christ, we shall not only reverence the bridegroom, but we shall also love and honour the bridegroom's friends. "By this, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." "By this we know, (says the beloved disciple) that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." Observe, *the brethren*, indefinitely, of whatever denomination. And this love must be "without dissimulation, and with a pure heart fervently." This was the case of the primitive Christians. They were all of one heart, and of one mind. It was said of them (O that it could be said of us!) "See how these Christians love one another!" They were of the same spirit as a good woman of *Scotland* was, who, when she saw a great multitude, as is customary in that country, coming from various parts to receive the blessed sacrament, saluted them with a "Come in, ye blessed of the Lord, I have an house that will hold an hundred of you, and a heart that will hold ten thousand." Let us go and do likewise.

Once more. Persons that are married, take one another *for better* or *for worse*, for richer or for poorer, to love and to cherish each other in sickness and in health. And if we are married to Jesus Christ, we shall be willing to bear his *cross*, as well as to wear his *crown*. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Neither will they be compelled to do this, as *Simon* of *Cyrene* was, but they will be volunteers in his service; they will cry out, Crown him, crown him, when others are crying out, “Crucify him, crucify him.” They will never leave or forsake him, but willingly follow the Captain of their salvation, though it be through a sea of blood.

I might run the parallel still further, and also enlarge upon the hints already given; but I fear I have said enough already to reproach most believers; I am sure I have said more than enough to abash and upbraid myself. For alas! how vilely, treacherously, and ungratefully have we behaved towards our spiritual husband, the dear Lord Jesus, ever since the day of our espousals? Had our friends, or even the wives of our own bosoms, behaved to us as we have behaved to our great and best friend, our glorious husband, we should have broken off our friendship, and sued for a bill of divorcement long ago. Under our first love, what promises did we make to him? But how frowardly have we behaved ourselves in this covenant? How little have we reverenced him? How often has our Beloved been no more to us than another beloved? How little have we lived to his glory? Have we not been a shame and reproach to his gospel? Have we not crucified him afresh, and has he not been sorely wounded in the house of his friends? Nay, has not his holy name been blasphemed through our means? For alas! how little have we obeyed him? How careless and indifferent have we been, whether we pleased him or not? We have often

said, indeed, when commanded by him to go work in his vineyard, We go, Lord; but alas! we went not. Or if we did go, with what reluctance has it been? How unwilling to watch with our dear Lord and Master, only one hour? And of his sabbaths, how often have we said, What a weariness is this? As for our adulteries, and spiritual fornications, how frequent, how aggravated have they been? Have not idols of all sorts, been suffered to fill up the room of the ever-blessed Jesus in our hearts? You that love him in sincerity, will not be offended if I tell you, that the xvith chapter of *Ezekiel* gives, in my opinion, a lively description of our behaviour towards our Lord. We were, like base-born children, cast out in the field to the loathing of our persons: no eye pitied or had compassion on us. Jesus passed by, saw us polluted in our own blood, and said unto us, "Live," i.e. preserved us, even in our natural state, from death. And when his time of love was come, he spread the skirt of his imputed righteousness over us, and covered the nakedness of our souls, entered into covenant with us, and we became his. He washed us also with water, even in the laver of regeneration, and thoroughly washed us by his precious blood, from the guilt of all our sins. He cloathed us also with broidered work, and decked us with ornaments, even with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We did eat fine flour and honey at his ordinances, and we fed on Jesus Christ in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving. In short, we were made exceeding beautiful, and the kingdom of God was erected in our hearts. We were renowned among our neighbours for our love to God, and all that knew us took knowledge of us, that we had been with Jesus. But alas! how have we fallen, who were once sons of the morning! How have we trusted in our own beauty, have grown spiritually proud, and provoked our patient and unspeakably long-suffering Lord to anger? Where is that ardent love we

spake of, when we told him, that, though we should die for him, we would not deny him in any wise? How desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things, have we proved our hearts to be, since we have done all these things, even the work of an imperious woman? These are great and numerous charges; but great and numerous as they are, there is not a single believer here present, but, if he knows his own heart, may plead guilty to some, or all of them. But this is a tender point: I see you concerned: your tears, O believers, are a proof of the anguish of your souls. And can any of us give any reason, why Jesus Christ should not give us a bill of divorcement, and put us away? May he not justly speak to us as he did to his adultress *Israel*, in the forementioned xvith of *Ezekiel*, "Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord; I will judge thee as women that break wedlock, and shed blood, are judged. I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy, because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things. Behold, therefore, I also will recompence thy way upon thy head. I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, who hast despised the oath, in breaking the covenant, the marriage contract that was between us." This, I am persuaded, you will confess to be the treatment which we all most justly deserve. But be not overwhelmed with over-much sorrow: for though the Lord our God is a jealous God, and will certainly visit our offences with a rod, and our backslidings with a spiritual scourge, yet his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from us, nor suffer his truth to fail. Though we have changed, yet he changeth not: He abideth faithful: his loving-kindness abideth for evermore. Hark! how sweetly he speaks to his backsliding people of old; "O *Israel*, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help. I will heal their backsliding, and love them freely." And in the verses immediately following the words of the text, how comfortably does he

address his espoused people! “In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of *Noah* unto me: for as I have sworn, that the waters of *Noah* should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn, that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” O that this goodness may lead us to repentance! O that this unparalleled, infinite, unchangeable love, may constrain us to an universal, uniform, chearful, unanimous, persevering obedience to all the commands of God!

Brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you, and I could dwell a long while upon the many great and precious invitations that are made to backsliders, to return to their first love, and do their first works: but it is high time for me, if, as was proposed,

III. I give to every one their proper portion; to speak to those poor souls, who know nothing of this blessed Bridegroom of the church, and consequently cannot yet say, “My Maker is my husband.”

Ah! I pity you from my inmost soul; I could weep over, and for you, though perhaps you will not weep for yourselves. But surely you would weep, and howl too, did you know the miserable condition those are in, who are not married to Jesus Christ. Will you give me leave (I think I speak it in much love) to inform you, that if you are not married to Jesus Christ, you are married to the law, the world, the flesh, and the devil, neither of which can make you happy; but all, on the contrary, concur to make you miserable. Hear ye not, ye that are married to the law, and seek to be justified in the sight of God, partly, at least, if not wholly, by your own

works, what the law saith to those that are under it, as a covenant of works? “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.” Every word breathes threatening and slaughter to poor fallen creatures. Cursed, both here and hereafter, be this man, and every one, naturally engendered of the offspring of *Adam*, without exception, that continueth not, even to the very end of life, in all things; not only in some, or many, but in all things, that are written in the book of the law, to do them, in the utmost perfection: for “he that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.” So that, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, whosoever is guilty of one wicked thought, word, or action, is under the curse of an angry sin-avenging God. “For as many as are under the law, are under the curse.” And do you know what it is to be under the curse of God, and to have the Wrath of God abide upon you? If you did, I believe you would not be so unwilling to be divorced from the law, and be espoused, as chaste virgins, to Jesus Christ.

And why are ye so wedded to the world? Did it ever prove faithful or satisfactory to any of its votaries? Has not *Solomon* reckoned up the sum total of worldly happiness? And what does it amount to? “Vanity, vanity, saith the preacher, all is vanity,” nay he adds, “and vexation of spirit.” And has not a greater than *Solomon* informed us, that a man’s life, the happiness of a man’s life, doth not consist in the things which he possesseth? Besides, “know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God; so that whosoever will be a friend to the world, (to the corrupt customs and vices of it) is an enemy to God?” And what better reasons can you give for being wedded to your lusts? Might not the poor slaves in the gallies, as reasonably be wedded to their chains? For do not your lusts fetter down your souls from God? Do they not lord it, and have they not dominion over you? Do

not they say, Come, and ye come; Go, and ye go; Do this, and ye do it? And is not he or she that liveth in pleasure, dead, whilst he liveth? And above all, how can ye bear the thoughts of being wedded to the devil, as every natural man is: for thus speaks the scripture, “He now ruleth in the children of disobedience.” And how can ye bear to be ruled by one, who is such a professed open enemy to the most high and holy God? Who will make a drudge of you, whilst you live, and be your companion in endless and extreme torment, after you are dead? For thus will our Lord say to those on the left hand, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” But,

IV. Will you permit me, O sinners, that I may draw towards a close of this discourse, to propose a better match to your souls. This is a part of the discourse which I long to come to, it being my heart’s desire, and earnest prayer to God, that your souls may be saved. “And now, O Lord God Almighty, thou Father of mercies, and God of all consolations, thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast promised to give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, send me good speed this day, O Lord, send me now prosperity. Behold, I stand here without the camp, bearing a little of thy dear Son’s sacred reproach! Hear me, O Lord, hear me, and according to thy word, let thy dear, thine only begotten Son, see of the travel of his soul, and be satisfied! O help me so to speak, that many may believe on, and cleave unto thy blessed, thine holy child Jesus!”

But who am I, that I should undertake to recommend the blessed Jesus to others, who am myself altogether unworthy to take his sacred name into my polluted lips? Indeed, my brethren, I do not count myself worthy of such an honour; but since it has pleased him, in whom all fulness dwells, to count

me worthy, and put me into the ministry, the very stones would cry out against me, did I not attempt, at least, to lisp out his praise; and earnestly recommend the ever-blessed Jesus to the choice of all.

Thus *Abraham*'s faithful servant behaved, when sent out to fetch a wife for his master *Isaac*. He spake of the riches and honours, which God had conferred on him; but what infinitely greater honours and riches, has the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, conferred on his only Son, to whom I now invite every christless sinner! To you, therefore, I call, O ye sons of men, assuring you, there is every thing in Jesus that your hearts can desire, or hunger and thirst after. Do people in disposing of themselves or their children in marriage, generally covet to be matched with persons of *great names*? Let this consideration serve as a motive to stir you up to match with Jesus. For God the Father has given him a name above every name; he has upon his vesture, and upon his thigh, a name written, "The King of kings, and the Lord of lords;" and here in the text we are told, "The Lord of Hosts is his name." Nor has he an empty title, but power equivalent; for he is a prince, as well as a saviour. "All power is given unto him, both in heaven and on earth:" "The God of the whole earth, (says our text) he shall be called." The government of men, of the church, and of devils, is put upon his shoulders: "Thrones, principalities and powers, are made subject unto him; by him kings reign, and princes decree justice; he setteth up one, and putteth down another: and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Will *riches* be an inducement unto you to come and match with Jesus? Why then, I can tell you, the riches of Jesus are infinite: for unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach to poor sinners, the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. I appeal to you that are his saints, whether you have not found this true, by happy experience; and

though some of you, may have been acquainted with him thirty, forty, fifty years ago, do you not find his riches are yet unsearchable, and as much past finding out, as they were the very first moment in which you gave him your hearts!

Would you match with a *wise husband*? Haste then, sinners, come away to Jesus: He is the fountain of wisdom, and makes all that come unto him, wise unto salvation; "He is the wisdom of the Father: the Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. When he prepared the heavens, he was there; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then was he with him, as one brought up with him; he was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." As he is wise, so is he *holy*; and therefore, in the words of our text, he is stiled, "The Redeemer, the Holy One of *Israel*:" and by the angel *Gabriel*, "That holy Thing." The apostles, addressing God the Father, stile him his "holy child Jesus:" and the spirits of just men made perfect, and the angels in heaven, cease not day or night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy." Nor is his *beauty* inferior to his wisdom or holiness; the seraphs veil their faces, when they appear before him: "He is the chiefest among ten thousand, nay, he is altogether lovely." And, as he is altogether lovely, so is he altogether *loving*: his name and his nature is Love. God, God in Christ is love: love in the abstract. And in this has he manifested his love, in that, whilst we were yet sinners, nay open enemies, Jesus, in his own due time, died for the ungodly. He loved us so as to give himself for us. O what manner of love is this! What was *Jacob*'s love to *Rachel*, in comparison of the love which Jesus bore to a perishing world! He became a curse for us. For it is written, "Cursed is every man that hangeth upon a tree." What *Zipporah* said to her husband improperly, Jesus may say properly to his spouse the church, "A bloody wife hast thou been to me, because of the

crucifixion." For he has purchased her with his own blood. And having once loved his people, he loves them unto the end. His love, like himself, is from everlasting to everlasting. He hates putting away: though we change, yet he changeth not: he abideth faithful. When we are married here, there comes in that shocking clause, to use the words of holy Mr. *Boston*, "Till death us doth part;" but death itself shall not separate a true believer from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord: for he will never cease loving his Bride, till he has loved her to heaven, and presented her before his Father, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Nay, his love will, as it were, but be beginning, through the endless ages of eternity.

And now, Sirs, what say you? Shall I put that question to you, which *Rebecca*'s relations, upon a proposal of marriage, put to her? "Will ye go with the man?" With the God-man, this infinitely great, this infinitely powerful, this all-wise, all-holy, altogether lovely, ever-loving Jesus? What objection have you to make against such a gracious offer? One would imagine, you had not a single one; but it is to be feared, through the prevalency of unbelief, and the corruption of your desperately wicked deceitful hearts, you are ready to urge several. Methinks I hear some of you say within yourselves, "We like the proposal, but alas! we are poor." Are you so? If that be all, you may, notwithstanding, be welcome to Jesus: "For has not God chosen the poor of this world, to make them rich in faith, and heirs of his everlasting kingdom?" And what says that Saviour, to whom I am now inviting you? "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And what says his Apostle concerning him? "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." But say you, "We are not only poor, but we are in debt; we owe God ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay;" but that

need not keep you back: for God the Father, from the Lord Jesus, his dearly beloved Son, has received double for all believers sins: the blood of Jesus cleanseth from them all. But you are blind, and miserable, and naked; to whom then should you fly for succour, but to Jesus, who came to open the eyes of the blind, to seek and save the miserable and lost, and cloath the naked with his perfect and spotless righteousness. And now, what can hinder your espousals with the dear and ever-blessed Lamb of God? I know but of one thing, that dreadful sin of unbelief. But this is my comfort, Jesus died for unbelief, as well as for other sins, and has promised to send down the Holy Spirit to convince the world of this sin in particular: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send the Comforter, and he will convince the world of sin." What sin? of unbelief; "because they believe not on me." O that this promise may be so fulfilled in your hearts, and Jesus may so become the author of divine faith in your souls, that you may be able to send me the same message as a good woman in *Scotland*, on her dying bed, sent me by a friend: "Tell him, (says she) for his comfort, that at such a time he married me to the Lord Jesus." This would be comfort indeed. Not that we can marry you to Christ: No; the Holy Ghost must tie the marriage knot. But such honour have all God's ministers; under him they espouse poor sinners to Jesus Christ. "I have espoused you (says St. *Paul*) as a chaste virgin to Jesus Christ." O that you may say, We will go with the man; then will I bow my head, as *Abraham*'s servant did, and go with joy and tell my Master, that he has not left his poor servant destitute this day: then shall I rejoice in your felicity. For I know, my Master will take you into the banqueting-house of his ordinances, and his banner over you shall be love. That this may be the happy case of you all, may the glorious God grant, for the sake of Jesus his dearly beloved

Son, the glorious bridegroom of his church; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. *Amen*, and *Amen*.

SERMON XIII.

The Potter and the Clay.

Jeremiah xviii. 1-6.

The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hands of the potter, so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

AT sundry times, and in divers manners, God was pleased to speak to our fathers by the prophets, before he spoke to us in these last days by his Son. To *Elijah*, he revealed himself by a small still voice. To *Jacob*, by a dream. To *Moses*, he spake face to face. Sometimes he was pleased to send a favourite prophet on some especial errand; and whilst he was thus employed, vouchsafed to give him a particular message, which he was

ordered to deliver without reserve to all the inhabitants of the land. A very instructive instance of this kind we have recorded in the passage now read to you. The first verse informs us that it was a word, or message, which came immediately from the Lord to the prophet *Jeremiah*. At what time, or how the prophet was employed when it came, we are not told. Perhaps, whilst he was praying for those who would not pray for themselves: Perhaps, near the morning, when he was slumbering or musing on his bed. For the word came to him, saying, "Arise." And what must he do when risen? He must "go down to the potter's house" (the prophet knew where to find it) "and there (says the great Jehovah) I will cause thee to hear my words." *Jeremiah* does not confer with flesh and blood, he does not object that it was dark or cold, or desire that he might have his message given him there, but without the least hesitation is immediately obedient to the heavenly vision. "Then (says he) I went down to the potter's house, and behold he wrought a work upon the wheels." Just as he was entering into the house or workshop, the potter, it seems, had a vessel upon his wheel. And was there any thing so extraordinary in this, that it should be ushered in with the word Behold? What a dreaming visionary, or superstitious enthusiast, would this *Jeremiah* be accounted, even by many who read his prophecies with seeming respect, was he alive now? But this was not the first time *Jeremiah* had heard from heaven in this manner. He therefore willingly obeyed; and had you or I accompanied him to the potter's house, I believe we should have seen him silently, but intensely waiting upon his great and all-wise Commander, to know wherefore he sent him thither. Methinks I see him all attention. He takes notice, that "the vessel was of clay;" but as he held it in his hand, and turned round the wheel, in order to work it into some particular form, "it was marred in the hands of the

potter," and consequently unfit for the use he before intended to put it to. And what becomes of this marred vessel? Being thus marred, I suppose, the potter, without the least imputation of injustice, might have thrown it aside, and taken up another piece of clay in its room. But he did not. "He made it again another vessel." And does the potter call a council of his domestics, to enquire of them what kind of vessel they would advise him to make of it? No, in no wise. "He made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it."

"Then," adds *Jeremiah*, whilst he was in the way of duty—then—whilst he was mentally crying, Lord what wouldst thou have me to do? "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, O house of *Israel*, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the hands of the potter (marred, and unfit for the first designed purpose) so are ye in mine hand, O house of *Israel*." At length, then, *Jeremiah* hath his sermon given to him: short, but popular. It was to be delivered to the whole house of *Israel*, princes, priests, and people: short, but pungent, even sharper than a two-edged sword. What! says the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, must I be denied the privilege of a common potter? May I not do what I will with my own? "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hands, so are ye in mine hands, O house of *Israel*. I made and formed you into a people, and blessed you above any other nation under heaven: but, O *Israel*, thou by thy backslidings hast destroyed thyself. As the potter therefore might justly have thrown aside his marred clay, so may I justly unchurch and unpeople you. But what if I should come over the mountains of your guilt, heal your backslidings, revive my work in the midst of the years, and cause your latter end greatly to increase? Behold, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, lying at his disposal, either to be destroyed or formed into another vessel, so

are ye in my hands, O house of *Israel*: I may either reject, and thereby ruin you, or I may revisit and revive you according to my own sovereign good will and pleasure, and who shall say unto me, what dost thou?"

This seems to be the genuine interpretation, and primary intention of this beautiful part of holy writ. But waving all further enquiries about its primary design or meaning, I shall now proceed to shew, that what the glorious Jehovah here says of the house of *Israel* in general, is applicable to every individual of mankind in particular. And as I presume this may be done, without either wire-drawing scripture on the one hand, or wresting it from its original meaning on the other, not to detain you any longer, I shall, from the passage thus explained and paraphrased, deduce, and endeavour to enlarge on these two general heads.

First, I shall undertake to prove, that every man naturally engendered of the offspring of *Adam*, is in the sight of the all-seeing, heart-searching God, only as a "piece of marred clay."

Secondly, That being thus marred, he must necessarily be renewed: and under this head, we shall likewise point out by whose agency this mighty change is to be brought about.

These particulars being discussed, way will naturally be made for a short word of application.

First, To prove that every man naturally engendered of the offspring of *Adam*, is in the sight of an all-seeing, heart-searching God, only as a piece of marred clay.

Be pleased to observe, that we say every man *naturally* engendered of the offspring of *Adam*, or every man since the fall: for if we consider man as he first came out of the hands of his Maker, he was far from being in such melancholy circumstances. No: he was originally made upright; or as

Moses, that sacred penman, declares, “God made him after his own image.” Surely never was so much expressed in so few words; which hath often made me wonder how that great critic *Longinus*, who so justly admires the dignity and grandeur of *Moses*’s account of the creation, and “God said, Let there be light, and there was light;” I say I have often wondered why he did not read a little further, and bestow as just an encomium upon this short, but withal inexpressibly august and comprehensive description of the formation of man, “so God created man in his own image.” Struck with a deep sense of such amazing goodness, and that he might impress yet a deeper sense of it upon our minds too, he immediately adds, “in the image of God made he him.” A council of the most adorable Trinity was called on this important occasion: God did not say, Let there be a man, and there was a man, but God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” This is the account which the lively oracles of God do give us of man in his first estate: but it is very remarkable, that the transition from the account of his creation to that of his misery, is very quick, and why? For a very good reason, because he soon fell from his primeval dignity; and by that fall, the divine image is so defaced, that he is now to be valued only as antiquarians value an ancient medal, merely for the sake of the image and superscription once stamped upon it; or of a second divine impress, which, through grace, it may yet receive.

Let us take a more particular survey of him, and see whether these things are so or not: and first, as to his *understanding*. As man was created originally “after God in knowledge,” as well as righteousness and true holiness, we may rationally infer, that his understanding, in respect to things natural, as well as divine, was of a prodigious extent: for he was made but a little lower than the angels, and consequently being like them, excellent in

his understanding, he knew much of God, of himself, and all about him; and in this as well as every other respect, was, as Mr. *Collier* expresses it in one of his essays, a perfect major: but this is far from being our case now. For in respect to *natural things*, our understandings are evidently darkened. It is but little that we can know, and even that little knowledge which we can acquire, is with much weariness of the flesh, and we are doomed to gain it as we do our daily bread, I mean by the sweat of our brows.

Men of low and narrow minds soon commence wise in their own conceits: and having acquired a little smattering of the learned languages, and made some small proficiency in the dry sciences, are easily tempted to look upon themselves as a head taller than their fellow mortals, and accordingly too, too often put forth great swelling words of vanity. But persons of a more exalted, and extensive reach of thought, dare not boast. No: they know that the greatest scholars are in the dark, in respect to many even of the minutest things in life: and after all their painful researches into the *Arcanæ Naturæ*, they find such an immense void, such an unmeasurable expanse yet to be travelled over, that they are obliged at last to conclude, almost with respect to every thing, "that they know nothing yet as they ought to know." This consideration, no doubt, led *Socrates*, when he was asked by one of his scholars, why the oracle pronounced him the wisest man on earth, to give him this judicious answer, "Perhaps it is, because I am most sensible of my own ignorance." Would to God, that all who call themselves Christians, had learnt so much as this heathen! We should then no longer hear so many *learned men*, falsely so called, betray their ignorance by boasting of the extent of their shallow understanding, nor by professing themselves so wise, prove themselves such arrant pedantic fools.

If we view our understandings in respect to *spiritual things*, we shall find that they are not only darkened, but become darkness itself, even "darkness that may be felt" by all who are not past feeling. And how should it be otherwise, since the infallible word of God assures us, that they are alienated from the light and life of God, and thereby naturally as incapable to judge of divine and spiritual things, comparatively speaking, as a man born blind is incapacitated to distinguish the various colours of the rainbow. "The natural man, (says an inspired apostle) discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God;" so far from it, "they are foolishness unto him;" and why? Because they are only to be "spiritually discerned." Hence it was, that *Nicodemus*, who was blessed with an outward and divine revelation, who was a ruler of the *Jews*, nay a master of *Israel*, when our Lord told him, "he must be born again;" appealed to be quite grappled. "How (says he) can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? how can these things be?" Were three more absurd questions ever proposed by the most ignorant man alive? or can there be a clearer proof of the blindness of man's understanding, in respect to divine, as well as natural things? Is not man then a piece of marred clay?

This will appear yet more evident, if we consider the *perverse bent of his will*. Being made in the very image of God; undoubtedly before the fall, man had no other will but his Maker's. God's will, and *Adam*'s, were then like unisons in music. There was not the least disunion, or discord between them. But now he hath a will, as directly contrary to the will of God, as light is contrary to darkness, or heaven to hell. We all bring into the world with us a carnal mind, which is not only an enemy to God, but "enmity itself, and which is therefore not subject unto the law of God, neither indeed can it be." A great many shew much zeal in talking against the man of sin,

and loudly (and indeed very justly) exclaim against the *Pope* for sitting in the temple, I mean the church of Christ, and "exalting himself above all that is called God." But say not within thyself, who shall go to *Rome*, to pull down this spiritual antichrist? as though there was no antichrist but what is without us. For know, O man, whoever thou art, an infinitely more dangerous antichrist, because less discerned, even *self-will*, sits daily in the temple of thy heart, exalting itself above all that is called God, and obliging all its votaries to say of Christ himself, that Prince of peace, "we will not have this man to reign over us." God's people, whose spiritual senses are exercised about spiritual things, and whose eyes are opened to see the abominations that are in their hearts, frequently feel this to their sorrow. Whether they will or not, this enmity from time to time bubbles up, and in spight of all their watchfulness and care, when they are under the pressure of some sharp affliction, a long desertion, or tedious night of temptation, they often find something within rising in rebellion against the all-wise disposals of divine Providence, and saying unto God their heavenly father, "what dost thou?" This makes them to cry (and no wonder, since it constrained one of the greatest saints and apostles first to introduce the expression) "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The spiritual and renewed soul groans thus, being burdened; but as for the natural and unawakened man, it is not so with him; self-will, as well as every other evil, either in a more latent or discernable manner, reigns in his unrenewed soul, and proves him, even to a demonstration to others, whether he knows, or will confess it himself or not, that in respect to the disorders of his will, as well as his understanding, man is only a piece of marred clay.

A transient view of fallen man's *affections* will yet more firmly corroborate this melancholy truth. These, at his being first placed in the paradise of God, were always kept within proper bounds, fixed upon their proper objects, and, like so many gentle rivers, sweetly, spontaneously and habitually glided into their ocean, God. But now the scene is changed. For we are now naturally full of vile affections, which like a mighty and impetuous torrent carry all before them. We love what we should hate, and hate what we should love; we fear what we should hope for, and hope for what we should fear; nay, to such an ungovernable height do our affections sometimes rise, that though our judgments are convinced to the contrary, yet we will gratify our passions though it be at the expence of our present and eternal welfare. We feel a war of our affections, warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death. So that *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*, I approve of better things but follow worse, is too, too often the practice of us all.

I am sensible, that many are offended, when mankind are compared to beasts and devils. And they might have some shadow of reason for being so, if we asserted in a physical sense, that they were really beasts and really devils. For then, as I once heard a very learned prelate, who was objecting against this comparison, observe, "a man being a beast would be incapable, and being a devil, would be under an impossibility of being saved." But when we make use of such *shocking comparisons*, as he was pleased to term them, we would be understood only in a moral sense; and in so doing, we assert no more than some of the most holy men of God have said of themselves, and others, in the lively oracles many ages ago. Holy *David*, the man after God's own heart, speaking of himself, says, "so foolish was I, and as a beast before thee." And holy *Job*, speaking of man in general, says,

that “he is born as a wild ass’s colt,” or take away the expletive, which as some think ought to be done, and then he positively asserts, that man is a wild ass’s colt. And what says our Lord, “Ye are of your father the devil;” and “the whole world is said to lie in him, the wicked one, who now rules in the children of disobedience,” that is, in all unrenewed souls. Our stupidity, proneness to fix our affections on the things of the earth, and our eagerness to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, evidence us to be earthly and brutal; and our mental passions, anger, hatred, malice, envy, and such like, prove with equal strength, that we are also devilish. Both together conspire to evince, that in respect to his affections, as well as his understanding and will, man deservedly may be termed a piece of marred clay.

The present *blindness of natural conscience* makes this appear in a yet more glaring light; in the soul of the first man *Adam*, conscience was no doubt the candle of the Lord, and enabled him rightly and instantaneously to discern between good and evil, right and wrong. And, blessed be God! some remains of this are yet left; but alas, how dimly does it burn, and how easily and quickly is it covered, or put out and extinguished. I need not send you to the heathen world, to learn the truth of this; you all know it by experience. Was there no other evidence, your own consciences are instead of a thousand witnesses, that man, as to his natural conscience, as well as understanding, will and affections, is much marred clay.

Nor does that great and boasted *Diana*, I mean unassisted *unenlightened reason*, less demonstrate the justness of such an assertion. Far be it from me to decry or exclaim against human reason. Christ himself is called the “Logos, the Reason;” and I believe it would not require much learning, or take up much time to prove, that so far and no farther than as we act

agreeably to the laws of Christ Jesus, are we any way conformable to the laws of right reason. His service is therefore called “a reasonable service.” And however his servants and followers may now be looked upon as fools and madmen; yet there will come a time, when those who despise and set themselves to oppose divine revelation, will find, that what they now call reason, is only *reason depraved*, and as utterly incapable, of itself, to guide us into the way of peace, or shew the way of salvation, as the men of *Sodom* were to find *Lot*’s door after they were struck with blindness by the angels, who came to lead him out of the city. The horrid and dreadful mistakes, which the most refined reasoners in the heathen world ran into, both as to the object, as well as manner of divine worship, have sufficiently demonstrated the weakness and depravity of human reason: nor do our modern boasters afford us any better proofs of the greatness of its strength, since the best improvement they generally make of it, is only to reason themselves into downright wilful infidelity, and thereby reason themselves out of eternal salvation. Need we now any further witness, that man, fallen man, is altogether a piece of marred clay?

But this is not all, we have yet more evidence to call; for do the blindness of our understandings, the perverseness of our will, the rebellion of our affections, the corruption of our consciences, the depravity of our reason prove this charge; and does not the present *disordered frame* and *constitution of our bodies* confirm the same also? Doubtless in this respect, man, in the most literal sense of the word, is a piece of marred clay. For God originally made him of the “dust of the earth.” So that notwithstanding our boasting of our high pedigrees, and different descent, we were all originally upon a level, and a little red earth was the common substratum out of which we were all formed. Clay indeed it was, but clay wonderfully

modified, even by the immediate hands of the Creator of heaven and earth. One therefore hath observed, that it is said “God built the man;” he did not form him rashly or hastily, but built and finished him according to the plan before laid down in his own eternal mind. And though, as the great God is without body, parts, or passions, we cannot suppose when it is said “God made man after his own image,” that it has any reference to his body, yet I cannot help thinking (with Doctor *South*) that as the eternal Logos was hereafter to appear, God manifest in the flesh, infinite wisdom was undoubtedly exerted in forming a casket into which so invaluable a pearl was in the fulness of time to be deposited. Some of the ancients are said to have asserted, that man at the first, had what we call a glory shining round him; but without attempting to be wise above what is written, we may venture to affirm, that he had a glorious body, which knowing no sin, knew neither sickness nor pain. But now on this, as well as other accounts, he may justly be called *Ichabod*; for its primitive strength and glory are sadly departed from it, and like the ruins of some ancient and stately fabric, only so much left as to give us some faint idea of what it was when it first appeared in its original and perfect beauty. The apostle *Paul*, therefore, who knew how to call things by their proper names, as well as any man living, does not scruple to term the human body, though in its original constitution fearfully and wonderfully made, a “vile body;” vile indeed! since it is subject to such vile diseases, put to such vile, yea very vile uses, and at length is to come to so vile an end. “For dust we are, and to dust we must return.” This among other considerations, we may well suppose, caused the blessed Jesus to weep at the grave of *Lazarus*. He wept, not only because his friend *Lazarus* was dead, but he wept to see human nature, through

man's own default, thus laid in ruins, by being subject unto such a dissolution, made like unto the beasts that perish.

Let us here pause a while, and with our sympathizing Lord, see if we cannot shed a few silent tears at least, upon the same sorrowful occasion. Who, who is there amongst us, that upon such a melancholy review of man's present, real, and most deplorable depravity both in body and soul, can refrain from weeping over such a piece of marred clay? Who, who can help adopting holy *David*'s lamentation over *Saul* and *Jonathan*? "How are the mighty fallen! How are they slain in their high places!" Originally it was not so. No, "God made man after his own image: in the image of God made he man." Never was there so much expressed in so few words. He was created after God in righteousness and true holiness.

This is the account, which the sacred volume gives us of this interesting point. This, this is that blessed book, that book of books, from whence, together with an appeal to the experience of our own hearts, and the testimonies of all past ages, we have thought proper to fetch our proofs. For, after all, we must be obliged to divine revelation, to know what we were, what we are, and what we are to be. In these, as in a true glass, we may see our real and proper likeness. And from these only can we trace the source and fountain of all those innumerable evils, which like a deluge have overflowed the natural and moral world. If any should object against the authenticity of this revelation, and consequently against the doctrine this day drawn from thence, they do in my opinion thereby very much confirm it. For unless a man was very much disordered indeed, as to his understanding, will, affections, natural conscience, and his power of reasoning, he could never possibly deny such a revelation, which is founded on a multiplicity of infallible external evidences, hath so many internal

evidences of a divine stamp in every page, is so suited to the common exigencies of all mankind, so agreeable to the experience of all men, and which hath been so wonderfully handed and preserved to us, hath been so instrumental to the convicting, converting, and comforting so many millions of souls, and hath stood the test of the most severe scrutinies, and exact criticisms of the most subtle and refined, as well as of the most malicious and persecuting enemies, that ever lived, even from the beginning of time to this very day. Persons of such a turn of mind, I think, are rather to be prayed for, than disputed with, if so be this perverse wickedness of their hearts may be forgiven them: They are in the very gall of bitterness, and must have "their consciences seared as it were with a red-hot iron," and must have their eyes "blinded by the God of this world," otherwise they could not but see, and feel, and assent to the truth of this doctrine, of man's being universally depraved; which not only in one or two, but in one or two thousands, in every page, I could almost say, is written, in such legible characters, that he that runs may read. Indeed, revelation itself is founded upon the doctrine of the fall. Had we kept our original integrity, the law of God would have yet been written in our hearts, and thereby the want of a divine revelation, at least such as ours, would have been superseded; but being fallen, instead of rising in rebellion against God, we ought to be filled with unspeakable thankfulness to our all bountiful Creator, who by a few lines in his own books hath discovered more to us, than all the philosophers and most learned men in the world could, or would, have discovered, though they had studied to all eternity.

I am well aware, that some who pretend to own the validity of divine revelation, are notwithstanding enemies to the doctrine that hath this day been delivered; and would fain elude the force of the proofs generally urged

in defence of it, by saying, they only bespeak the corruption of particular persons, or have reference only to the heathen world: but such persons err, not knowing their own hearts, or the power of Jesus Christ: for by nature there is no difference between *Jew* or *Gentile*, *Greek* or *Barbarian*, bond or free. We are altogether equally become abominable in God's sight, all equally fallen short of the glory of God, and consequently all alike so many pieces of marred clay.

How God came to suffer man to fall? how long man stood before he fell? and how the corruption contracted by the fall, is propagated to every individual of his species? are questions of such an abstruse and critical nature, that should I undertake to answer them, would be only gratifying a sinful curiosity, and tempting you, as Satan tempted our first parents, to eat forbidden fruit. It will much better answer the design of this present discourse, which is practical, to pass on

II. To the next thing proposed, and point out to you the absolute necessity there is of this fallen nature's being renewed.

This I have had all along in my eye, and on account of this, have purposely been so explicit on the first general head: for as *Archimedes* once said, "Give me a place where I may fix my foot, and I will move the world;" so without the least imputation of arrogance, with which, perhaps, he was justly chargeable, we may venture to say, grant the foregoing doctrine to be true, and then deny the necessity of man's being renewed who can.

I suppose, I may take it for granted, that all of you amongst whom I am now preaching the kingdom of God, hope after death to go to a place which we call Heaven. And my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you all may have mansions prepared for you there. But give me leave to tell

you, was you now to see these heavens opened, and the angel (to use the words of the seraphic *Hervey*) cloathed with all his heavenly drapery, with one foot upon the earth, and another upon the sea; nay, were you to see and hear the angel of the everlasting covenant, Jesus Christ himself, proclaiming "time shall be no more," and giving you all an invitation immediately to come to heaven; heaven would be no heaven to you, nay it would be a hell to your souls, unless you were first prepared for a proper enjoyment of it here on earth. "For what communion hath light with darkness?" Or what fellowship could unrenewed sons of *Belial* possibly keep up with the pure and immaculate Jesus?

The generality of people form strange ideas of heaven. And because the scriptures, in condescension to the weakness of our capacities, describe it by images taken from earthly delights and human grandeur, therefore they are apt to carry their thoughts no higher, and at the best only form to themselves a kind of *Mahometan* paradise. But permit me to tell you, and God grant it may sink deep into your hearts! Heaven is rather a state than a place; and consequently, unless you are previously disposed by a suitable state of mind, you could not be happy even in heaven itself. For what is grace but glory militant? What is glory but grace triumphant? This consideration made a pious author say, that "holiness, happiness, and heaven, were only three different words for one and the self-same thing." And this made the great *Preston*, when he was about to die, turn to his friends, saying, "I am changing my place, but not my company." He had conversed with God and good men on earth; he was going to keep up the same, and infinitely more refined communion with God, his holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, in heaven.

To make us meet to be blissful partakers of such heavenly company, this "marred clay," I mean, these depraved natures of ours, must necessarily undergo an universal moral change: our understandings must be enlightened; our wills, reason, and consciences, must be renewed; our affections must be drawn toward, and fixed upon things above; and because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, this corruptible must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality. And thus old things must literally pass away, and behold all things, even the body as well as the faculties of the soul, must become new.

This moral change is what some call, repentance, some, conversion, some, regeneration; choose what name you please, I only pray God, that we all may have the thing. The scriptures call it holiness, sanctification, the new creature, and our Lord calls it a "New birth, or being born again, or born from above." These are not barely figurative expressions, or the flights of eastern language, nor do they barely denote a relative change of state conferred on all those who are admitted into Christ's church by baptism; but they denote a real, moral change of heart and life, a real participation of the divine life in the soul of man. Some indeed content themselves with a figurative interpretation; but unless they are made to experience the power and efficacy thereof, by a solid living experience in their own souls, all their learning, all their laboured criticisms, will not exempt them from a real damnation. Christ hath said it, and Christ will stand, "Unless a man," learned or unlearned, high or low, though he be a master of *Israel* as *Nicodemus* was, unless he "be born again, he cannot see, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

If it be enquired, who is to be the potter? and by whose agency this marred clay is to be formed into another vessel? Or in other words, if it be

asked, how this great and mighty change is to be effected? I answer, not by the mere dint and force of moral suasion. This is good in its place. And I am so far from thinking, that Christian preachers should not make use of rational arguments and motives in their sermons, that I cannot think they are fit to preach at all, who either cannot, or will not use them. We have the example of the great God himself for such a practice; "Come (says he) and let us reason together." And St. *Paul*, that prince of preachers, "reasoned of temperance, and righteousness, and a judgment to come." And it is remarkable, "that whilst he was reasoning of these things, *Felix* trembled." Nor are the most persuasive strains of holy rhetoric less needful for a scribe ready instructed to the kingdom of God. The scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, every where abound with them. And when can they be more properly employed, and brought forth, than when we are acting as ambassadors of heaven, and beseeching poor sinners, as in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God. All this we readily grant. But at the same time, I would as soon go to yonder church-yard, and attempt to raise the dead carcases, with a "come forth," as to preach to dead souls, did I not hope for some superior power to make the word effectual to the designed end. I should only be like a sounding brass for any saving purposes, or as a tinkling cymbal. Neither is this change to be wrought by the power of our own free-will. This is an idol every where set up, but we dare not fall down and worship it. "No man (says Christ) can come to me, unless the Father draw him." Our own free-will, if improved, may restrain us from the commission of many evils, and put us in the way of conversion; but, after exerting our utmost efforts (and we are bound in duty to exert them) we shall find the words of our own church article to be true, that "man since the fall hath no power to turn to God." No, we might as soon attempt to stop the

ebbing and flowing of the tide, and calm the most tempestuous sea, as to imagine that we can subdue, or bring under proper regulations, our own unruly wills and affections by any strength inherent in ourselves.

And therefore, that I may keep you no longer in suspence, I inform you, that this heavenly potter, this blessed agent, is the Almighty Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, the third person in the most adorable Trinity, coessential with the Father and the Son. This is that Spirit, which at the beginning of time moved on the face of the waters, when nature lay in one universal chaos. This was the Spirit that over-shadowed the Holy Virgin, before that holy thing was born of her: and this same Spirit must come, and move upon the chaos of our souls, before we can properly be called the sons of God. This is what *John* the baptist calls "being baptized with the Holy Ghost," without which, his and all other baptisms, whether infant or adult, avail nothing. This is that fire, which our Lord came to send into our earthly hearts, and which I pray the Lord of all lords to kindle in every unrenewed one this day.

As for the extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost, such as working of miracles, or speaking with divers kinds of tongues, they are long since ceased. But as for this miracle of miracles, turning the soul to God by the more ordinary operations of the Holy Ghost, this abides yet, and will abide till time itself shall be no more. For it is he that sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of God. On this account, true believers are said to be "born from above, to be born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Their second, as well as their first creation, is truly and purely divine. It is, therefore, called "a creation;" but put ye on (says the apostle) the new man which is created—And how? Even as the first man was, "after God in righteousness and true holiness."

These, these are the precious truths, which a scoffing world would fain rally or ridicule us out of. To produce this glorious change, this new creation, the glorious Jesus left his Father's bosom. For this he led a persecuted life; for this he died an ignominious and accursed death; for this he rose again; and for this he now sitteth at the right hand of his Father. All the precepts of his gospel, all his ordinances, all his providences, whether of an afflictive or prosperous nature, all divine revelation from the beginning to the end, all center in these two points, to shew us how we are fallen, and to begin, carry on, and compleat a glorious and blessed change in our souls. This is an end worthy of the coming of so divine a personage. To deliver a multitude of souls of every nation, language and tongue, from so many moral evils, and to reinstate them in an incomparably more excellent condition than that from whence they are fallen, is an end worthy the shedding of such precious blood. What system of religion is there now, or was there ever exhibited to the world, any way to be compared to this? Can the deistical scheme pretend in any degree to come up to it? Is it not noble, rational, and truly divine? And why then will not all that hitherto are strangers to this blessed restoration of their fallen natures, (for my heart is too full to abstain any longer from an application) why will you any longer dispute or stand out against it? Why will you not rather bring your clay to this heavenly Potter, and say from your inmost souls, "Turn us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned?" This, you may and can do: and if you go thus far, who knows but that this very day, yea this very hour, the heavenly Potter may take you in hand, and make you vessels of honour fit for the Redeemer's use? Others that were once as far from the kingdom of God as you are, have been partakers of this blessedness. What a wretched creature was *Mary Magdalene*? And yet out of her Jesus Christ cast seven devils.

Nay, he appeared to her first, after he rose from the dead, and she became as it were an apostle to the very apostles. What a covetous creature was *Zaccheus*? He was a griping cheating publican; and yet, perhaps, in one quarter of an hour's time, his heart is enlarged, and he made quite willing to give half of his goods to feed the poor. And to mention no more, what a cruel person was *Paul*. He was a persecutor, a blasphemer, injurious; one that breathed out threatnings against the disciples of the Lord, and made havoc of the church of Christ. And yet what a wonderful turn did he meet with, as he was journeying to *Damascus*? from a persecutor, he became a preacher; was afterwards made a spiritual father to thousands, and now probably sits nearest the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. And why all this? That he might be made an example to them that should hereafter believe. O then believe, repent; I beseech you, believe the gospel. Indeed, it is glad tidings, even tidings of great joy. You will then no longer have any thing to say against the doctrine of *Original Sin*; or charge the Almighty foolishly, for suffering our first parents to be prevailed on to eat such sour grapes, and permitting thereby their children's teeth to be set on edge. You will then no longer cry out against the doctrine of the *New Birth*, as enthusiasm, or brand the assertors of such blessed truths with the opprobrious names of fools and madmen. Having felt, you will then believe; having believed, you will therefore speak; and instead of being vessels of wrath, and growing harder and harder in hell fire, like vessels in a potter's oven, you will be made vessels of honour, and be presented at the great day by Jesus, to his heavenly Father, and be translated to live with him as monuments of rich, free, distinguishing and sovereign grace, for ever and ever.

You, that have in some degree experienced the quickening influence (for I must not conclude without dropping a word or two to God's children) you

know how to pity, and therefore, I beseech you also to pray for those, to whose circumstances this discourse is peculiarly adapted. But will you be content in praying for them? Will you not see reason to pray for yourselves also? Yes, doubtless, for yourselves also. For you, and you only know, how much there is yet lacking in your faith, and how far you are from being partakers in that degree, which you desire to be, of the whole mind that was in Christ Jesus. You know what a body of sin and death you carry about with you, and that you must necessarily expect many turns of God's providence and grace, before you will be wholly delivered from it. But thanks be to God, we are in safe hands. He that has been the author, will also be the finisher of our faith. Yet a little while, and we like him shall say "It is finished;" we shall bow down our heads and give up the ghost. Till then, (for to thee, O Lord, will we now direct our prayer) help us, O Almighty Father, in patience to possess our souls. Behold, we are the clay, and thou art the Potter. Let not the thing formed say to him that formed it, whatever the dispensations of thy future Will concerning us may be, Why dost thou deal with us thus? Behold, we put ourselves as blanks in thine hands, deal with us as seemeth good in thy sight, only let every cross, every affliction, every temptation, be overruled to the stamping thy blessed image in more lively characters on our hearts; that so passing from glory to glory, by the powerful operations of thy blessed Spirit, we may be made thereby more and more meet for, and at last be translated to a full, perfect, endless, and uninterrupted enjoyment of glory hereafter, with thee O Father, thee O Son, and thee O blessed Spirit; to whom, three persons but one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, power, might, majesty and dominion, now and to all eternity. Amen and Amen.

SERMON XIV.

The Lord our Righteousness.
Jeremiah xxiii. 6.

The Lord our Righteousness.

WHOEVER is acquainted with the nature of mankind in general, or the propensity of his own heart in particular, must acknowledge, that *self-righteousness* is the last idol that is rooted out of the heart: being once born under a covenant of works, it is natural for us all to have recourse to a covenant of works, for our everlasting salvation. And we have contracted such a devilish pride, by our fall from God, that we would, if not wholly, yet in part at least, glory in being the cause of our own salvation. We cry out against popery, and that very justly; but we are all Papists, at least, I am sure, we are all Arminians by nature; and therefore no wonder so many natural men embrace that scheme. It is true, we disclaim the doctrine of merit, are ashamed directly to say we deserve any good at the hands of God; therefore, as the Apostle excellently well observes, “we go about,” we fetch a circuit, “to establish a righteousness of our own, and,” like the Pharisees

of old, “will not wholly submit to that righteousness which is of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This is the sorest, though, alas! the most common evil that was ever yet seen under the sun. An evil, that in any age, especially in these dregs of time wherein we live, cannot sufficiently be inveighed against. For as it is with the people, so it is with the priests; and it is to be feared, even in those places, where once the truth as it is in Jesus was eminently preached, many ministers are so sadly degenerated from their pious ancestors, that the doctrines of grace, especially the personal, *all-sufficient righteousness of* Jesus, is but too seldom, too slightly mentioned. Hence the love of many waxeth cold; and I have often thought, was it possible, that this single consideration would be sufficient to raise our venerable forefathers again from their graves; who would thunder in their ears their fatal error.

The righteousness of Jesus Christ is one of those great mysteries, which the angels desire to look into, and seems to be one of the first lessons that God taught men after the fall. For, what were the coats that God made to put on our first parents, but types of the application of the merits or righteousness of Jesus Christ to believers hearts? We are told, that those coats were made of skins of beasts; and, as beasts were not then food for men, we may fairly infer, that those beasts were slain in sacrifice, in commemoration of the great sacrifice, Jesus Christ, thereafter to be offered. And the skins of the beasts thus slain, being put on *Adam* and *Eve*, they were hereby taught how their nakedness was to be covered with the righteousness of the Lamb of God.

This is it which is meant, when we are told, “*Abraham* believed on the Lord, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” In short, this is it of

which both the law and the prophets have spoken, especially *Jeremiah* in the words of the text, “The Lord our righteousness.”

I propose, through divine grace,

I. To consider who we are to understand by the word Lord.

II. How the Lord is man’s righteousness.

III. I will consider some of the chief objections that are generally urged against this doctrine.

IV. I shall shew some very ill consequences that flow naturally from denying this doctrine.

V. Shall conclude with an exhortation to all to come to Christ by faith, that they may be enabled to say with the Prophet in the text, “The Lord our righteousness.”

I. I am to consider who we are to understand by the word Lord. The Lord our righteousness.

If any Arians or Socinians are drawn by curiosity to hear what the babler has to say, let them be ashamed of denying the divinity of that Lord, who has bought poor sinners with his precious blood. For the person mentioned in the text, under the character of the Lord, is Jesus Christ. Verse 5. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto *David* a righteous branch, a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days (verse 6.) *Judah* shall be saved, and *Israel* shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.” By the *righteous branch*, all agree, that we are to understand Jesus Christ. He it is that is called the Lord in our text. If so, if there were no other text in the Bible to prove the divinity of Christ, this is sufficient: for if the word *Lord* may properly belong to Jesus Christ, he must be God. And, as you have it in the margin of your Bibles, the word

Lord is in the original *Jehovah*, which is the essential title of God himself. Come then, ye Arians, kiss the Son of God, bow down before him, and honour him, even as ye honour the Father. Learn of the angels, those morning-stars, and worship him as truly God: for otherwise you are as much idolators, as those that worship the Virgin *Mary*. And as for you Socinians, who say Christ was a mere man, and yet profess that he was your Saviour, according to your own principles you are accursed: for, if Christ be a mere man, then he is only an arm of flesh: and it is written, "Cursed is he that trusteth on an arm of flesh." But I would hope, there are no such monsters here; at least, that, after these considerations, they would be ashamed of broaching such monstrous absurdities any more. For it is plain, that, by the word *Lord*, we are to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, who here takes to himself the title of *Jehovah*, and therefore must be very God of very God; or, as the Apostle devoutly expresses it, "God blessed for evermore."

II. How the Lord is to be man's righteousness, comes next to be considered.

And that is, in one word, by *imputation*. for it pleased God, after he had made all things by the word of his power to create man after his own image. And so infinite was the condescension of the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, that, although he might have insisted on the everlasting obedience of him and his posterity; yet he was pleased to oblige himself, by a covenant or agreement made with his own creatures, upon condition of an unsinning obedience, to give them immortality and eternal life. For when it is said, "The day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" we may fairly infer, so long as he continued obedient, and did not eat thereof, he should surely live. The 3d of *Genesis* gives us a full, but mournful account, how

our first parents broke this covenant, and thereby stood in need of a better righteousness than their own, in order to procure their future acceptance with God. For what must they do? They were as much under a covenant of works as ever. And though, after their disobedience, they were without strength; yet they were obliged not only to do, but continue to do all things, and that too in the most perfect manner, which the Lord had required of them: and not only so, but to make satisfaction to God's infinitely offended justice, for the breach they had already been guilty of. Here then opens the amazing scene of *divine philanthropy*, I mean, God's love to man: For behold, what man could not do, Jesus Christ, the son of his Father's love, undertakes to do for him. And that God might be just in justifying the ungodly, though "he was in the form of God, and therefore thought it no robbery to be equal with God; yet he took upon him the form of a servant," even human nature. In that nature he obeyed, and thereby fulfilled the whole moral law in our stead; and also died a painful death upon the cross, and thereby became a curse for, or instead of, those whom the Father had given to him. As God, he satisfied, at the same time that he obeyed and suffered as man; and, being God and man in one person, he wrought out a full, perfect, and sufficient righteousness for all to whom it was to be imputed.

Here then we see the meaning of the word *righteousness*. It implies the active as well as passive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. We generally, when talking of the merits of Christ, only mention the latter,—his death; whereas, the former,—his life and active obedience, is equally necessary. Christ is not such a saviour as becomes us, unless we join both together. Christ not only died, but lived; not only suffered, but obeyed for, or instead of, poor sinners. And both these jointly make up that compleat

righteousness, which is to be imputed to us, as the disobedience of our first parents was made ours by imputation. In this sense, and no other, are we to understand that parallel which the apostle *Paul* draws, in the vth of the *Romans*, between the first and second *Adam*. This is what he elsewhere terms, "our being made the righteousness of God in him." This is the sense wherein the Prophet would have us to understand the words of the text; therefore, *Jeremiah* xxxiii. 16. "She (*i. e.* the church itself) shall be called, (having this righteousness imputed to her) The Lord our righteousness." A passage, I think, worthy of the profoundest meditation of all the sons and daughters of *Abraham*.

Many are the objections which the proud hearts of fallen men are continually urging against this wholesome, this divine, this soul-saving doctrine. I come now,

III. To answer some few of those which I think the most considerable.

And, *First*, they say, because they would appear friends to morality, "That the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is destructive of good works, and leads to licentiousness."

And who, pray, are the persons that generally urge this objection? Are they men full of faith, and men really concerned for good works? No; whatever few exceptions there may be, if there be any at all, it is notorious, they are generally men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. The best title I can give them is, that of *profane moralists*, or moralists falsely so called. For I appeal to the experience of the present as well as past ages, if iniquity did and does not most abound, where the doctrine of Christ's whole personal righteousness is most cried down, and most seldom mentioned: Arminian being antichristian principles, always did, and always will lead to antichristian practices. And never was there a reformation

brought about in the church, but by the preaching the doctrine of an imputed righteousness. This, as that man of God, *Luther*, calls it, is "*Articulus stantis aut cadentis Ecclesiæ*," the article by which the Church stands or falls. And though the preachers of this doctrine are generally branded by those on the other side, with the opprobrious names of Antinomians, deceivers, and what not; yet, I believe, if the truth of the doctrine on both sides was to be judged of by the lives of the preachers and professors of it, on our side the question would have the advantage every way.

It is true, this, as well as every other doctrine of grace, may be abused. And perhaps the unchristian walk of some, who have talked of Christ's imputed righteousness, justification by faith, and the like, and yet never felt it imputed to their own souls, has given the enemies of the Lord thus cause to blaspheme. But this is a very unsafe, as well as a very unfair way of arguing. The only question should be, Whether or not this doctrine of an imputed righteousness, does in itself cut off the occasion of good works, or lead to licentiousness? To this we may boldly answer, In no wise. It excludes works, indeed, from being any cause of our justification in the sight of God; but it requires good works as a proof of our having this righteousness imputed to us, and as a declarative evidence of our justification in the sight of men. And then, how can the doctrine of an imputed righteousness be a doctrine leading to licentiousness?

It is all calumny. The apostle *Paul* introduceth an infidel making this objection, in his epistle to the *Romans*; and none but infidels, that never felt the power of Christ's resurrection upon their souls, will urge it over again. And therefore, notwithstanding this objection, with the Prophet in the text, we may boldly say, "The Lord is our righteousness."

But Satan (and no wonder that his servants imitate him) often transforms himself into an angel of light: and therefore, (such perverse things will infidelity and Arminianism make men speak) in order to dress their objections in the best colours, some urge, "That our Saviour preached no such doctrine; that in his sermon on the mount, he mentions only morality:" and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness falls wholly to the ground.

But surely the men, who urge this objection, either never read, or never understood, our Lord's blessed discourse, wherein the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is so plainly taught, that he who runs, if he has eyes that see, may read.

Indeed our Lord does recommend morality and good works, (as all faithful ministers will do) and clears the moral law from many corrupt glosses put upon it by the letter-learned Pharisees. But then, before he comes to this, 'tis remarkable, he talks of inward piety, such as poverty of spirit, meekness, holy mourning, purity of heart, especially hungring and thirsting after righteousness; and then recommends good works, as an evidence of our having his righteousness imputed to us, and these graces and divine tempers wrought in our hearts. "Let your light (that is, the divine light I before have been mentioning) shine before men, in a holy life; that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your father which is in heaven." And then he immediately adds, "think not that I am come to destroy the moral law: I came not to destroy, (to take away the force of it as a rule of life) but to fulfil, (to obey it in its whole latitude, and give the compleat sense of it.)" And then he goes on to shew how exceeding broad the moral law is. So that our Lord, instead of setting aside an imputed righteousness in his sermon upon the mount, not only confirms it, but also answers the

foregoing objection urged against it, by making good works a proof and evidence of its being imputed to our souls. He, therefore, that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Prophet says in the words of the text, "The Lord our righteousness."

But as Satan not only quoted scripture, but backed one temptation after another with it, when he attacked Christ in the wilderness; so his children generally take the same method in treating his doctrine. And, therefore, they urge another objection against the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, from the example of the young man in the gospel.

We may state it thus: "The Evangelist *Mark*, say they, chapter x. mentions a young man that came to Christ, running, and asking him what he should do to inherit eternal life? Christ referred him to the commandments, to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. It is plain, therefore, works were to be, partly at least, the cause of his justification: and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is unscriptural." This is the objection in its full strength: and little strength in all its fulness. For, was I to prove the necessity of an imputed righteousness, I scarce know how I could bring a better instance to make it good.

Let us take a nearer view of this young man, and of our Lord's behaviour towards him, *Mark* x. 17. the Evangelist tells us, "That when Christ was gone forth into the way, there came one running (it should seem it was some nobleman; a rarity indeed to see such a one running to Christ!) and not only so, but he kneeled to him, (perhaps many of his rank now, scarce knew the time when they kneeled to Christ) and asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Then Jesus, to see whether or not he believed him to be what he really was, truly and properly God, said unto him, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is

God." And, that he might directly answer his question, says he, "Thou knowest the commandments: do not commit adultery, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and thy mother." This was a direct answer to his question; namely, That eternal life was not to be attained by his doings. For our Lord, by referring him to the commandments, did not (as the objectors insinuate) in the least hint, that his morality would recommend him to the favour and mercy of God: but he intended thereby, to make the law his schoolmaster to bring him to himself; that the young man, seeing how he had broken every one of these commandments, might thereby be convinced of the insufficiency of his own, and consequently of the absolute necessity of looking out for a better righteousness, whereon he might depend for eternal life.

This was what our Lord designed. The young man being self-righteous, and willing to justify himself, said, "All these have I observed from my youth:" but had he known himself, he would have confessed, all these have I broken from my youth. For, supposing he had not actually committed adultery, had he never lusted after a woman in his heart? What, if he had not really killed another, had he never been angry without a cause, or spoken unadvisedly with his lips? If so, by breaking one of the least commandments in the least degree, he became liable to the curse of God: for "cursed is he (saith the law) that continueth not to do all things that are written in this book." And therefore, as observed before, our Lord was so far from speaking against, that he treated the young man in that manner, on purpose to convince him of the necessity of an imputed righteousness.

But perhaps they will reply, it is said, "Jesus beholding him, loved him." And what then? This he might do with a human love, and at the same time this young man have no interest in his blood. Thus Christ is said to wonder,

to weep over *Jerusalem*, and say, "O that thou hadst known, &c." But such-like passages are to be referred only to his human nature. And there is a great deal of difference between the love wherewith Christ loved this young man, and that wherewith he loved *Mary*, *Lazarus*, and their sister *Martha*. To illustrate this by a comparison: A minister of the Lord Jesus Christ seeing many amiable dispositions, such as a readiness to hear the word, a decent behaviour at public worship, and a life outwardly spotless in many, cannot but so far love them; but then there is much difference betwixt the love which a minister feels for such, and that divine love, that union and sympathy of soul, which he feels for those that he is satisfied are really born again of God. Apply this to our Lord's case, as a faint illustration of it. Consider what has been said upon the young man's case in general, and then, if before you were fond of this objection, instead of triumphing, like him you will go sorrowful away. Our Saviour's reply to him more and more convinces us of the truth of the prophet's assertion in the text, that "the Lord is our righteousness."

But there is a fourth, and a grand objection yet behind, which is taken from the 25th chapter of *Matthew*, "where our Lord is described as rewarding people with eternal life, because they fed the hungry, cloathed the naked, and such-like. Their works therefore were a cause of their justification, consequently the doctrine of imputed righteousness is not agreeable to scripture."

This, I confess, is the most plausible objection that is brought against the doctrine insisted on from the text; and that we may answer it in as clear and brief a manner as may be, we confess, with the Article of the Church of *England*, "That albeit good works do not justify us, yet they will follow after justification, as fruits of it; and though they can claim no reward in

themselves, yet forasmuch as they spring from faith in Christ, and a renewed soul, they shall receive a reward of grace, though not of debt; and consequently the more we abound in such good works, the greater will be our reward when Jesus Christ shall come to judgment."

Take these considerations along with us, and they will help us much to answer the objection now before us. For thus saith *Matthew*, "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye cloathed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. I will therefore reward you, because you have done these things out of love to me, and hereby have evidenced yourselves to be my true disciples." And that the people did not depend on these good actions for their justification in the sight of God, is evident. "For when saw we thee an hungred, say they, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and cloathed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" Language, and questions, quite improper for persons relying on their own righteousness, for acceptance and acquittance in the sight of God.

But then they reply against this: "In the latter part of the chapter, it is plain that Jesus Christ rejects and damns the others for not doing these things. And therefore, if he damns these for not doing, he saves those for doing; and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is good for nothing."

But that is no consequence at all; for God may justly damn any man for omitting the least duty of the moral law, and yet in himself is not obliged to

give to any one any reward, supposing he has done all that he can. We are unprofitable servants; we have not done near so much as it was our duty to do, must be the language of the most holy souls living; and therefore, from or in ourselves, cannot be justified in the sight of God. This was the frame of the devout souls just now referred to. Sensible of this, they were so far from depending on their works for justification in the sight of God, that they were filled, as it were, with a holy blushing, to think our Lord should condescend to mention, much more to reward them for, their poor works of faith and labours of love. I am persuaded their hearts would rise with a holy indignation against those who urge this passage, as an objection to the assertion of the prophet, that "the Lord is our righteousness."

Thus, I think, we have fairly answered these grand objections, which are generally urged against the doctrine of an *imputed righteousness*. Was I to stop here, I think I may say, "We are made more than conquerors through him that loved us." But there is a way of arguing which I have always admired, because I have thought it always very convincing, by shewing the *absurdities* that will follow from denying any particular proposition in dispute.

IV. This is the next thing that was proposed. And never did greater or more absurdities flow from the denying any doctrine, than will flow from denying the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness.

And *first*, if we deny this doctrine, we turn the truth, I mean the word of God, as much as we can, into a lie, and utterly subvert all those places of scripture which say that we are saved by grace; that it is not of works, lest any man should boast; that salvation is God's free gift; and that he who glorieth, must glory only in the Lord. For, if the whole personal righteousness of Jesus Christ be not the sole cause of my acceptance with

God, if any work done by or foreseen in me, was in the least to be joined with it, or looked upon by God as an inducing, impulsive cause of acquitting my soul from guilt, then I have somewhat whereof I may glory in myself. Now boasting is excluded in the great work of our redemption; but that cannot be, if we are enemies to the doctrine of an imputed righteousness. It would be endless to enumerate how many texts of scripture must be false, if this doctrine be not true. Let it suffice to affirm in the general, that if we deny an imputed righteousness, we may as well deny a divine revelation all at once: for it is the *alpha* and *omega*, the beginning and the end of the book of God. We must either disbelieve that, or believe what the prophet hath spoken in the text, "that the Lord is our righteousness."

But farther: I observed at the beginning of this discourse, that we are all *Arminians* and *Papists* by nature: for as one says, "*Arminianism* is the back way to *popery*." And here I venture further to affirm, that if we deny the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, whatever we may stile ourselves, we are really *Papists* in our hearts, and deserve no other title from men.

Sirs, what think you? Suppose I was to come and tell you, that you must intercede with saints, for them to intercede with God for you; would you not then say, I was justly reputed a *popish missionary* by some, and deservedly thrust out of the synagogues by others? I suppose you would. And why? Because, you would say, the intercession of Jesus Christ was sufficient of itself, without the intercession of saints; and that it was blasphemous to join theirs with his, as though it was not sufficient.

Suppose I went a little more round about; and told you that the death of Christ was not sufficient, without our death being added to it; that you must die as well as Christ, join your death with his, and then it would be

sufficient. Might you not then, with a holy indignation, throw dust in the air, and justly call me a “setter forth of strange doctrines?” And now then, if it be not only absurd, but blasphemous, to join the intercession of saints with the intercession of Christ, as though his intercession was not sufficient; or our death with the death of Christ, as though his death was not sufficient: judge ye, if it be not equally absurd, equally blasphemous, to join our obedience, either wholly or in part, with the obedience of Christ, as if that was not sufficient. And if so, what absurdities will follow the denying that the Lord, both as to his active and passive obedience, is our righteousness?

One more absurdity I shall mention, as following the denying this doctrine, and I have done.

I remember a story of a certain prelate, who, after many arguments in vain urged to convince the Earl of *Rochester* of the invisible realities of another world, took his leave of his lordship with some such words as these: “Well, my lord, if there be no hell, I am safe; but if there should be such a thing as hell, what will become of you?” I apply this to those that oppose the doctrine now insisted on. If there be no such thing as the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, those who hold it, and bring forth fruit unto holiness, are safe; but if there be such a thing (as there certainly is) what will become of you that deny it? It is no difficult matter to determine. Your portion must be in the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever. Since you will rely upon your works, by your works you shall be judged. They shall be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary; and they will be found wanting. By your works therefore shall you be condemned; and you, being out of Christ, shall find God, to your poor wretched souls, a consuming fire.

The great *Stoddard* of *Northampton* in *New-England*, has therefore well intitled a book which he wrote (and which I would take this opportunity to

recommend) “The Safety of appearing in the Righteousness of Christ.” For why should I lean upon a broken reed, when I can have the rock of ages to stand upon, that never can be moved?

And now, before I come to a more particular application, give me leave, in the apostle’s language, triumphantly to cry out, “Where is the scribe, where the disputer?” Where is the reasoning infidel of this generation? Can any thing appear more reasonable, even according to your own way of arguing, than the doctrine here laid down? Have you not felt a convincing power go along with the word? Why then will you not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that so he may become the Lord *your* righteousness?

But it is time for me to come a little closer to your consciences.

Brethren, though some may be offended at this doctrine, and may account it foolishness; yet, to many of you, I doubt not but it is precious, it being agreeable to the form of sound words, which from your infancy has been delivered to you; and, coming from a quarter, you would least have expected, may be received with more pleasure and satisfaction. But give me leave to ask you one question; Can you say, the Lord our righteousness? I say, the Lord *our* righteousness. For entertaining this doctrine in your heads, without receiving the Lord Jesus Christ savingly by a lively faith into your hearts, will but increase your damnation. As I have often told you, so I tell you again, an unapplied Christ is no Christ at all. Can you then, with believing *Thomas*, cry out, “My Lord and my God?” Is Christ your sanctification, as well as your outward righteousness? For the word righteousness, in the text, not only implies Christ’s personal righteousness imputed to us, but also holiness wrought in us. These two, God has joined together. He never did, he never does, he never will put them asunder. If you are justified by the blood, you are also sanctified by the Spirit of our

Lord. Can you then in this sense say, The Lord our righteousness? Were you ever made to abhor yourselves for your actual and original sins, and to lothe your own righteousness; for, as the prophet beautifully expresses it, “your righteousness is as filthy rags?” Were you ever made to see and admire the all-sufficiency of Christ’s righteousness, and excited by the Spirit of God to hunger and thirst after it? Could you ever say, my soul is athirst for Christ, yea, even for the righteousness of Christ? O when shall I come to appear before the presence of my God in the righteousness of Christ! nothing but Christ! nothing but Christ! Give me Christ, O God, and I am satisfied! my soul shall praise thee for ever.

Was this ever the language of your hearts? and, after these inward conflicts, were you ever enabled to reach out the arm of faith, and embrace the blessed Jesus in your souls, so that you could say, “my beloved is mine, and I am his?” If so, fear not, whoever you are. Hail, all hail, you happy souls! The Lord, the Lord Christ, the everlasting God, is your righteousness. Christ has justified you, who is he that condemneth you? Christ has died for you, nay rather is risen again, and ever liveth to make intercession for you. Being now justified by his grace, you have peace with God, and shall, ere long, be with Jesus in glory, reaping everlasting and unspeakable fruits both in body and soul. For there is no condemnation to those that are really in Christ Jesus. “Whether *Paul* or *Apollos*, or life or death, all is yours if you are Christ’s, for Christ is God’s.” My brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you! O think of the love of Christ in dying for you! If the Lord be your righteousness, let the righteousness of your Lord be continually in your mouth. Talk of, O talk of, and recommend the righteousness of Christ, when you lye down, and when you rise up, at your going out and coming in! Think of the greatness of the gift, as well as of the giver! Shew to all the

world, in whom you have believed! Let all by your fruits know, that the Lord is your righteousness, and that you are waiting for your Lord from heaven! O study to be holy, even as he who has called you, and washed you in his own blood, is holy! Let not the righteousness of the Lord be evil spoken of through you. Let not Jesus be wounded in the house of his friends; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, day by day. O think of his dying love! Let that love constrain you to obedience! having much forgiven, love much. Be always asking, What shall I do, to express my gratitude to the Lord, for giving me his righteousness? Let that self-abasing, God-exalting question be always in your mouths; "Why me, Lord? why me?" why am I taken, and others left? why is the Lord my righteousness? why is he become my salvation, who have so often deserved damnation at his hands?

My friends, I trust I feel somewhat of a sense of God's distinguishing love upon my heart; therefore I must divert a little from congratulating you, to invite poor christless sinners to come to him, and accept of his righteousness, that they may have life.

Alas, my heart almost bleeds! What a multitude of precious souls are now before me! how shortly must all be ushered into eternity! and yet, O cutting thought! was God now to require all your souls, how few, comparatively speaking, could really say, the Lord *our* righteousness!

And think you, *O sinners*, that you will be able to stand in the day of judgment, if Christ be not your righteousness! No, that alone is the wedding-garment in which you must appear. O christless sinners, I am distressed for you! the desires of my soul are enlarged. O that this may be an accepted time! that the Lord may be your righteousness! For whither would you flee, if death should find you naked? Indeed there is no hiding

yourselves from his presence. The pitiful fig-leaves of your own righteousness will not cover your nakedness, when God shall call you to stand before him. *Adam* found them ineffectual, and so will you. O think of death! O think of judgment! Yet a little while, and time shall be no more; and then what will become of you, if the Lord be not your righteousness? Think you that Christ will spare you? No, he that formed you, will have no mercy on you. If you are not of Christ, if Christ be not your righteousness, Christ himself shall pronounce you damned. And can you bear to think of being damned by Christ? Can you bear to hear the Lord Jesus say to you, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Can you live, think you, in everlasting burnings? Is your flesh brass, and your bones iron? what if they are? hell-fire, that fire prepared for the devil and his angels, will heat them through and through. And can you bear to depart from Christ? O that heart-piercing thought! Ask those holy souls, who are at any time bewailing an absent God, who walk in darkness, and see no light, though but a few days or hours; ask them, what it is to lose a sight and presence of Christ? See how they seek him sorrowing, and go mourning after him all the day long! And, if it is so dreadful to lose the sensible presence of Christ only for a day, what must it be to be banished from him to all eternity?

But thus it must be, if Christ be not your righteousness. For God's justice must be satisfied; and, unless Christ's righteousness is imputed and applied to you here, you must hereafter be satisfying the divine justice in hell-torments eternally; nay, Christ himself shall condemn you to that place of torment. And how cutting is that thought! Methinks I see poor, trembling, christless wretches, standing before the bar of God, crying out, Lord, if we must be damned, let some angel, or some archangel, pronounce the

damnatory sentence: but all in vain. Christ himself shall pronounce the irrevocable sentence. Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, let me persuade you to close with Christ, and never rest till you can say, "the Lord our righteousness." Who knows but the Lord may have mercy on, nay, abundantly pardon you? Beg of God to give you faith; and, if the Lord gives you that, you will by it receive Christ, with his righteousness, and his All. You need not fear the greatness or number of your sins. For are you sinners? so am I. Are you the chief of sinners? so am I. Are you backsliding sinners? so am I. And yet the Lord (for ever adored be his rich, free and sovereign grace) the Lord is my righteousness. Come then, *O young men*, who (as I acted once myself) are playing the prodigal, and wandering away afar off from your heavenly Father's house, come home, come home, and leave your swines trough. Feed no longer on the husks of sensual delights: for Christ's sake arise, and come home! your heavenly Father now calls you. See yonder the best robe, even the righteousness of his dear Son, awaits you. See it, view it again and again. Consider at how dear a rate it was purchased, even by the blood of God. Consider what great need you have of it. You are lost, undone, damned for ever, without it. Come then, poor, guilty prodigals, come home: indeed, I will not, like the elder brother in the gospel, be angry; no, I will rejoice with the angels in heaven. And O that God would now bow the heavens, and come down! Descend, O Son of God, descend; and, as thou hast shewn in me such mercy, O let thy blessed Spirit apply thy righteousness to some young prodigals now before thee, and clothe their naked souls with thy best robe!

But I must speak a word to you, *young maidens*, as well as young men. I see many of you adorned, as to your bodies: but are not your souls naked? Which of you can say, the Lord is my righteousness? which of you was ever

solicitous to be dressed in this robe of invaluable price, and without which you are no better than whited sepulchres in the sight of God? Let not then so many of you, young maidens, any longer forget your chief and only ornament. O seek for the Lord to be your righteousness, or otherwise burning will soon be upon you, instead of beauty!

And what shall I say to you of a middle age, you *busy merchants*, you *cumbered Martha's*, who, with all your gettings, have not yet gotten the Lord to be your righteousness? Alas! what profit will there be of all your labour under the sun, if you do not secure this pearl of invaluable price? this one thing, so absolutely needful, that it only can stand you in stead, when all other things shall be taken from you. Labour therefore no longer so anxiously for the meat which perisheth, but henceforward seek for the Lord to be your righteousness, a righteousness that will entitle you to life everlasting. I see also many *hoary heads* here, and perhaps the most of them cannot say, the Lord is my righteousness. O gray-headed sinners, I could weep over you! your gray hairs, which ought to be your crown, and in which perhaps you glory, are now your shame. You know not that the Lord is your righteousness: O haste then, haste ye, aged sinners, and seek an interest in redeeming love! Alas, you have one foot already in the grave, your glass is just run out, your sun is just going down, and it will set and leave you in an eternal darkness, unless the Lord be your righteousness! Flee then, O flee for your lives! be not afraid. All things are possible with God. If you come, though it be at the eleventh hour, Christ Jesus will in no wise cast you out. Seek then for the Lord to be your righteousness, and beseech him to let you know, how it is that a man may be born again when he is old! But I must not forget the *lambs* of the flock. To feed them was one of my Lord's last commands. I know he will be angry with me, if I do

not tell them, that the Lord may be *their* righteousness; and that of such is the kingdom of heaven. Come then, ye little children, come to Christ; the Lord Christ shall be *your* righteousness. Do not think, that you are too young to be converted. Perhaps many of you may be nine or ten years old, and yet cannot say, the Lord is our righteousness; which many have said, though younger than you. Come then, while you are young. Perhaps you may not live to be old. Do not stay for other people. If your fathers and mothers will not come to Christ, do you come without them. Let children lead them, and shew them how the Lord may be *their* righteousness. Our Lord Jesus loved little children. You are his lambs; he bids me feed you. I pray God make you willing betimes to take the Lord for your righteousness.

Here then I could conclude; but I must not forget the *poor negroes*; no, I must not. Jesus Christ has died for them, as well as for others. Nor do I mention you last, because I despise your souls, but because I would have what I shall say, make the deeper impression upon your hearts. O that you would seek the Lord to be your righteousness! Who knows but he may be found of you? For in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female, bond nor free; even you may be the children of God, if you believe in Jesus. Did you never read of the eunuch belonging to the queen of *Candace*? a negro like yourselves. He believed. The Lord was his righteousness. He was baptized. Do you also believe, and you shall be saved. Christ Jesus is the same now as he was yesterday, and will wash you in his own blood. Go home then, turn the words of the text into a prayer, and intreat the Lord to be *your* righteousness. Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly, into all our souls! *Amen*, Lord Jesus, *Amen* and *Amen*!

SERMON XV.

The Righteousness of Christ, an everlasting Righteousness.
Daniel ix. 24.

And to bring in everlasting Righteousness.

ON reading these words, I cannot help addressing you in the language of the angels to the poor shepherds, who kept watch over their flocks by night, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy," such tidings, that if we have ears to hear, if we have eyes to see, and if our hearts have indeed experienced the grace of God, must cause us to cry out with the Virgin *Mary*, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour." The words which I have read to you, are part of one of the most explicit revelations that was given of Jesus Christ, before he made his public entrance into this our world. It has been observed by some, and very properly too, that it is one mark of the divine goodness to his creatures, that he is pleased to let light come in gradually upon the natural world. If the sun from midnight darkness, was immediately to shine forth in his full meridian blaze, his great splendor would be apt to dazzle our eyes, and

strike us blind again: but God is pleased to make light come gradually in, and by that means we are prepared to receive it. And as God is pleased to deal with the natural, so he has dealt with the moral, with the spiritual world. The Lord Jesus Christ did not appear in his full glory all at once, but as the sun rises gradually, so did the Lord Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, rise gradually upon men, with healing under his wings. Hence it was, that our first parents had nothing to fix their faith upon, but that first promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And in future ages, at sundry times, and after divers manners, God was pleased to speak to our fathers by the prophets, before he spake to us in these last days by his son; and the prophets that were more peculiarly dear to God, it should seem had more peculiar and extraordinary revelations vouchsafed to them, concerning Jesus Christ.

It is plain from the accounts we have in Scripture, that the Prophet *Daniel* was one of these; he is stiled by the angel, not only a "man that was beloved," but a "man that was *greatly* beloved," or as it is in the margin of your bibles, "he was a man of desires," of large and extensive desires to promote the glory of God; he was a desirable man, a man that did much good in his generation, and therefore his life was much to be desired by those who loved God. The words which I have chosen for the subject of our present meditation, contain part of a revelation made to this man. If you look back to the beginning of this chapter, you will find how the good man was employed, when God was pleased to give him this revelation; verse 2. "In the first year of *Darius*'s reign, I *Daniel* understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to *Jeremiah* the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of *Jerusalem*." *Daniel* was a great man, and withal a good man; great as he

was, it seems he was not above reading his Bible; he made the Bible his constant study; for it is the Bible we are to understand by what is here termed books, and elsewhere, the scriptures of truth. He found, that the time for God's people being delivered from the captivity, was now at hand. Well, one would have thought, that therefore *Daniel* needed not to pray; but this, instead of retarding, quickened him in his prayers: and therefore we are told in the third verse, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth, and ashes." It is beautifully expressed: "he set his face," as though he was resolved never to let his eye go off God, till God was pleased to give him an answer; he was resolved, *Jacob*-like, to wrestle with the Lord God, until God should be pleased to give him the desired blessing. We are told in the fourth verse, that "he prayed unto the Lord, and made confession," not only of his own sins, but the sins of his people. And when ye retire home to your houses, before ye go to bed, I would recommend to you the reading of this prayer; every word of it bespeaks his exceeding concern for the public good. It would take me up too much time, was I to make such observations as indeed the prayer deserves; to bring you sooner to the words of the text, let us go forward to the twentieth verse, and there you will find the success that *Daniel* met with, when praying. Says he, "while I was praying and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people *Israel*, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God, for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man *Gabriel*, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." The manner in which *Daniel* expresses himself, is very emphatical: "While I was *speaking in prayer*;" implying, that God suffers us, when we draw near to him by faith in prayer, to lay all our complaints

before him; he suffers us to speak unto, and talk with him, as a man talketh with his friend. *Daniel* at this time too was making *confession* one part of his prayer; for we are never, never in a better frame to receive answers from above, than when we are humbling ourselves before the Lord. He was not only confessing his own sins, but he was confessing the sins of his people; he was praying for those, who perhaps seldom prayed for themselves; "while I was speaking in prayer, the man *Gabriel*:" which word, by interpretation, signifies *the strength of* God; a very proper name, says Bishop *Hall*, for that angel who was to come and bring the news to the world, of the God of strength, the Lord Jesus Christ. This angel is here represented as flying, and as flying swiftly; to show us how willing, how unspeakably willing those blessed spirits are, to bring good news to men. And it is upon this account, I suppose, that we are taught by our Lord to pray, "that God's will may be done by us on earth, as it is done in heaven," that we may imitate a little of that alacrity and vigour, which angels employ, when they are sent on errands for God.

Well, here is not only mention made of the angel's flying swiftly, but there is mention made of the time that he came; "He came and touched me, about the time of the evening oblation," that is, about three o'clock in the afternoon; at this time there was a sacrifice made to God, and this sacrifice was in a peculiar manner a type of the Lord Jesus, who in the evening of the world was to become a sacrifice for sinners. We are told in the 22d verse, what message this angel delivered, "He informed me, and talked with me, and said, O *Daniel*, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding; at the beginning of thy supplication, the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved, therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." This passage,

with such-like passages of scripture, hath often comforted my soul, and may comfort the hearts of all God's people. There are a great many of you, perhaps, have prayed, and prayed again to God, and probably you do not find any answer given you: you pray for an enlarged heart, you pray for comfort, you pray for deliverance; God is pleased to withhold it for a while; then the devil strikes in, and says, God has shut out your prayers, God will never hear, God will never regard you, therefore pray no more. But, my dear friends, this is a mistake; a thousand years are with God as one day; and the Lord Jesus has bid us, "to pray always, and not faint." You may have had your prayers heard, the very moment they went out of your lips, though it may not please your God, (and it may not be proper for you) to let you know that they are heard. "At the beginning of thy supplication, the commandment went forth;" and this very angel some hundred years after, told *Zacharias*, that his prayer was heard; a prayer for what? a prayer for a child; it could not be supposed that at the very time *Zacharias* was praying for a child; but his prayer he had put up forty years before, God was pleased to answer so long afterwards.

But to proceed with *Gabriel*'s declaration, verse 24. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness," I do not intend to trouble you about the critical exposition of these *seventy weeks*; commentators are divided exceedingly upon this subject; some of them explain them one way, and some another, and perhaps we shall never know till the day of judgment, till the glorious day spoken of in the New Testament, which are right. My intention is to dwell upon this particular part of the angel's message, that

some one person was to do something *unspeakable* for God's people, even "to bring in an everlasting righteousness."

If you want to know who was the person that was to do this, look to the 26th verse, and you will find the person mentioned, the Lord Jesus Christ: "after threescore and two weeks shall the *Messiah* be cut off, but not for himself:" he is the person spoken of, he was "to put an end to sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

From these important words, I shall endeavour,

First, To shew you what we are to understand by the word, "Righteousness."

Secondly, I shall endeavour to shew you, upon what account it is, that the righteousness mentioned in the text, is called an "everlasting righteousness."

Thirdly, I shall shew, what we are to understand by "bringing it in." And,

Then speak a word to saints and sinners. And while I am speaking to your ears, may God, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, speak to your hearts!

First, To explain what we are to understand by the word, "righteousness." If I was to ask some people what we are to understand by the word, righteousness; if the person was an *Arminian*, or an enemy to the doctrine of free grace, he would answer me, it signifies what we commonly call *moral honesty*, or doing justice between man and man. And, indeed, in various passages of scripture, the word righteousness has no other meaning, at least, it bears that meaning. I suppose, we are to understand it in this sense, when we are told, that *Paul*, preaching before *Felix*, "reasoned of temperance, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come." *Felix* had been a very unrighteous and unjust man, and therefore, to convince him of his wickedness, to alarm his conscience, to put him upon seeking help in the

Lord Jesus, *Paul* preached not only of temperance, (for *Felix* had been a very intemperate man) but he preached to him of righteousness, of the necessity of doing justice, because he had been an unjust man; and he puts before him the judgment to come, in order to make him fly to Jesus Christ for deliverance from the bad consequences of that judgment; and there are other places of scripture, where the word righteousness may be understood in this sense.

It likewise signifies inward holiness, wrought in us by the blessed Spirit of God. But, I believe, the word righteousness in my text signifies, what, I trust most, I should be glad if I could say, all who attend this night, will be glad to hear of: What is that? It is what all reformed divines, that have clear heads and clear hearts, call an *imputed righteousness*, or the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to be imputed to poor sinners upon their believing: and, if you ask me, what I mean by an imputed righteousness; not to shoot over your heads, but rather, if God shall be pleased to make me, to reach your hearts, I will tell you, by this word "righteousness," I understand all that Christ hath done, and all that Christ hath suffered: or, to make use of the term generally made use of by sound divines, "Christ's active, and Christ's passive obedience;" put these two together, and they make up the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear friends, thus stood the case between God and man: at first God made man upright. *Moses* gives us a short, but never was so full a description of the origin and nature of man given by any other but himself. "In the image of God made he man," says that sacred historian, being inspired by the Spirit of God. God said, and it was done; God commanded, and the world arose before him; "Let there be light," and instantaneously behold light appeared: but when that lovely, that divine, that blessed creature Man, the Lord of the creation, God's

vicegerent, was to be made, God calls a council, and says, "Let us make man after our own image." Now, this image is to be understood, no doubt, in respect of man's soul; for God being no corporeal substance, man could not be made after his image that way. Well, in this condition God made man. *Adam* stood as our representative. *Adam* and *Eve* had but one name originally, "God made man, and called their name *Adam*." God left *Adam* to his own free will; he was pleased to enter into a covenant with him, which, indeed, is an amazing instance of God's condescension. God might have ordered man to do so and so, and not made him any promise of a reward: but the great Creator was pleased to promise him, that if he performed an unsinning obedience, if he abstained from eating a particular tree, that he and his posterity should live for ever; but if He broke that command, in the day that he ate thereof, he and all his posterity were to die. Now, I verily believe, had you and I been there present, however some people may object against God's severity, in imputing *Adam*'s sin to us; yet I believe, if you and I, and all the world had been present, we should have heartily come into this agreement. Supposing God had called the whole creation together, and had said, "Ye, my creatures, I have made here a man after my own image, I have breathed into him the breath of life, I have caused him to become a living soul, I have filled him with righteousness and true holiness; he has not the least propensity to sin, only he is a fallible and mutable creature; all that I desire of this man is, that he abstain from yonder tree: I have given to him all the trees of the garden, I have made him, and planted for him a garden with mine own right hand, I desire he may abstain from plucking yonder fruit: Will ye stand or fall by this man, will ye let him be your representative, will ye be content that his obedience or disobedience be imputed to you?" If we had been all there, every one of us would have said,

“Lord God, we will let him be our representative;” the terms were so easy, the improbability of his falling was so exceeding great, that I believe every one of us should have all put our hand to the covenant. And supposing us alive, and that we had agreed to that covenant, who is that man or woman that could find fault with God’s imputing *Adam*’s sin to us. Well, my friends, God made man in this condition; the devil envied his happiness; it is supposed by some, that man was made to supply the places of the fallen angels. But the devil envied man, and had leave to tempt him; *Eve* soon reached out her hand and plucked of the forbidden fruit, and afterwards *Adam* transgressed also; and from that very moment, to make use of Mr. *Boston*’s words, “Man’s name was *Ichabod*,” the glory of the Lord departed from him. *Adam* and *Eve* then fell: you, and I, and all their posterity (whom they represented) fell in them. Mankind had but one neck; and God might have served mankind, as *Caligula* would have served *Rome*, according to his own words, “I wish it had but one neck, and I would cut it off with one blow.” God, if he pleased, might have sent us all to hell. Here *Calvin* represents God’s attributes as struggling one with another; Justice saying to God, seeing Justice had framed the sanction, “Is the law broken, damn the offender, and send him to hell.” The mercy of God, his darling attribute, cries out, “Spare him, spare him.” The wisdom of God contrives a way, that justice might be satisfied, and yet mercy be triumphant still. How was that? The Lord Jesus interposes, the days-man, the dear Redeemer! he saw God wielding his flaming sword, and his hand taking hold of vengeance; the Lord Jesus Christ saw the sword ready to be sheathed in the blood of the offender; when no eye could pity, when no angel or archangel could rescue, just as God was, as it were, about to give the fatal blow, just as the knife was put to the throat of the offender, the Son of God, the eternal Logos,

says, “Father, spare the sinner; let him not die; Father, Father, O hold thy hand, withdraw thy sword, for I come to do thy will; man has broken thy law, and violated thy covenant: I do not deny but man deserves to be damned for ever; but, Father, what *Adam* could not do, if thou wilt prepare me a body, I in the fulness of time will go, and die for him; he has broken thy law, but I will go and keep it, that thy law may be honoured; I will give a perfect unsinning obedience to all thy commandments; and that thou mayst justify ungodly creatures, I will not only go down and obey thy law, but I will go down and bleed; I will go down and die: here I am; I will step in between thee and sinners, and be glad to have thy sword sheathed in my heart’s blood for them.”

In the fulness of time descends the eternal Logos, “In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law from the curse of it, being made a curse for us.” The Lord Jesus Christ being cloathed in human nature, fulfilled all righteousness; he submitted to every institution of God, and was pleased to obey the whole moral law; and afterwards, O can we think of it, O can you hear of it, without a heart leaping with joy, at last the Lord Jesus bled and died! and when he was just expiring, just as he was about to bow down his head, and give up the ghost, what do ye think he said? He said, “It is finished!” As much as to say, “Now the arduous work, the difficult task I had undertaken, blessed be God, is now completely over; all the demands of the law are finished; now God’s justice is satisfied; now a new and living way is opened by my blood to the holiest of all for poor sinners.”

So that when Christ’s righteousness is here spoken of, we are to understand “Christ’s obedience and death,” all that Christ has done, and all that Christ has suffered for an elect world, for all that will believe on him.

And blessed be God for this righteousness! blessed be God for the epithet which in the text is put to this righteousness; it might be called a *blessed* righteousness, it might be called a *glorious* righteousness; it might be called an *invaluable* righteousness; but the angel calls it an *everlasting righteousness*; God give you to take the comfort of it!

Secondly, I am now to shew, on what account, this righteousness is here called an *everlasting* righteousness; and pray why do you think is Christ's righteousness called an everlasting righteousness?

I suppose it is called an everlasting righteousness,

First, Because Christ's righteousness was intended by the great God to extend to mankind even from eternity. All of you know, that old love is the best love. When we have an old acquaintance, a friend, that has loved us for many years, indeed that love is sweet: though we may love new friends, yet when an old friend and a new friend meet together, we may say, that the old is better. Now this should endear God to us, to think that from all the ages of eternity God had thoughts of you; God intended the Lord Jesus Christ to save your souls and mine: hence it is, that God, to endear *Jeremiah* to him, tells him, I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Hence it is, that the Lord Jesus, when he calls his elect people up to heaven, says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father;" what follows? "receive the kingdom prepared for you;" how long? "from the foundation of the world." All that we receive in time; all the streams that come to our souls, are but so many streams flowing from that inexhaustible fountain, God's electing, God's sovereign, God's distinguishing, God's everlasting love; and, therefore, the righteousness of Jesus Christ may properly be called an everlasting righteousness, because God intended it from everlasting.

Secondly, It is called an everlasting righteousness, because the efficacy of Christ's death took place immediately upon *Adam*'s fall. Christianity, in one sense, is as old as the creation. Great Professor *Franck*, of *Germany*, says, "That Christ is the sum and substance of all righteousness." Mr. *Henry* observes, "That the Lord Jesus Christ is the treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament, under the types and shadows of the *Mosaic* dispensation." We have the Sun of Righteousness shining in his full meridian in the New Testament dispensation. Now the righteousness of Jesus Christ, may be called an everlasting righteousness, because all the saints that have been saved, or that ever will be saved, are all saved by the righteousness of Christ. A great many censorious people are mighty inquisitive to know, what will become of the heathens, that never heard of Jesus Christ. I would say to such persons, as the Lord Jesus Christ did to another curious enquirer, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." Pray, for what should you and I trouble ourselves about the heathens? Are not we heathens? It is too true, that we have too much of the heathens temper and practice with us. But why should we lose our time in enquiring about what will become of the heathen, and not rather enquire what will become of our own souls? We may be sure God will deal with heathens according to their light: if he has given them no revelation, they will not be judged by a revelation; if they have not had a law, they will be judged without law. But as for the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who have the gospel revealed to them, however Deists may argue contrary to it; however they may set up reason in opposition to divine revelation; we may be sure none were ever saved, or will be saved, but by the righteousness of Christ. It was through faith in him, that *Abel* was saved; it was through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that *Abraham* was accepted, and that all the prophets of old were accepted; and there is none

other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but that of Christ. And therefore, since persons under the law, and under the gospel, are to be saved only through Christ; therefore, Christ's righteousness may properly be called an everlasting righteousness. But this is not all.

Thirdly, The righteousness of Jesus Christ, is not only to be called an everlasting righteousness, because that all persons under the law, and all persons under the gospel, are saved by it; but because the efficacy thereof, blessed be God for it! is to continue till time shall be no more. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ! the efficacy of whose blood, death, and atonement, is as great and as effectual now to the salvation of poor sinners, as when he bowed his blessed head, and gave up the ghost: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and whosoever believes on him now, whosoever comes to, and accepts of him, shall now see his power, shall taste of his grace, and shall be actually saved by him, the same as if he had been in company with those who saw him expiring.

Fourthly, Christ's righteousness may be called an everlasting righteousness, because the benefit of it is to endure to everlasting life. Indeed, some people tell us, that a person may be in Christ to-day, and go to the devil to-morrow: but, blessed be God, ye have not so learned Christ! No, my dear friends, thanks be to God for that divine text, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Though God's people may fall foully; and though many are full of doubts and fears, and say, "One day I shall fall by the hands of *Saul*;" however ye may say in your haste, "All men are liars;" however your poor souls may be harassed, yet no wicked devil, nor your own depraved heart, shall be able to separate you from the love of God: God has loved you, God has fixed his heart upon you, and having loved his own, he loves them unto the end. The Lord of life and of

glory, the blessed Jesus, will never cease loving you, till he hath loved and brought you to heaven; when he will rejoice, and say, "Behold me, O my Father, and the dear children that thou hast given me; thou gavest them me; thine they were, I have bought them with my blood, I have won them with my sword and with my bow, and I now will wear them as so many jewels of my crown." Therefore, Jesus Christ's righteousness may be called an everlasting righteousness, because those who once take hold of, and are interested in it, shall be saved everlastingly by Christ: "It is God that justifies us, (says St. *Paul*) who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again." He gives devils the challenge, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory? Who shall separate us from the love of God? I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither principalities nor powers, nor any other creature, shall ever be able to seperate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Those whom God justifies, he also glorifies. And because Christ lives, blessed be God, we shall live also. I know not what you may say; but though I trust I have felt the grace of Christ, yet I find that I have as much need to come to Christ every day for fresh strength, as if I had never believed before: and if I was to depend upon my own faithfulness, and not the faithfulness of the Son of God, I am sure I should soon desert the Lord Jesus Christ. But glory be to God, he is faithful that hath promised! Glory be to God, our salvation depends not upon our own free will, but upon God's free grace! Here is a sure bottom; the believer may build upon it; let the storms blow as long and as high as they please, they may make the poor creature tremble, but blessed be God, they never shall be able to take him off the foundation; though they may shake him, they shall only shake off his corruption: and I

believe all that fear God, will be glad to part with it. On all these accounts, Christ's righteousness may be called an everlasting righteousness.

III. It is said, in my text, that Jesus was to bring it in. What are we to understand by his bringing it in? Our Lord's promulgating and proclaiming it to the world. Indeed, it was brought in under the law; but then it was brought in under types and shadows, and most of the *Jews* looked no further. But Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. The light of *Moses* was only twilight; the light of the gospel, is like the sun at noon-day, shining in his full meridian. Therefore, Jesus Christ may be said to bring in this everlasting righteousness, because he proclaimed it to the world, and commanded it to be preached, that God sent his Son into the world, that the world through him might be saved.

Again, The Lord Jesus Christ brought in this righteousness, as he wrought it out for sinners upon the cross. Some Antinomians, for want of a proper distinction, run into a grievous error, telling us, Because God intended to justify by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, therefore man is justified from all eternity: which is absurd: a person cannot be justified, till he is actually existing; therefore, though man is justified, as it lies in God's mind from all eternity, yet it was not actually brought in till the Lord Jesus Christ pronounced those blessed words, "It is finished;" the grand consummation! then Jesus brought it in. A new and a living way was to be opened to the Holy of Holies, for poor sinners, by the blood of Christ. But I do not think that the expression, *brought in*, is to be limited to this sense, though I suppose it is the primary one; it implies not only Christ's bringing it into the world, as promulgating, and having it written in the word of God, and as having wrought it out for sinners in his life, and on the cross; but he brings it in, in a manner, which, I pray God may take place this night; I mean,

bringing it, by his blessed Spirit, into poor believers hearts. All that Christ hath done, all that Christ hath suffered, all Christ's active obedience, all Christ's passive obedience, will do us no good, unless by the Spirit of God, it is brought into our souls. As one expresses it, "An unapplied Christ is no Christ at all." To hear of a Christ dying for sinners, will only increase your damnation, will only sink you deeper into hell, unless we have ground to say, by a work of grace wrought in our hearts, that the Lord Jesus hath brought this home to us. Hence it is, that the Apostle, speaking of Christ, says, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." O that dear, that great, that little, but important word, *me*. Happy they, who can adopt the Apostle's language! Happy they that can apply it to their own heart; and when they hear that Christ has brought in an everlasting righteousness, can say, Blessed be God, it is brought in by the blessed Spirit to my soul!

Are there any here that can go along with me on this doctrine? But why do I ask this question, when preaching to numbers, who, I hope, have tasted of the grace of God long ago? I do not know; I cannot distinguish you; you are just like other people, as to your looks and habits; but if I do not, and if your neighbours cannot know you, that great God, in whose presence you are, knows you; He, before whose tribunal we are shortly to appear, knows you. If Christ Jesus hath brought his everlasting righteousness into your heart; if it is applied by the Spirit of God to your soul, what shall I say to you? I will say as the Angel to *John*, "Come up hither," thou child of God! Come up hither, thou son, thou daughter of *Abraham*! Come and join with me, in calling upon angels and archangels, in calling upon the spirits of just men made perfect, to help thee to praise that loving Redeemer, that has brought in an everlasting righteousness. O was ever love like this! When *Abraham* was about to offer up his son, God said, "Now I know that thou

lovest me, since thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Now may each child of God say, "Now, O God, I know that thou hast loved me, since thou hast not withheld thy Son, thy dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, from dying for me." If thou hast got Christ brought into thy soul by faith, O look forward, look towards a happy eternity; O look towards those everlasting mansions, into which God will bring thee after death. My dear friends, I could say much from this text to comfort God's people: But

I must address myself to you, poor souls, who cannot say, that this righteousness has been brought home to your souls; but if it was never brought home before, may God, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, bring it home now! Are any of you depending upon a righteousness of your own? Do any of you here, think to save yourselves by your own doings? I say to you, as the Apostle said to one that offered money for a power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, your righteousness shall perish with you. Poor miserable creatures! What is there in your tears? what in your prayers? what in your performances, to appease the wrath of an angry God? Away from the trees of the garden; come, ye guilty wretches, come as poor, lost, undone, and wretched creatures, and accept of a better righteousness than your own. As I said before, so I tell you again, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is an everlasting righteousness: it is wrought out for the very chief of sinners. Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come and drink of this water of life freely. Are any of you wounded by sin? Do any of you feel you have no righteousness of your own? Are any of you perishing for hunger? Are any of you afraid ye will perish for ever? Come, dear souls, in all your rags; come, thou poor man; come, thou poor, distressed woman; you, who think God will never forgive you, and that your sins are too great to be forgiven; come, thou doubting creature, who art afraid thou wilt never get comfort;

arise, take comfort, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, the Lord of glory, calls for thee: through his righteousness there is hope for the chief of sinners, for the worst of creatures. What if thou hadst committed all the sins in the world? What if thou hadst committed the sins of a thousand, what if thou hadst committed the sins of a million of worlds? Christ's righteousness will cover, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ will cleanse thee from the guilt of them all. O let not one poor soul stand at a distance from the Saviour. My dear friends, could my voice hold out, was my strength equal to my will, I would wrestle with you; I would strive with arguments, till you came and washed in this blood of the Lamb; till you came and accepted of this everlasting righteousness. O come, come! Now, since it is brought into the world by Christ, so in the name, in the strength, and by the assistance of the great God, I bring it now to the pulpit; I now offer this righteousness, this free, this imputed, this everlasting righteousness to all poor sinners that will accept of it. For God's sake accept it this night: you do not know but ye may die before to-morrow. How do ye know, but while I am speaking, a fit of the apoplexy may seize, and death arrest you? O my dear friends, where can ye go? where will ye appear? How will ye stand before an angry God, without the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ put upon your souls? Can ye stand in your own rags? Will ye dare to appear before a heart-searching God, without the apparel of your elder brother? If ye do, I know your doom: Christ will frown you into hell: "Depart, depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," shall be your portion. Think, I pray you, therefore, on these things; go home, go home, go home, pray over the text, and say, "Lord God, thou hast brought an everlasting righteousness into the world by the Lord Jesus Christ; by the blessed Spirit bring it into my heart!" then, die when ye will, ye are safe; if it be to-morrow, ye shall be immediately translated into the

presence of the everlasting God: that will be sweet! Happy they who have got this robe on; happy they that can say, “My God hath loved me, and I shall be loved by him with an everlasting love!” That every one of you may be able to say so, may God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the dear Redeemer; to whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XVI.

The Observation of the Birth of Christ, the Duty of all Christians; or the true Way of keeping Christmas.

Matthew i. 21.

And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his Name Jesus: For he shall save his People from their Sins.

THE celebration of the birth of Christ hath been esteemed a duty by most who profess Christianity. When we consider the condescension and love of the Lord Jesus Christ, in submitting to be born of a virgin, a poor sinful creature; and especially as he knew how he was to be treated in this world; that he was to be despised, scoffed at, and at last to die a painful, shameful, and ignominious death; that he should be treated as though he was the off-scouring of all mankind; used, not like the son of a man, and, therefore, not at all like the Son of God; the consideration of these things should make us to admire the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was so willing to offer himself as a ransom for the sins of the people, that when the fulness of time was come, Christ came, made of a woman, made under the law: he came

according to the eternal counsel of the Father; he came, not in glory or in splendor, not like him who brought all salvation with him: no, he was born in a stable, and laid in a manger; oxen were his companions. O amazing condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ, to stoop to such low and poor things for our sake. What love is this, what great and wonderful love was here, that the Son of God should come into our world in so mean a condition, to deliver us from the sin and misery in which we were involved by our fall in our first parents! And as all that proceeded from the springs must be muddy, because the fountain was so, the Lord Jesus Christ came to take our natures upon him, to die a shameful, a painful, and an accursed death for our sakes; he died for our sins, and to bring us to God; he cleansed us by his blood from the guilt of sin, he satisfied for our imperfections; and now, my brethren, we have access unto him with boldness; he is a mediator between us and his offended Father.

Therefore, if we do but consider into what state, and at how great a distance from God we are fallen; how vile our natures were; what a depravity, and how incapable to restore that image of God to our souls, which we lost in our first parents: when I consider these things, my brethren, and that the Lord Jesus Christ came to restore us to that favour with God which we had lost, and that Christ not only came down with an intent to do it, but actually accomplished all that was in his heart towards us; that he raised and brought us into favour with God, that we might find kindness and mercy in his sight; surely this calls for some return of thanks on our part to our dear Redeemer, for this love and kindness to our souls. How just would it have been of him, to have left us in that deplorable state wherein we, by our guilt, had involved ourselves? For God could not, nor can receive any additional good by our salvation; but it was love, mere

love; it was free love that brought the Lord Jesus Christ into our world about 1700 years ago. What, shall we not remember the birth of our Jesus? Shall we yearly celebrate the birth of our temporal king, and shall that of the King of kings be quite forgotten? Shall that only, which ought to be had chiefly in remembrance, be quite forgotten? God forbid! No, my dear brethren, let us celebrate and keep this festival of our church, with joy in our hearts: let the birth of a Redeemer, which redeemed us from sin, from wrath, from death, from hell, be always remembered; may this Saviour's love never be forgotten! but may we sing forth all his love and glory as long as life shall last here, and through an endless eternity in the world above! may we chaunt forth the wonders of redeeming love, and the riches of free grace, amidst angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, without intermission, for ever and ever! And as, my brethren, the time for keeping this festival is approaching, let us consider our duty in the true observation thereof, or the right way for the glory of God, and the good of immortal souls, to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; an event which ought to be had in eternal remembrance.

It is my design to lay down rules for the true keeping of that time of *Christmas*, which is now approaching.

I. I shall shew you when you may be said, not to observe this festival aright.

II. I shall shew you, when your observation and celebrating of this festival is done according to the glory of God, and to the true manner of keeping of it.

III. Shall conclude with an exhortation to all of you, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to have a regard to your behaviour at all times, but more especially, my dear brethren, on this solemn occasion.

I. My brethren, I am to shew when your celebration of this festival is not of the right kind.

And *First*, you do not celebrate this aright, when you spend most of your time in cards, dice, or gaming of any sort.

This is a season, for which there is no more allowance for wasting of your precious time in those unlawful entertainments, than any other. Persons are apt to flatter themselves that they are free and at liberty to spend whole evenings now at cards, at dice, or any diversion whatsoever, to pass away, as they call it, a tedious evening. They can do any thing now to pass away that, which is hastening as fast as thought: time is always upon the wing; it is no sooner present but it is past, and no sooner come but it is gone. And have we so much to do, and so little time to do it in, and yet complain of time lying heavy upon our hands? Have we not the devil and the beast to get out of our souls? Are not our natures to be changed, our corruptions to be subdued, our wills to be brought over to God, our hard hearts to be softened, all old things to be done away, and all things to become new in our souls? Is there not all this to be done? And yet we have too much time upon our hands! It is well, that instead of having too much time, it be not found that we have got too little, when we come to die: then we shall wish, my brethren, that we had made more account of our time, that we had improved it for the glory of God, and the welfare of our immortal souls.

Good God! how amazing is the consideration, that many can go to church in the morning, and take the Sacrament, and come home and spend the afternoon and evening in cards: Is this, my brethren, discerning the Lord's body? Is this taking the sacrament according to its institution? Is not this a pollution thereof, and making the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.

Therefore, those of you who have made this your practice in times past, let me beseech you, in the bowels of mercy, not to do so any more; for, indeed, it is earthly, it is sensual, it is devilish. Consider what is said of those who eat and drink at the Lord's table unworthily, that they eat and drink their own damnation: And can they, my brethren, be said to eat and drink any otherwise, who no sooner go from the table of the Lord, but run to the diversions of the devil? Indeed this is exceeding sinful, and displeasing unto the Lord; then forbear those diversions which are so evil in themselves: O be not found in those exercises, and in that pleasure, which you would not be found in when you come to die. Thus, my brethren, you see it is not a right celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus, to spend it in cards, dice, or any other diversions, which proceed so directly from the devil, and are destructive to all true goodness.

Secondly, They cannot be said truly to celebrate this time, who spend their time in eating and drinking to excess.

This is a season when persons are apt to indulge themselves in all manner of luxury: iniquity now abounds apace; nothing is scarcely to be seen but things of the greatest extravagance imaginable; not only for the necessities of the body, but to pamper it in lust, to feed its vices, to make us go on in sin, to be a means for gratifying our carnal appetite; and this is a means to make us forget the Lord of glory. This makes us only fit to do such drudgery, as the devil shall set us about; this is only preparing to run wheresoever the devil sends: this, instead of denying ourselves, is indulging ourselves; this is not, nor cannot be called, a celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we are making ourselves worse than the beasts that perish.

I am not speaking against eating and drinking of the good things of life, but against the eating and drinking of them to excess, because, thus they unqualify us for the service of God; and to our fellow-creatures they make us unsociable, and may occasion us to be guilty of saying and acting those things, which we should be ashamed to think of, if we had only eat or drank with moderation.

Therefore, my dear brethren, let me beseech you to set a watch over yourselves; be careful that you do not run into that company which may tempt you to evil; for would a man run himself into danger on purpose? Would a man enter himself into that company, where, before he goes, he knows he shall be exposed to great temptations; and therefore, if you have any reason to think that the company you are going into will be a temptation, I beseech you, by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, that you would not run into it.

How can you say, "Lead us not into temptation," when you are resolved to lead yourselves into it, by running into the occasions of sins. You are commanded to keep from the appearance of evil; and do you do that, by running into the place and company where it is like to be committed? No, this is so far from avoiding, and shunning it, that it is a plain proof to the contrary; therefore, if you are for observing this time, this festival of our church, let it not be done by running to excess; for you plainly see, that those who are guilty thereof, cannot be said properly to celebrate it.

Thirdly, Nor can they, my brethren, be said to keep, or rightly observe the commemoration of the birth of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who neglect their worldly callings to follow pleasures and diversions.

Alas! many, instead of keeping this time as it ought to be, run into sin with greediness; instead of devoting their time to the Lord, it is only

devoted to the devil and their own lusts. How many who thus mispend their time, at this season, lay by the work of their callings for a considerable time, with no other view, but to follow earthly, sensual, and devilish pleasures. If they should go to hear a sermon, or to a society, my brethren, the mouths of all the *Pharisees* at once are open against them, that they are not only a going to be ruined themselves, but are going to ruin their families too; they think it needless to make so much ado; this is being *righteous over-much*; but you may be as wicked as you please, and they will not cry out; however, when you are *wicked over-much*, by serving the devil and your own pleasures for a week or a month together, then, my brethren, with them you are only taking a little recreation, spending your time in innocent diversions; no one cries out against you, there is no outcry that you are going to be ruined. Again, if you give never so small a matter among the poor people of God, for their relief, then you are robbing your families, then you are going to turn madmen, and in a few days will be so methodistically mad, that you are not fit for a polite gentleman's conversation; but if you spend one hundred times the money in playhouses, &c. on your lusts and pleasures, then you are liked and esteemed as a good friend and companion; but, my dear brethren, these good companions in the world's account, are never so in the Lord Jesus Christ's. You cannot serve God and mammon; you must either lose your lusts, your pleasures, and your delights, or you cannot expect to find favour with God; for indeed, and indeed, the ways that too many follow at this time, are sinful, yea, they are exceeding sinful. You see they cannot be said to celebrate this holy time, who thus mispend their precious time to the neglect of their families; such are destroying themselves with a witness.

Thus, my dear brethren, I have shewn you who they are who do not rightly observe this holy festival.

II. I come now, in the second place, to shew you, who they are who do rightly observe, and truly celebrate the birth of our Redeemer.

And I shall shew you who they are in two particulars, directly opposite to the others; and then, my brethren, take your choice: you must choose the one or the other, there is no medium, you must either serve the Lord or Baal; and, therefore, my dear brethren, let me beg of you to consider,

First, That those spend their time aright, and truly observe this festival, who spend their hours in reading, praying, and religious conversation.

What can we do to employ our time to a more noble purpose, than reading of what our dear Redeemer has done and suffered; to read, that the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, came from his throne and took upon him the form of the meanest of his servants; and what great things he underwent. This, this is an history worth reading, this is worth employing our time about: and surely, when we read of the sufferings of our Saviour, it should excite us to prayer, that we might have an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ; that the blood which he spilt upon mount *Calvary*, and his death and crucifixion, might make an atonement for our sins, that we might be made holy; that we might be enabled to put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, even the Lord Jesus Christ; that we may throw away the heavy yoke of sin, and put on the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, my brethren, these things call for prayer, and for earnest prayer too; and O do be earnest with God, that you may have an interest in this Redeemer, and that you may put on his righteousness, so that you may not come before him in your filthy rags, nor be found not having on the wedding garment. O do not, I beseech you, trust unto yourselves for justification; you cannot,

indeed, you cannot be justified by the works of the law. I intreat that your time may be thus spent; and if you are in company, let your time be spent in that conversation which profiteth: let it not be about your dressing, your plays, your profits, or your worldly concerns, but let it be the wonders of redeeming love: O tell, tell to each other, what great things the Lord has done for your souls; declare unto one another, how you were delivered from the hands of your common enemy, *Satan*, and how the Lord has brought your feet from the clay, and has set them upon the rock of ages, the Lord Jesus Christ; there, my brethren, is no slipping; other conversation, by often repeating, you become fully acquainted with, but of Christ there is always something new to raise your thoughts; you can never want matter when the love of the Lord Jesus Christ is the subject: then let Jesus be the subject, my brethren, of all your conversation.

Let your time be spent on him: O this, this is an employ, which if you belong to Jesus, will last you to all eternity. Let others enjoy their cards, their dice, and gaming hours; do you, my brethren, let your time be spent in reading, praying, and religious conversation. Which will stand the trial best at the last day? which do you think will bring most comfort, most peace, in a dying hour? O live and spend your time now, as you will wish to have done, when you come to die.

Secondly, Let the good things of life, you enjoy, be used with moderation.

I am not, as the scoffers of this day tell you, against eating and drinking the good things of life; no, my brethren, I am only against their being used to an excess; therefore, let me beseech you to avoid those great indiscretions, those sinful actions, which will give the enemies of God room to blaspheme. Let me beseech you, to have a regard, a particular regard to your behaviour, at this time; for indeed the eyes of all are upon you, and

they would rejoice much to find any reason to complain of you. They can say things against us without a cause; and how would they rejoice if there was wherewith they might blame us? Then they would triumph and rejoice indeed; and all your little slips, my dear brethren, are, and would be charged upon me. O at this time, when the eyes of so many are upon you, be upon your guard; and if you use the good things of this life with moderation, you do then celebrate this festival in the manner which the institution calls for.

And instead of running into excess, let that money, which you might expend to pamper your own bodies, be given to feed the poor; now, my brethren, is the season, in which they commonly require relief; and sure you cannot act more agreeable, either to the season, to the time, or for the glory of God, than in relieving his poor distressed servants. Therefore, if any of you have poor friends, or acquaintance, who are in distress, I beseech you to assist them; and not only those of your acquaintance, but the poor in general. O my dear brethren, that will turn to a better account another day, than all you have expended to please the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. Consider, Christ was always willing to relieve the distressed; it is his command also; and can you better commemorate the birth of your king, your Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, than in obeying one of his commands?

Do not, my dear brethren, be forgetful of the poor of this world; consider, if providence has smiled upon you, and blessed you with abundance of the things of this life, God calls for some returns of gratitude from you: be ye mindful of the poor, and when you are so, then you may be said to have a true regard for that time which is now approaching; if you would truly observe this festival, let it be done with moderation, and a regard to the poor of this world.

Thirdly, Let me beg of you not to alienate too much of your time from the worldly business of this life, but have a proper regard thereunto, and then you may be said rightly to observe this festival.

God allows none to be idle: in all ages business was commended; and therefore do not think that any season will excuse us in our callings: we are not, my brethren, to labour for the things of this life inordinately, but we are to labour for them with all moderation: we are not to neglect our callings; no, we are to regard those places and stations of life, which God in his providence has thought convenient for us; and therefore, when you neglect your business to the hurt of your families, whatever pretence you thereby make for so doing, you are guilty of sin; you are not acting according to the doctrine of the gospel, but are breaking the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ, both according to his word, and to his own practice.

At this festival, persons are apt to take a little more liberty than usual; and if that time from our vocations is not prejudicial to ourselves or families, and is spent in the service of God, and the good of immortal souls, then I do not think it sinful; but there is too much reason to fear, that the time is spent upon our own lusts, and then it is exceeding sinful, it is against our own souls, and it is against the good of our families, and instead of commemorating the birth of our dear Redeemer, we are dishonouring him in the greatest degree possibly we can.

Therefore, enquire strictly into your end and design in spending your time; see, my brethren, whether it proceeds from a true love to your Redeemer, or whether there is not some worldly pleasure or advantage at the bottom: if there is, our end is not right; but if it proceed intirely from love to him that died, and gave himself for us, our actions will be a proof thereof; then our time will be spent, not in the polite pleasures of life, but

according to the doctrines and commands of the blessed Jesus; then our conversation will be in heaven: and O that this might be found to be the end of each of you, who now hear me; then we should truly observe this festival, and have a true regard to the occasion thereof, that of Christ's coming to redeem the souls of those which were lost.

Let me now conclude, my dear brethren, with a few words of exhortation, beseeching you to think of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did Jesus come into the world to save us from death, and shall we spend no part of our time in conversing about our dear Jesus; shall we pay no regard to the birth of him, who came to redeem us from the worst of slavery, from that of sin, and the devil; and shall this Jesus not only be born on our account, but likewise die in our stead, and yet shall we be unmindful of him? Shall we spend our time in those things which are offensive to him? Shall we not rather do all we can to promote his glory, and act according to his commands? O my dear brethren, be found in the ways of God; let us not disturb our dear Redeemer by any irregular proceedings; and let me beseech you to strive to love, fear, honour and obey him, more than ever you have done yet; let not the devil engross your time, and that dear Saviour who came into the world on your accounts, have so little. O be not so ungrateful to him who has been so kind to you; What could the Lord Jesus Christ have done for you more than he has? Then do not abuse his mercy, but let your time be spent in thinking and talking of the love of Jesus, who was incarnate for us, who was born of a woman, and made under the law, to redeem us from the wrath to come.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, &c.

SERMON XVII.

The Temptation of Christ.

Matthew iv. 1–11.

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones may be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship

me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

DEARLY beloved, to-day you are invited to take a walk into the wilderness, to behold, sympathize with, and get instruction and comfort from a Saviour tempted. In the conflict, he approves himself to be God's beloved Son; and the Father gives demonstrable evidence, that with, and in him, he is indeed well pleased. Let us with serious attention consider, when, where, and how, our great *Michael* fought with and overcame the dragon. The Evangelist *Matthew* is very particular in relating the preparations for, the beginning, process, and issue of this glorious and important combat.

"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." In the close of the foregoing chapter we are told, that the blessed Jesus had been publicly baptized, and was also solemnly inaugurated to his mediatorial office, by the opening of the heavens, by the Spirit of God descending on him like a dove, and by a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased;" and then it was, when he came from the solemn ordinance of baptism; when he was about to shew himself openly unto *Israel*; when he was full of the Holy Ghost (*Luke* iv. 1.); even *then* was he led, with a holy unconstrained violence, as a champion into the field, to engage an enemy, whom he was sure to conquer. But whither is this conqueror led? Into a lonesome, wide, howling wilderness: probably, says Mr. *Henry*, into the great wilderness of *Sinai*; a wilderness, not only lonesome, but inhabited by wild beasts. *Mark* i. 13. Hither was our Lord led, not only that he might prepare himself by retirement and prayer, but also that he might be alone, and thereby give Satan all the advantages he could desire. In this combat, as well as that of

his last agony, “of the people, there was to be none with him.” Neither does he content himself with praying, but he fasts also, and that “forty days and forty nights,” (verse 2.): as *Moses* and *Elias* had done, many years before, it may be, in the very same place. All these fasts were miraculous; and therefore, though we are taught hereby, that fasting is a Christian duty, yet, to pretend, in an ordinary way, to imitate them, by fasting for so long a term together, is no doubt superstitious, presumptuous, and sinful: but few people, I believe, need such a caution.

During these forty days, we may suppose, our Lord felt no hunger: converse with heaven, to him was instead of meat and drink; but “afterwards he was an hungered;” exceedingly so, no doubt. And now, the important fight begins. For, then “the tempter,” emphatically so called, because he first tempted our first parents to sin, and hath ever since been unwearied in tempting their descendants; then the tempter, who in an invisible manner had been attacking our blessed Lord all the whole forty days, when he saw him hungering, and in such distressing circumstances, came to him, as it should seem, in a visible shape, and probably transformed into the appearance of an angel of light. And what does he tempt him to? To nothing less, than to doubt of his being the Son of God. “If thou be the Son of God.” What! put an *if* to this, Satan, after the glorious Jesus had been proved to be God’s son, and repeatedly too in such a glorious manner? Surely, thou thyself couldst not but see the heavens opened, and the Spirit descending; surely, thou didst hear the voice that came to him from heaven, immediately after his baptism, saying, “This is my beloved Son:” And dost thou now say unto him, “If thou be the Son of God.” Yes; but Satan knew, and believed he was full well; but he wanted to make our Lord to doubt of it. And why? Because he was in such a

melancholy situation. As though he had said, “If God was thy father, he would never suffer thee to starve to death in a howling wilderness, among wild beasts. Surely, the voice thou lately didst hear, was only a delusion. If thou wast the Son of God, especially his beloved Son, in whom he was so pleased, thou wouldst be taken more care of by him.” Thus he attacked our first parents, by suggesting to them hard thoughts of their all-bountiful Creator: “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?” “Hath he placed you amidst such a variety of delicious fruits, only to teaze and make you miserable?” And how artfully now does he labour to insinuate himself into our Lord’s affections, as he then did to ingratiate himself with our first parents. “If thou be the Son of God, says he, come, prove it, by commanding these stones (a heap of which, probably, lay very near) to be made bread: this will demonstrate thy divinity, and relieve thy pressing necessity at the same time.” Thus, as in all his other temptations, Satan would fain appear to be his very kind friend; but the holy Jesus saw through the disguised enmity of his antagonist; and scorning either to distrust his righteous Father on the one hand, or to work a miracle to please and gratify the devil on the other, although he had the Spirit of God without measure, and might have made use of a thousand other ways, yet answers him with a text of scripture: “It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” This is a quotation from *Deuteronomy* viii. 3, and contains a reason given by the great God, why he chose to feed the *Israelites* with manna; that they might learn thereby, man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. This our blessed Lord here applies to himself; and his being in the wilderness, made the application of it still more pertinent. *Israel* was God’s son: out of *Egypt* was he called to sojourn

in the wilderness, where he was miraculously supported. And therefore our Lord, knowing that he was typified by this *Israel*, and that, like them, he was now in a wilderness, quotes this scripture as a reason why he should not, at Satan's suggestion, either despair of receiving help from his Father in his present circumstances, or distrust the validity of his late manifestations, or make use of any unwarrantable means for his present relief. For as God was his father, he would, therefore, either in an ordinary way spread a table for him in the wilderness, or support and sustain him, as he did his *Israel* of old, in some extraordinary way or other without it: "For man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Thus is the tempter foiled in the first onset; but he hath other arrows in his quiver, with which he will farther strive to wound the immaculate Lamb of God. Since he cannot draw him in either to distrust, or despair, he will now try if he cannot prevail on him to presume. In order to effect this, "He taketh the blessed Jesus up into the Holy City," or *Jerusalem*, called by our Saviour, the city of the Great King, and here called holy, because the holy temple was in it, and, we would hope, many holy people. This was a populous place, and therefore, would greatly befriend the devil's design. And not only so, but "he setteth him on a pinnacle," a battlement or wing, "of the temple," the top of which was so very high, that, as *Josephus* observes, it would make a man's head run giddy to look down from it. And some think this was done at the time of public worship. How the holy Jesus suffered himself to be taken hither; whether he was transported through the air, or whether he followed Satan on foot, is uncertain; but certainly it was an instance of amazing condescension in our Lord, that he should permit so foul a fiend, to carry or lead his holy body about in this manner. Well! Satan

hath now gotten him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and still harping upon his old string, “If thou be the Son of God, (says he) cast thyself down,” and thereby shew to this large worshipping assembly, (who will assuredly then believe) that thou art God’s beloved Son, under the special protection of heaven, and art that Messiah, “who was to come into the world.” This was artful, very artful. But he seems to improve in cunning: for he brings his Bible with him, and backs his temptation with a text of scripture; “For it is written, (says he) he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” But is *Saul* also among the prophets? Does the devil quote scripture, yea, and seemingly such a very apposite one too? I suspect some design, without doubt: for herein, he would mimic our Lord, who, he perceived, intended to fight him with this weapon; and not liking the sharp edge of it, he thought that if he quoted scripture, the Lord Jesus would not employ it against him any more. “It is written, (therefore said he) he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone: and therefore, since thou art sure of such protection, thou needst not fear to cast thyself down.” This was plausible, and by the length of it, one would be apt to imagine, it was a fair quotation; but Satan takes care, not only to misapply, but also to maim it, purposely omitting these important words, “in all thy ways.” It is true, God had given charge to his angels, concerning his children in general, and his beloved Son in particular, that they should keep him in all his ways; but, if our Lord had at this time, at the devil’s request, and to gratify pride, thrown himself down from the pinnacle, and thereby unnecessarily presumed on his Father’s protection, he would not have been in God’s way, and therefore, would have had no right to the promised

protection at all. Satan was aware of this, and therefore slily left out what he knew would not suit his purpose. But is scripture the worse, for being abused or perverted by the devil, or his emissaries? No, in no wise. Our Lord, therefore, lets him know, that he should not throw aside this important weapon upon this account, but puts by this home thrust, with another scripture: "It is written *again*, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Still our Lord quotes something out of the book of *Deuteronomy*, and hath his eye upon *Israel* in his wilderness state. Originally these words were directed to the *Israelites* in general, and accordingly are in the plural number; but here our Lord, as before, makes a particular application of them to himself: Satan bids him cast himself down, assuring him, God had promised in his word, to order his angels to take care of him: Now, says our Lord, "It is written in another part of his word, that the *Israelites* should not tempt the Lord their God, by distrusting his goodness on the one hand, or presuming on his protection on the other: And, therefore, as I would not command the stones to be made bread, needlessly and distrustfully set up to provide for myself; neither will I now presume unnecessarily upon God's power, by casting myself down, though placed by thee in such a dangerous situation."

Thus our great *Michael* comes off conqueror in the second assault. And doth not the serpent feel his head bruised enough yet? Not at all: on the contrary, being more and more enraged at such unusual opposition, and want of success, "He again taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, (what mountain is not very material) and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," St. *Luke* adds, "in a moment of time:" which confirms the common conjecture, that Satan did not shew our Lord really the kingdoms of the world, (for that must have taken up more time)

but only took him up into an exceeding high mountain to humour the thing, and by exerting his utmost art, impressed on our Lord's imagination *all at once*, a very strong, and to any but innocence itself, a very striking prospect of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; not the cares: that would not serve Satan's turn. He shewed our Saviour crowns, but never told him, those crowns were gilded with thorns; "He shewed him, (says Mr. *Henry*, my favourite commentator) as in a landscape, or airy representation in a cloud, such as that great deceiver could easily frame and put together, the glorious and splendid appearance of princes, their robes and retinue, their equipage and life-guards; the pomps of thrones and courts, and stately palaces; the sumptuous buildings in cities; the gardens and fields about the country seats, with the various instances of their wealth, pleasure, and gaiety; so as might be most likely to strike the fancy, and excite the admiration and affection. Such was this shew." Our Saviour very well knew it, only lets Satan go to the full length of his string, that his victory over him might be the more illustrious. And now, says the devil, "All these things (a mighty all indeed; a mere imaginary bubble!) will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." He would fain have it taken for granted, that he had succeeded in the two preceding temptations: "Come, thou seest thou art not the Son of God, or if thou art, thou seest what an unkind Father he is; thou art here in a starving condition, therefore take my advice, disown thy relation to him, set up for thyself, call me father, ask of me blessings, and all these will I give thee; while all that I desire in return, is but a bow, only fall down and worship me." Here Satan discovers himself with a witness: this was a desperate parting stroke, indeed. It is now high time for thee, O thou enemy of souls, to be commanded to depart! Filled with a holy resentment at such hellish treatment, and impatient of the very thought of

setting up for himself, or alienating the least part of his heart and affections from his Father, or dividing them between his God and the world; “Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan, (I know thee who thou art, under all thy disguises) get thee hence, thou grand adversary: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve: this is the great commandment of the law; this is the commandment my Father gave unto his *Israel* of old, and wouldst thou have me, who came to fulfil the law and the prophets, thus shamefully be a transgressor of it? Get thee hence, I will bear thy insolence no longer: thy other temptations were hellish, like thyself, but this intolerably so: get thee therefore hence, Satan: my heavenly Father is the Lord my God, and him only will I serve.”

And now the battle is over: the important combat is ended: Jesus hath won the field: Satan is routed and totally put to flight. “Then,” when the devil found that Jesus could withstand even the golden bait, the lust of the eye and pride of life, in the two last, as well as the lust of the flesh in the first temptation, despairing of the least success, and quite stunned with that all-powerful *Get thee hence, Satan*, “he leaveth him.”

Hell, we may well suppose, like the Philistines of old, was confounded, and gave a horrible groan, when they saw their great *Goliah*, in whom they had so long trusted, thus shamefully and totally defeated in no less than three pitched battles. The first *Adam* was attacked but once, and was conquered; but the second *Adam*, though thus repeatedly assaulted, comes off without the least sin, not only conqueror, but more than conqueror. Think you not, that there was joy, joy unspeakable in heaven, upon this glorious occasion? Think you not that the angels, those sons of God, and the multitude of the heavenly host, who shouted so loud at our Lord’s birth, did not repeat, if possible, with yet greater extasy, that heavenly anthem, “Glory

be to God in the highest." For a while they were only spectators, orders, we may suppose, being issued out, that they should only wait around, but not relieve their praying, fasting, tempted Lord; but now the restraint is removed: Satan departs, and "behold, angels came and ministered unto him;" they came to administer to his bodily necessities, and to congratulate him upon the glorious and compleat victory which he had gained: some of them, it may be, had done this kind office for *Elijah* long ago; and with unspeakably greater joy, they repeat it to the Lord of *Elijah* now. His Father sends him bread from heaven; and by this lets him know, that notwithstanding the horrid temptations with which he had been attacked, he is his own beloved son, in and with whom he was well pleased.

And was there joy in heaven on this happy occasion? What equal, and if possible, what infinitely greater joy ought there to be among the children of God here on earth? For we should do well to remember, that our blessed Lord in this great fight with, and conquest over the dragon, acted as a public person, as a fæderal head of his mystical body the church, even the common representative of all believers. We may therefore from this blessed passage gather strong consolations; since by our Lord's conquest over Satan, we are thereby assured of our own, and in the mean while can apply to him as a compassionate High-Priest, who was in all things tempted as we are, that he might experimentally be enabled to succour us when we are tempted.

Who, who after hearing of or reading this, can think themselves hardly used, or utterly cast off by God, because they are tempted to self-murder, blasphemy, or any other horrid and shocking crimes? Who can wonder at wave being permitted to come upon wave, and one trial to follow upon the back of another? Who can admire, that Satan follows them to holy ordinances, and tempts them to doubt of the reality of all their

manifestations, and of their being God's children, even after they have enjoyed the most intimate and delightful communion with their heavenly Father? Was not our Lord treated thus? And "shall the servant be above his Lord, or the disciple above his Master?" No, it is sufficient that the servant be as his Lord, and the disciple as his Master.

But not to dwell on a general improvement, let us see what particular lessons may be learned from this affecting portion of holy writ.

And *First*, was our Lord thus violently beset in the *wilderness*? then we may learn, that however profitable solitude and retirement may be, when used in due season, yet when carried to an extreme is hurtful, and rather befriends than prevents temptation. Woe be to him that is thus always alone; for he hath not another to lift him up when he falleth, or to advise with when he is tempted. As a hermit in *America* once told me, when I asked him whether he found that way of life lessened his temptations; "Dost not thou know, friend, (said he) that a tree which grows by itself, is more exposed to winds and storms than another that stands surrounded with other trees in the woods?" Our Lord knew this, and therefore he was *led by the Spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Lord, keep us from leading ourselves into this temptation, and succour and support us whenever led by thy providence into it! Then, and then only, shall we be safe amidst the fiery darts of the grand enemy of our souls.

Secondly, Did our Lord by prayer, fasting, and temptation, prepare himself for his public ministry? Surely then, all those who profess to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon them the office and administration of the church, should be prepared in the same manner. For though the knowledge of books and men, are good in their places, yet without a knowledge of Satan's devices be superadded, a minister will be

only like a physician, that undertakes to prescribe to sick people, without having studied the nature of herbs. And hence, it is to be feared, many heavy laden and afflicted souls have been sent by certain ministers, to surgeons, to be blooded in the arm, instead of being directed to apply to the blood of Christ to cleanse their hearts. Hence, conviction is looked upon as a delirium, and violent temptations censured as downright madness. Hence, souls that are truly and earnestly repenting of their sins, and as earnestly seeking after rest in Christ, have been directed to plays, novels, romances, and merry company, to divert them from being righteous over-much. Miserable comforters are such blind guides! Surely, they deserve no better titles than that of *murderers of souls*! They go not into the kingdom of heaven themselves, and those who are entering in they would by this means hinder. Go not after them, all ye young men who would be able ministers of the New Testament; but on the contrary, if you would be useful in binding up the broken hearted, and pouring the oil of consolation into wounded souls, prepare yourselves for manifold temptations. For as *Luther* says, "prayer and meditation, reading and temptation, make a minister." If now exercised with spiritual conflicts, be not disheartened, it is a good sign that our Lord intends to make use of you. Being thus tempted like unto your brethren, you will be the better enabled to succour and advise those who shall apply to you under their temptations. What says the apostle *Paul*? "If we are afflicted, it is for your sake." And if you are afflicted, it is only that you may save your own souls, and help to save the souls of those who shall be committed to your charge. Be strong therefore in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and learn to endure hardness, like good soldiers, that are hereafter to instruct others how they must fight the good fight of faith.

Thirdly, Did the tempter come to Christ when he saw him an hungered? Let those of you that are reduced to a low estate, from hence learn, that an hour of poverty is an hour of temptation, not only to murmuring and doubting of our sonship and the divine favour, but also to help ourselves by unlawful means. “If thou be the Son of God, said Satan, command that these stones may be made bread.” This is what *Agur* dreaded, “lest I be poor and steal.” Learn, ye godly poor, to be upon your guard, and remember that poverty and temptations are no marks of your being cast off by God. Your Lord was an hungered; your Lord was tempted on this account to doubt his sonship, before you. Learn of him not to distrust, but rather to trust in your heavenly Father. Angels came and ministered unto Christ; and he who is Lord of the angels, will send some kind messenger or another to relieve your wants. Your extremity shall be the Redeemer’s opportunity to help you. Make your wants known unto him, he careth for you. Though in a desart, though no visible means appear at present, yet you shall in God’s due time find a table spread for you and yours; “For man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

And may not such among you, who are exalted, as well as those who are brought low, from Satan’s taking the Lord Jesus, and placing him upon a pinnacle of the temple, learn also a lesson of holy watchfulness and caution. High places are slippery places, and are apt to make even the strongest heads and most devout hearts to turn giddy. How necessary therefore is that excellent petition in our Litany, “in all time of our wealth, (as well as in all time of our tribulation) good Lord deliver us!” Agreeably to this, *Agur* prays as much against riches as poverty; if he was poor, he feared he should be tempted to steal, if rich, that he should trust in uncertain riches, and say, who is the Lord?

I charge, therefore, all of you, who are rich and high in this world, to watch and pray, lest ye fall by Satan's temptation. Those especially of you, that are placed as on the pinnacle of the temple, exalted above your fellows in the church of God, take heed in an especial manner unto yourselves, lest by spiritual pride, vanity, or any other sin that doth most easily beset persons in such eminent stations, ye cast yourselves down. This is what Satan aims at. He strives to make us destroyers of ourselves. And he hath a particular enmity against such as you; he knows, that your name is *Legion*; and that if you cast yourselves down, he shall gain a great advantage over many others; you cannot fall alone. O that it may be said of us, as the papists used to say of *Luther*, "That *German* beast doth not love gold." May the fire of divine love burn up all the love of this present evil world, and pride of life, out of your hearts! This, Satan reserved for his last, as thinking it was the most powerful and prevailing temptation, "He took our Lord up into an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." He cares not how high he exalts us, or how high he is obliged to bid, so he can but get our hearts divided between God and the world. All this will he offer to give us, if we will only fall down and worship him. Arm us, dear Lord Jesus, with thy Spirit, and help us under all such circumstances, to learn of thee, and say unto the tempter, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Fourthly, Whether beset with this or any other temptation, let all of us learn of our Lord to fight the devil with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Though he had the Spirit without measure, yet he always made use of this. We may say of it, as *David* did of *Goliah*'s sword, "none like this," none like this. And supposing Satan should be permitted to

transform himself into an angel of light, and by false impressions, and delusive applications of misquoted texts, attempt to turn this weapon upon us against ourselves; let us not therefore be prevailed on to let go, but by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, as our Lord did, find out God's mind and our duty. Had Christ's children and ministers only observed this one lesson, how much strange fire would quickly have been extinguished? how much real enthusiasm been easily stopped? how many imaginary revelations have been detected? how many triumphs of Satan and his emissaries been prevented? and how much more would the comforts of Christ's people and ministers been continued and increased, not only in this present, but also in every age of the Christian church? But let us not be discouraged or think worse of Christ, his cause, or his word, because through Satan's subtlety, any of us, or others, may have been drawn in to make some wrong applications of it; others have been thus tempted and mistaken before us. However, let us be humbled before God and man, and be excited by our past ignorance of Satan's devices, to adhere more closely to the written word, and to pray more earnestly for God's holy Spirit to give us direction by it. "Then will it still be a lanthorn unto our feet, and a light unto our paths;" we shall yet be enabled to behave more skilfully under all our future trials. Many we must yet expect; nay, perhaps our severest temptations are yet to come; Satan left our Lord, after his attacking him in the wilderness, "only for a season," as St. *Luke* has it, until the season of his death and passion. And thus he may be permitted to deal with us. We are not yet come to our compleat rest; the King of terrors is yet to be grappled with, and the valley of the shadow of death to be passed through; long before that, we may be called to endure many a fiery trial, and be beset with manifold temptations, under which we may be as ignorant how to behave,

as under those with which we have already been visited. Alas! we know not what remaining corruptions are in our hearts, which time and temptation may draw out and discover. Perhaps Satan hath not yet attacked us on our weakest side; when he does, if left to ourselves, how weak shall we be? It is said of *Achilles*, that he was invulnerable, except in the heel, and by a wound in that, at last he died. "Let not him, therefore, that putteth on the harness, boast as though he had put it off." Neither, on the other hand, let us be faint-hearted or dismayed. Satan may tempt, but cannot force; he may sift, but Christ will pray. He who hath helped us already, will help us to the end. He who conquered for us in the wilderness, will ere long make us also more than conquerors over all trials and temptations, inward and outward, and over death and hell itself, through his almighty, everlasting, and never-failing love. We now sow in tears; in a very little time, and we shall reap with joy: we may now go on our way weeping, by reason of the enemy oppressing us; but, ere long, angels shall be sent, not to minister to us in this wilderness, but to carry us to an heavenly *Canaan*, even to *Abraham*'s bosom. Then shall we see this accuser and tempter of our Lord, of our brethren, and of ourselves, cast out: this wicked one, as well as the wicked world, and wicked heart, will no more be permitted to vex, disturb or annoy us.

"But woe unto you that laugh now; for you shall then lament and weep." Woe unto you, who either believe there is no devil, or never felt any of his temptations. Woe unto you that are at ease in *Zion*, and instead of staying to be tempted by the devil, by idleness, self-indulgence, and making continual provision for the flesh, even tempt the devil to tempt you. Woe unto you, who not content with sinning yourselves, turn factors for hell, and make a trade of tempting others to sin. Woe unto you, who either deny divine

revelation, or never make use of it but to serve a bad turn. Woe unto you who sell your consciences, and pawn your souls for a little worldly wealth or honour. Woe unto you who climb up to high places, when in church or state, by corruption, bribery, extortion, cringing, flattery, or bowing down to, and soothing the vices of those by whom you expect to rise. Woe unto you! for whether you will own the relation or not, surely you are of your father the devil; for the works of your father you will do; I tremble for you. How can you escape the damnation of hell.

But I have not time to follow such as you any farther. This discourse, and the present frame of my mind, lead me rather to speak to those, who by feeling Satan's fiery darts, know assuredly that there is a devil. Comfort thou, comfort thou, these afflicted ones, O Lord. O thou all-merciful and all-bountiful God, and thou compassionate High-Priest, thou once tempted, but now triumphant Saviour, as thou once didst not disdain to be ministered unto by angels, bless we pray thee this discourse, to the support and strengthening of thy tempted people, though delivered by the meanest messenger thou didst ever yet employ in thy church!

I add no more. The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord lift up the light of his countenance, stablish, strengthen, and settle you, and bring you to his eternal kingdom!

SERMON XVIII.

The Heinous Sin of Profane Cursing and Swearing.

Matthew v. 34.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all.

AMONG the many heinous sins for which this nation is grown infamous, perhaps there is no one more crying, but withal more common, than the abominable custom of profane swearing and cursing. Our streets abound with persons of all degrees and qualities, who are continually provoking the holy one of *Israel* to anger, by their detestable oaths and blasphemies: and our very children, "out of whose mouths," the psalmist observes in his days, "was perfected praise," are now grown remarkable for the quite opposite ill quality of cursing and swearing. This cannot but be a melancholy prospect, for every sincere and honest minister of Jesus Christ, to view his fellow-creatures in; and such as will put him on contriving some means to prevent the spreading at least of so growing an evil; knowing that the Lord (without repentance) will assuredly visit for these things. But alas! what can he do? Public animadversions are so neglected amongst us, that we seldom find a

common swearer punished as the laws direct. And as for private admonition, men are now so hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, that to give them sober and pious advice, and to shew them the evil of their doings, is but like "casting pearls before swine; they only turn again and rend you." Since matters then are come to this pass, all that we can do is, that as we are appointed watchmen and ambassadors of the Lord, it is our duty from time to time to shew the people their transgression, and warn them of their sin; so that whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we however may deliver our own souls. That I therefore may discharge my duty in this particular, give me leave, in the name of God, humbly to offer to your most serious consideration, some few observations on the words of the text, in order to shew the heinousness of profane cursing and swearing.

But, before I proceed directly to the prosecution of this point, it will be proper to clear this precept of our Lord from a misrepresentation that has been put on it by some, who infer from hence, that our Saviour prohibits swearing before a magistrate, when required on a solemn and proper occasion. But that all swearing is not absolutely unlawful for a Christian, is evident from the writings of St. *Paul*, whom we often find upon some solemn occasions using several forms of imprecation, as, "I call God to witness;" "God is my judge;" "By your rejoicing in Christ Jesus," and such like. And that our Saviour does by no means forbid swearing before a magistrate, in the words now before us, is plain, if we consider the scope and design he had in view, when he gave his disciples this command. Permit me to observe to you then, that our blessed master had set himself, from the 27th verse of the chapter, out of which the text is taken, to vindicate and clear the moral law from the corrupt glosses and

misconstruction of the *Pharisees*, who then sat in *Moses*'s chair, but were notoriously faulty in adhering too closely to the literal expression of the law, without ever considering the due extent and spiritual meaning of it. Accordingly they imagined, that because God had said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," that therefore, supposing a person was not guilty of the very act of adultery, he was not chargeable with the breach of the seventh commandment. And likewise in the matter of swearing, because God had forbidden his people, in the books of *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy*, "to take his name in vain," or to swear falsely by his name; they therefore judged it lawful to swear by any creature in common discourse, supposing they did not directly mention the name of God. Our blessed Saviour therefore, in the words now before us, rectifies this their mistake about swearing, as he had done in the verses immediately foregoing, concerning adultery, and tells the people, that whatever allowances the *Pharisees* might give to swear by any creature, yet he pronounced it absolutely unlawful for any of his followers to do so. "You have heard, that it has been said by them of old time," (namely, by the *Pharisees* and teachers of the *Jewish* law) "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you," (I who am appointed by the Father to be the great prophet and true law-giver of his church) "Swear not at all, (in your common conversation) neither by heaven for it is God's throne; (and therefore to swear by that, is to swear by Him that sits thereon) neither by the earth, for it is his foot-stool; nor by *Jerusalem*, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: but let your communications (which plainly shews that Christ is here speaking of swearing, not before a magistrate, but in common conversation) let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay, (a strong affirmation or

negation at the most); for whatsoever is more than this, cometh of evil;" that is, cometh from an evil principle, from the evil one, the devil, the author of all evil.

Which by the way, methinks, should be a caution to all such persons, who, though not guilty of swearing in the gross sense of the word, yet attest the truth of what they are speaking of, though ever so trifling, by saying, Upon my life,—as I live,—by my faith,—by the heavens, and such like: which expressions, however harmless and innocent they may be esteemed by some sorts of people, yet are the very oaths which our blessed Lord condemns in the words immediately following the text; and persons who use such unwarrantable forms of speaking, must expect to be convicted and condemned as swearers, at our Saviour's second coming to judge the world.

But to return: It appears then from the whole tenor of our Saviour's discourse, that in the words of the text he does by no means disannul or forbid swearing before a magistrate (which, as might easily be shewn, is both lawful and necessary) but only profane swearing in common conversation; the heinousness and sinfulness of which I come now, more immediately to lay before you.

And here, not to mention that it is a direct breach of our blessed master's and great law-giver's command in the words of the text, as likewise of the third commandment, wherein God positively declares, "he will not hold him guiltless (that is, will assuredly punish him) that taketh his name in vain:" not to mention that it is the greatest abuse of that noble faculty of speech, whereby we are distinguished from the brute creation; or the great hazard the common swearer runs, of being perjured some time or other: not to mention those reasons against it, which of themselves would abundantly prove the folly and sinfulness of swearing: I shall at this time content

myself with instancing four particulars, which highly aggravate the crime of profane swearing, and those are such as follow:

I. *First*, Because there is no temptation in nature to this sin, nor does the commission of it afford the offender the least pleasure or satisfaction.

II. *Secondly*, Because it is a sin which may be so often repeated.

III. *Thirdly*, Because it hardens infidels against the Christian religion, and must give great offence, and occasion much sorrow and concern to every true disciple of Jesus Christ.

IV. *Fourthly*, Because it is an extremity of sin, which can only be matched in hell.

I. The first reason then, why swearing in common conversation is so heinous in God's sight, and why we should not swear at all, is, because it has no temptation in nature, nor does the commission of it, unless a man be a devil incarnate, afford the offender the least pleasure or satisfaction.

Now here, I presume, we may lay it down as a maxim universally agreed on, that the guilt of any crime is increased or lessened in proportion to the weakness or strength of the temptation, by which a person is carried to the commission of it. It was this consideration that extenuated and diminished the guilt of *Saul*'s taking upon him to offer sacrifice before the Prophet *Samuel* came; and of *Uzza*'s touching the ark, because it was in danger of falling: as, on the contrary, what so highly aggravated the disobedience of our first parents, and of *Lot*'s wife, was, because the former had so little reason to eat the forbidden fruit, and the latter so small a temptation to look back on *Sodom*.

And now if this be granted, surely the common swearer must of all sinners be the most without excuse, since there is no manner of temptation in nature to the commission of his crime. In most of the other commands,

persons, perhaps, may plead the force of natural inclination in excuse for the breach of them: one, for instance, may alledge his strong propensity to anger, to excuse his breaking of the sixth: another, his proneness to lust, for his violation of the seventh. But surely the common swearer has nothing of this kind to urge in his behalf: for though he may have a natural inclination to this or that crime, yet no man, it is to be presumed, can say, he is born with a swearing constitution.

But farther, As there is no temptation to it, so there is no pleasure or profit to be reaped from the commission of it. Ask the drunkard why he rises up early to follow strong drink, and he will tell you, because it affords his sensual appetite some kind of pleasure and gratification, though it be no higher than that of a brute. Enquire of the covetous worldling, why he defrauds and over-reaches his neighbour, and he has an answer ready; to enrich himself, and lay up goods for many years. But it must certainly puzzle the profane swearer himself, to inform you what pleasure he reaps from swearing: for alas! it is a fruitless tasteless thing that he sells his soul for. But indeed he does not sell it at all: in this case he prodigally gives it away (without repentance) to the devil; and parts with a blessed eternity, and runs into everlasting torment, merely for nothing.

II. But *Secondly*, what increases the heinousness of profane swearing, is, that it is a sin which may so often be repeated.

This is another consideration which always serves to lessen or increase the guilt and malignity of any sin. It was some excuse for the drunkenness of *Noah*, and the adultery of *David*, that they committed these crimes but once: as, on the contrary, of the patriarch *Abraham*'s distrust of God, that he repeated the dissembling of *Sarah* to be his wife, two several times. And if this be admitted as an aggravation of other persons crimes, surely much

more so of the guilt of common swearing, because it is a sin which may be, and is for the generality often repeated. In many other gross sins it cannot be so: if a man be overcome in drink, there must be a considerable time ere he can recover his debauch, and return to his cups again: or if he be accustomed to profane the sabbath, he cannot do it every day, but only one in seven. But alas! the profane swearer is ready for another oath, almost before the sound of the first is out of our ears: yea, some double and treble them in one sentence, even so as to confound the sense of what they say, by an horrid din of blasphemy! Now if the great and terrible *Jehovah* has expresly declared that he will not hold him guiltless, that is, will assuredly punish him, that taketh his name but once in vain: what a vast heap of these heinous sins lies at every common swearer's door! It would be apt to sink him into an intolerable despair, did he but see the whole sum of them. And O what a seared conscience must that wretch have, that does not feel this prodigious weight!

III. But *Thirdly*, what makes the sin of profane swearing appear yet more exceeding sinful, is, that it hardens infidels against the Christian religion.

It is the Apostle *Peter*'s advice to the married persons of his time, that they should walk as became the gospel of Christ, that those who were without, might be won to embrace the Christian religion, by seeing and observing their pious conversation coupled together with fear. And what the Apostle presses on married persons, we find elsewhere enjoined on each particular member of the church. Accordingly we are commanded by our blessed Lord, to "let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven:" And the Apostle *Paul* bids us "walk circumspectly towards them that are without, redeeming the time;" that is, embracing all opportunities to do them good, "because the

days are evil." But alas! in what a direct contradiction does the profane swearer live to this and such-like precepts, who, instead of gaining proselytes to Christ from the unbelieving part of the world, does all he can to oppose it! For how can it be expected, that infidels should honour our God, when Christians themselves despise him; or that any should embrace our religion, when professors of it themselves make so light of one of its strictest commands? No; to our grief and shame be it spoken, it is by reason of such impieties as these, that our holy religion (the best and purest in itself) is become a by-word among the heathen; that the sacred authority of the holy Jesus and his doctrine is despised; and "God's name (as it is written) blasphemed among the *Gentiles*."

These cannot but be sad stumbling-blocks and offences in the way of our brethren's conversion: "But woe be to those men by whom such offences come." We may say of them, as our blessed Lord did of *Judas*, "it had been better for such men, that they had never been born:" Or, as he threatens in another place, "It shall be more tolerable for *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* in the day of judgment, than for such sinners."

But this is not all; As profane swearing must undoubtedly harden those in their infidelity, that are without, so must it no less grieve and give great offence to those honest and sincere persons that are within the church. We hear of *David*'s complaining and crying out, "Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell with *Mesech*, and to have my habitation amongst the tents of *Kedar*;" that is, that he was obliged to live and converse with a people exceedingly wicked and profane. And St. *Peter* tells us, that "*Lot*'s righteous soul was grieved day by day, whilst he saw and observed the ungodly conversation of the wicked." And no doubt it was one great part of our blessed Master's sufferings whilst on earth, that he was compelled to

converse with a wicked and perverse generation, and to hear his heavenly Father's sacred name profaned and scoffed at by unrighteous and wicked men. And surely it cannot but pierce the heart of every true and sincere Christian, of every one that does in any measure partake of the spirit of his Master, to hear the multitude of oaths and curses which proceed daily and hourly out of the mouths of many people, and those too, whose liberal education, and seeming regard for the welfare of religion, one would think, should teach them a more becoming behaviour. To hear the great and terrible name of God polluted by men, which is adored by angels; and to consider how often that sacred name is profaned in common discourse, which we are not worthy to mention in our prayers: this, I say, cannot but make each of them cry out with holy *David*, "Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell with *Mesech*, and to have my habitation amongst the tents of *Kedar*." And though the blasphemous and profane discourses of others, will not be imputed to sincere persons for sin, so long as they "have no fellowship with such hellish fruits of darkness, but rather reprove them;" yet it will greatly enhance the present guilt, and sadly increase the future punishment of every profane swearer, by whom such offences come. For if, as our Saviour tells us, "it had been better for a man to have a mill-stone tied about his neck, than that he should offend one of his little ones, (that is, the weakest of his disciples) how much sorer punishment will they be thought worthy of," who not only cause God's name to be blasphemed among the *Gentiles*, and the religion of our dear Redeemer to be abhorred; but who make his saints to weep and mourn, and vex their righteous souls from day to day, by their ungodly, profane, and blasphemous conversation? Surely, as God will put the tears of the one into his bottle, so it will be just in him to punish the other with eternal sorrow, for all their ungodly and hard

speeches, and cast them into a lake of fire and brimstone, where they shall be glad of a drop of water to cool those tongues, with which they have so often blasphemed the Lord of Hosts, and grieved the people of our God.

IV. But it is time for me to proceed to give my *Fourth* and last reason, why common swearing is so exceeding sinful; and that is, Because it is such an extremity of sin, that can only be matched in hell, where all are desperate, and without hope of mercy.

The damned devils, and damned souls of men in hell, may be supposed to rave and blaspheme in their torments, because they know that the chains wherein they are held, can never be knocked off: but for men that swim in the river of God's goodness, whose mercies are renewed to them every morning, and who are visited with fresh tokens of his infinite unmerited loving-kindness every moment: for these favourite creatures to set their mouths against heaven, and to blaspheme a gracious, patient, all-bountiful God; is a height of sin which exceeds the blackness and impiety of devils and hell itself.

And now, after what has been here offered, to shew the heinousness of profane cursing and swearing in common conversation, may I not very justly address myself to you in the words of the text, "Therefore I say unto you, Swear not at all;" since it is a sin that has no temptation in nature, nor brings any pleasure or profit to the committer of it; since it hardens infidels in their infidelity, and affords sad causes of grief and lamentation to every honest Christian; since it is a sin that generally grows into a habit; and lastly, such a sin that can only be matched in hell.

1. And first then, if these things be so, and the sin of profane swearing, as hath been in some measure shewn, is so exceeding sinful, what shall we say to such unhappy men, who think it not only allowable, but fashionable and

polite, to “take the name of God in vain;” who imagine that swearing makes them look big among their companions, and really think it a piece of honour to abound in it? But alas! little do they think that such a behaviour argues the greatest degeneracy of mind and fool-hardiness, that can possibly be thought of. For what can be more base, than one hour to pretend to adore God in public worship, and the very next moment to blaspheme his name: indeed, such a behaviour, from persons who deny the being of a God, (if any such fools there be) is not altogether so much to be wondered at; but for men, who not only subscribe to the belief of a Deity, but likewise acknowledge him to be a God of infinite majesty and power; for such men to blaspheme his holy name, by profane cursing and swearing, and at the same time confess, that this very God has expressly declared, he will not hold him guiltless, but will certainly and eternally punish (without repentance) him that taketh his name in vain; is such an instance of foolhardiness, as well as baseness, that can scarcely be paralleled. This is what they presume not to do in other cases of less danger: they dare not revile a general at the head of his army, nor rouze a sleeping lion when within reach of his paw. And is the Almighty God, the great Jehovah, the everlasting King, who can consume them by the breath of his nostrils, and frown them to hell in an instant; is he the only contemptible being in their account, that may be provoked without fear, and offended without punishment? No; though God bear long, he will not bear always: the time will come, and that too, perhaps, much sooner than such persons may expect, when God will vindicate his injured honour, when he will lay bare his almighty arm, and make those wretches feel the eternal smart of his justice, whose power and name they have so often vilified and blasphemed. Alas! what will become of all their bravery then? Will they then wantonly

sport with the name of their Maker, and call upon the King of all the earth to damn them any more in jest? No; their note will then be changed: indeed, they shall call, but it will be for "the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to cover them from the wrath of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the Lamb for ever." It is true, time was when they prayed, though without thought, perhaps, for damnation both for themselves and others: and now they will find their prayers answered. "They delighted in cursing, therefore shall it happen unto them; they loved not blessing, therefore shall it be far from them; they cloathed themselves with cursing like as with a garment, and it shall come into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones."

2. But farther, if the sin of swearing is so exceeding heinous, and withal so common, then it is every particular person's duty, especially those that are in authority, to do their utmost towards discountenancing and suppressing so malignant a crime. The duty we owe both to God and our neighbour, requires this at our hands: by the one we are obliged to assert our Maker's honour; by the other to prevent our neighbour's ruin: and it is but doing as we would be done by, and as we ourselves act in cases of lesser consequence. Were we to hear either our own or our friend's good name vilified and traduced, we should think it our bounden duty to vindicate the wronged reputation of each: and shall the great, terrible, and holy name of our best and only friend, our king, our father, nay our God: shall this be daily, nay every moment, defied and blasphemed; and will no one dare to stand up in defence of his honour and holiness? Be astonished, O heavens, at this! No; let us scorn all such base and treacherous treatment: let us resolve to support the cause of religion, and with a becoming prudent courage manifest our zeal for the honour of the Lord of Hosts. Men in authority have double the advantages of ordinary Christians: their very

office shews they are intended for the punishment of evil doers. And such is the degeneracy of mankind, that the generality of them will be more influenced by the power of persons in authority, than by the most laboured exhortations from the pulpit. To such, therefore, if there are any here present, I humbly address myself, beseeching them, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to do their utmost to put a stop to, and refrain profane cursing and swearing. And though it must be confessed, that this is a work which requires a great deal of courage and pains, yet they would do well to consider, it is for God they undertake it, who certainly will support and bear them out in a due execution of their office here, and reward them with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory hereafter. But it is time to draw towards a conclusion.

3. Let me, therefore, once more address myself to every person here present, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; and if any amongst them have been any way guilty of this notorious sin of swearing, let me entreat them by all that is near and dear to them, that they would neither give the magistrate the trouble to punish, nor their friends any reason for the future to warn them against committing the crime; but keep a constant and careful watch over the door of their lips, and withal implore the divine assistance (without which all is nothing) that they offend no more so scandalously with their tongues. Let them seriously lay to heart, what with great plainness and simplicity has here been delivered: and if they have any regard for themselves as men, or their reputation as Christians; if they would not be a public scandal to their profession, or a grief to all that know or converse with them: in short, if they would not be devils incarnate here, and provoke God to punish them eternally hereafter; I say unto them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Swear not at all.”

SERMON XIX.

Christ the Support of the Tempted.

Matthew vi. 13.

Lead us not into Temptation.

THE great and important duty which is incumbent on Christians, is to guard against all appearance of evil; to watch against the first risings in the heart to evil; and to have a guard upon our actions, that they may not be sinful, or so much as seem to be so. It is true, the devil is tempting us continually, and our own evil hearts are ready to join with the tempter, to make us fall into sins, that he thereby may obtain a victory over us, and that we, my brethren, may be his subjects, his servants, his slaves; and then by-and-by he will pay us our wages, which will be death temporal, and death eternal. Our Lord Jesus Christ saw how his people would be tempted; and that the great enemy of their souls would lay hold of every opportunity, so he could but be a means of keeping poor sinners from coming to the Lord Jesus Christ; hurrying you with temptation, to drive you to some great sins; and then if he cannot gain you over, fall it to a smaller, and suit his

temptations time after time; and when he finds none of these things will do, often transform himself into an angel of light, and by that means make the soul fall into sin, to the dishonour of God, and the wounding of itself: the Lord Jesus, I say, seeing how liable his disciples, and all others, would be to be overcome by temptation, therefore advises them, when they pray, to beg that they might not be led into temptation. It is so dangerous to engage so subtle and powerful an enemy as Satan is, that we shall be overcome as often as we engage, unless the Lord is on our side. My brethren, if you were left to yourselves, you would be overcome by every temptation with which you are beset.

These words are part of the prayer which Christ taught his disciples; and I shall, therefore, make no doubt, but that you all believe them to be true, since they are spoken by one who cannot lie. I shall,

I. Shew you who it is that tempts you.

II. Shall shew, my brethren, why he tempts you.

III. Mention some of the ways and means he makes use of, to draw you over to his temptations.

IV. Let you see how earnest you ought to be to the Lord, that he may preserve you from being led into temptation.

V. I shall make some application by way of entreaty unto you, to come unto Christ, that he, my brethren, may deliver you from being tempted.

I. *First*, We are to consider who it is that tempts ye.

And the Tempter is Satan, the prince of the power of the air, he that now ruleth in the children of disobedience; he is an enemy to God and goodness, he is a hater of all truth: Why else did he slander God in paradise? Why did he tell *Eve*, "You shall not surely die?" He is full of malice, envy, and revenge: for what reasons else could induce him to molest innocent man in

paradise? The person that tempts ye, my brethren, is remarkable for his subtilty: for having not power given him from above, he is obliged to wait for opportunities to betray us, and to catch us by guile: he, therefore, made use of the serpent to tempt our first parents: and to lie in wait to deceive, is another part of his character. And though this character is given of the devil, if we were to examine our own hearts, we should find many of the tempter's characters legible in us.

Do not many of you love to make a lie? And if it is done in your trade, you therefore look on it as excusable; but whether you believe it or not, it is sinful, it is exceedingly sinful. Though you may value yourselves as fine rational creatures, and that you are noble beings; and you were so, as you first came out of God's hands; but now you are fallen, there is nothing lovely, nothing desirable in man; his heart is a sink of pollution, full of sin and uncleanness: Yet, though a man's own heart is so desperately wicked, he is told by our modern polite preachers, that there is a fitness in men, and that God seeing you a good creature, gives you his grace; but this, though it is a modern, polite, and fashionable way of talking, is very unscriptural; it is very contrary to the doctrines of the Reformation, and to our own Articles. But however contrary to the doctrines of the Church of *England*, yet our pulpits ring of nothing more, than doing no one any harm, living honestly, loving your neighbour as yourselves, and do what you can, and then Christ is to make up the deficiency: this is making Christ to be half a saviour, and man the other part; but I say, Christ will be your whole righteousness, your whole wisdom, your whole sanctification, or else he will never be your whole redemption. How amazing is it, that the ministers of the church of *England* should speak quite contrary to what they have subscribed! Good God! if these are the guides of the ignorant, and esteemed to be the true

ministers of Jesus, because they have a great share of letter-learning; when at the same time they are only the blind leaders of the blind; and without a special Providence, they both will fall into the ditch.

No wonder at people's talking of the fitness and unfitness of things, when they can tell us, that the Spirit of God, is a good conscience, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost are consequent thereupon. But this is wrong; for it should be said, the Spirit of God, are the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and a good conscience consequent thereupon. *Seneca*, *Cicero*, *Plato*, or any of the heathen philosophers, would have given as good a definition as this; it means no more than reflecting we have done well.

But let these modern, polite gentlemen, and let my letter-learned brethren, paint man in as lovely colours as they please, I will not do it: I dare not make him better than the word of God does. If I was to paint man in his proper colours, I must go to the kingdom of hell for a copy: for man is by nature full of pride, subtilty, malice, envy, revenge, and all uncharitableness; and what are these but the tempers of the devil? and lust, sensuality, pleasure, these are the tempers of the beast. Thus, my brethren, man is half a beast, and half a devil, a motley mixture of the beast and devil. And this is the creature, who has made himself so obnoxious to the wrath of God, and open to his indignation, that is told, that he must be part his own saviour, by doing good works, and what he cannot do Christ will do for him.

This is giving the tempter great room to come in with his temptation; he may press a soul to follow moral duties, to go to church, take the sacrament, read, pray, meditate; the devil is well content you should do all these; but if they are done in your own strength, or if you go no farther than here, you are only going a smoother way to hell.

Thus, my brethren, you may see who it is that tempts us. But

II. Why he tempts you, is the second thing I am to shew you.

It is out of envy to you, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, he endeavours to keep you from closing with Jesus; and if he can but keep you from laying hold by faith on Christ, he knows he has you safe enough; and the more temptations you are under, and according to their nature and greatness, you are more hurried in your minds; and the more unsettled your thoughts and affections are, the more apt you are to conclude, that if you were to go to Christ, at present, in all that hurry of mind, he would not receive you; but this is the policy of the tempter, to make you have low and dishonourable thoughts of the blessed Jesus; and so by degrees he works upon your minds, that you are careless and indifferent about Christ. This, this, my brethren, is the design of the tempter. Nothing will please him more, than to see you ruined and lost for ever. He tempts you for that end, that you may lose your interest in Jesus Christ, and that you may dwell with him and apostate spirits to all eternity. He knows that Jesus Christ died for sinners, yet he would fain keep souls from seeking to this city of refuge for shelter, and from going to *Gilead* for the true balm.

It is he that rules in thy heart, O scoffer, O *Pharisee*; the devil reigns there, and endeavours to blind your eyes, that you shall not see what danger you are in, and how much evil there is in those hearts of yours; and as long as he can keep you easy and unconcerned about having your hearts changed, he will be easy; though if he can, he will tempt you to sin against him, until you are hardened in your iniquity. O, my brethren, do not give the devil a handle wherewith he may lay hold on you: alas! it is no wonder that the devil tempts you, when he finds you at a play, a ball, or masquerade; if you are doing the devil's work, it is no wonder if he presses you in the

continuation thereof; and how can any say, “Lead us not into temptation,” in the morning, when they are resolved to run into it at night? Good God! Are these persons members of the church of *England*? Alas, when you have gone to church, and read over the prayers, it is offering no more than the sacrifice of fools; you say *Amen* to them with your lips, when in your hearts you are either unconcerned at what you are about, or else you think that the bare saying of your prayers is sufficient, and that then God and you have balanced accounts.

But, my dear brethren, do not deceive yourselves, God is not to be mocked. You are only ruining yourselves for time and eternity. You pray, “lead us not into temptation,” when you are tempting the devil to come and tempt you.

III. I shall now point out some of the ways and means, he makes use of to draw you to himself.

But this is a field so large, and I have but just begun to be a soldier of Jesus Christ, that I cannot name many unto you. I shall therefore be very short on this head.

1. He endeavours to make you think sin is not so great as it is; that there is no occasion of being so over-strict, and that you are righteous over-much; that you are ostentatious, and will do yourself harm by it; and that you will destroy yourselves. He shows you, my brethren, the bait, but he hides the hook; he shows you the pleasure, profits and advantages, that attend abundance of this world’s goods; but he does not show you the crosses, losses and vexations that you may have while you are in the enjoyment of the blessings of this world.

2. When he finds he cannot allure you by flattery, he will try you by frowns, and the terrors of this world; he will stir up people to point at you,

and cry, “Here comes another troop of his followers:” He will stir them up to jeer, scoff, backbite, and hate you; but if he still finds this will not do, then he throws doubts, my brethren, and discouragements in your mind, whether the way you are in is the true way or not; or else he will suggest, What! do you expect to be saved by Christ? Also, He did not die for you; you have been too great a sinner; you have lived in sin so long, and committed such sins against Christ, which he will not forgive. Thus he hurries poor sinners almost into despair.

And very often, when the people of God are met to worship him, he sends his agents, the scoffers, to disturb them. We saw an instance of their rage just now; they would fain have disturbed us; but the Lord was on our side, and so prevented all the attempts of wicked and designing men, to disturb and disquiet us. Lord Jesus, forgive them who are thus persecuting thy truth! Jesus, shew them that they are fighting against thee, and that it is hard for them to kick against the pricks! These, my brethren, are some of the ways Satan takes, in his temptations, to bring you from Christ: Many more might be named; but these are sufficient, I hope, to keep you on your guard, against all that the enemy can do to hinder you from coming to Christ.

IV. I come to shew you, how earnest you ought to be with Jesus Christ, either not to suffer you to be led into temptations, or to preserve you under them.

And here, my dear brethren, let me beseech you to go to Jesus Christ; tell him, how you are assaulted by the evil one, who lies in wait for your souls; tell him, you are not able to master him, in your own strength; beg his assistance, and you shall find him ready to help you; ready to assist you, and to be your Guide, your Comforter, your Saviour, your All: He will give you strength to resist the fiery darts of the devil; and, therefore, you can no

where find one so proper to relieve you, as Jesus Christ; he knows what it is to be tempted; he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, and he will give you the assistance of his Spirit, to resist the evil one, and then he will fly from you. In Christ Jesus you shall have the strength you stand in need of, the devil shall have no power; therefore fear not, for in the name of the Lord we shall overcome all our spiritual *Amalekites*: Let the devil and his agents rage, let them breathe out threatnings, yea, let them breathe out slaughters, yet we can rejoice in this, that Jesus Christ hath them in his power, they shall go no farther than he permits them; they may rage, they may rage horribly, but they can go no farther, until they have got more power from on high.

If they could do us what mischief they would, very few of us should be permitted to see our habitations any more; but, blessed be God, we can commit ourselves to his protection; he has been our protector hitherto, he will be so still. Then earnestly intreat of the Lord to support you under those temptations, which the devil may assault you with; he is a powerful adversary, he is a cunning one too; he would be too hard for us, unless we have the strength of Christ to be with us. But let us be looking up unto Jesus, that he would send his Spirit into our hearts, and keep us from falling. O my dear brethren in Christ Jesus, how stands it now between God and your souls? Is Jesus altogether lovely to your souls? is he precious unto you? I am sure, if you have not gone back from Christ, he will not from you; he will root out the accursed things of this world, and dwell in your hearts. You are candidates for heaven; and will you mind earth? What are all the pleasures of earth, without an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ? And one smile from him is more to be desired than rubies, yea more than the whole world.

O you who have found Jesus Christ assisting you, and supporting you under all the temptations of this life, will you forsake him? have you not found him a gracious master? is he not the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely? Now you see a form and comeliness in Christ, which you never saw before. O! how do you and I wish we had known Jesus sooner, and that we had more of his love; it is condescending love, it is amazing, it is forgiving love, it is dying love, it is exalted and interceding love, and it is glorified love. Methinks when I am talking of the love of Jesus Christ, who loved me before I loved him; he saw me polluted in blood, full of sores, a slave to sin, to death and hell, running to destruction, then he passed by me, and said unto my soul, "Live;" he snatched me as a brand plucked from the burning. It was love that saved me, it was all of the free grace of God, and that only. The little experience I have had of this love, makes me amazed at the condescension, the love, and mercifulness of the blessed Jesus, that he should have mercy upon such a wretch. O, my brethren, the kingdom of God is within me, and this fills me so full of love, that I would not be in my natural state again, not for millions of millions of worlds; I long to be with Jesus, to live with the Lord that bought me, to live forever with the Lamb that was slain, and to sing *Hallelujah*'s unto him. Eternity itself will be too short to set forth the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot, indeed I cannot forbear speaking again, and again, and again, of the Lord Jesus.

And if there are any here who are strangers to this love of the Lord Jesus Christ, do not despair; come, come unto Christ, and he will have mercy upon you, he will pardon all your sins, he will heal all your backslidings, he will love you freely, and take you to be with himself. Come therefore, O my guilty brethren, unto Jesus, and you shall find rest for your souls. You need

not fear, you need not despair, when God has had mercy upon such a wretch as I; and he will save you also, if you will come unto him by faith.

Why do ye delay? What! do you say, you are poor, and therefore ashamed to come? It is not your poverty that Christ mindeth; come in all your rags, in all your pollution, and he will save you. Do not depend upon any thing but the blood of Jesus Christ; do not stand out an hour longer, but give your hearts to Christ, give him the firstlings of the flock; come unto him now, lest he should cut you off before you are prepared, and your soul be sent to that pit from whence there is no redemption.

Do not waver, but give him that which he desires, your hearts; it is the heart the Lord Jesus Christ wanteth; and when you have an inward principle wrought in your hearts by this same Jesus, then you will feel the sweetness and pleasure of communion with God. O consider, my brethren, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, in dying for you; and are you resolved to slight his dying love? Your sins brought Christ from heaven, and I humbly pray to the Lord that they may not be a means of sending you to hell. What language will make you leave your sins and come to Christ? O that I did but know! and that it lay in my power to give you this grace; not one of you, not the greatest scoffer here should go hence before he was changed from a natural to a spiritual life; then, then we would rejoice and take sweet council together; but all this is not in my power: but I tell you where you may have it, even of the Lord Jesus; he will give it to you, if you ask it of him, for he has told us, "Ask, and you shall receive;" therefore ask of him, and if you are repulsed again and again, intreat him more, and he will be unto you as he was to the poor *Syrophœnician* woman, who came to Christ on account of her daughter; and if she was so importunate to him for a body, how much more should we be solicitous for our souls? If you seek to him in faith, his

answer will be to you as it was to her, “Thy faith hath saved thee, be it as thou wouldest have it.”

O, do not forsake the seeking of the Lord; do not, I beseech you, neglect the opportunities which may be offered to you, for the salvation of your souls; forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, to build up and confirm and strengthen those who are weak in faith; to convince sinners, that they may feel the power of God pricking them in their hearts, and make them cry out, “What must we do to be saved?”

The devil and his agents have their clubs of revelling, and their societies of drunkenness; they are not ashamed to be seen and heard doing the devil their master’s works; they are not ashamed to proclaim him; and sure you are not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ; you dare proclaim that Jesus, who died that you might live, and who will own you before his Father and all the holy angels: Therefore, dare to be singularly good; be not afraid of the face of man; let not all the threats of the men of this world move you: what is the loss of all the grandeur, or pleasure, or reputation of this life, compared to the loss of heaven, of Christ and of your souls? and as for the reproaches of the world, do not mind them; when they revile you, never, never revile again; do not answer railing with railing; but let love, kindness, meekness, patience, long-suffering, be found in you, as they were in the blessed Jesus; therefore, I beseech you, do not neglect the frequent coming together, and telling each other, what great things Jesus Christ hath done for your souls.

I do not now, as the Pharisees say I do, encourage you to leave your lawful callings, and your business, in which God, by his providence, hath placed you; for you have two callings, the one a general, and the other a special one; it is your duty to regard your families, and if you neglect them out of any pretence whatsoever, as going to church or to societies, you are

out of the way of your duty, and offering that to God which he commanded you not. But then, my brethren, you are to take care that the things of this life do not hinder the preparing for that which is to come; let not the business of the world make you unmindful of your souls; but in all your moral actions, in the business of life, let all be done with a view to the glory of God, and the salvation of your souls.

The night draws on, and obliges me to hasten to a conclusion; though, methinks, I could speak until my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, yea, until I could speak no more, if it was to save your souls from the paws of him who seeketh to devour them.

Therefore let me beseech you, in all love and compassion: Consider, you, who are Pharisees; you, who will not come to Christ, but are trusting to yourselves for righteousness; who think, because you lead civil, honest, decent lives, all will go well at last; but let me tell you, O ye Pharisees, that harlots, murderers, and thieves, shall enter the kingdom of God before you. Do not flatter yourselves of being in the way to heaven, when you are in the broad way to hell; but if you will throw away your righteousness and come to Christ, and be contented to let Jesus Christ do all for you, and in you, then Christ is willing to be your Saviour; but if you bring your good works with you, and think to be justified on the account of them, you may seek to be justified by them for ever, and never be justified; no, it is only the blood of Jesus that cleanseth us from the filth and pollution of all our sins; and you must be sanctified before you are justified. As for good works, we are justified before God without any respect to them, either past, present, or to come: when we are justified, good works will follow our justification, for we can do no good works, until we are cleansed of our pollution, by the sanctification of the Spirit of God.

O ye scoffers, come and see this Jesus, this Lord of glory whom you have despised; and if you will but come to Christ, he will be willing to receive you, notwithstanding all the persecution you have used towards his members: However, if you are resolved to persist in your obstinacy, remember, salvation was offered to you, that Christ and free grace were proposed; but you refused to accept of either, and therefore your blood will be required at your own hands.

I shall only say this unto you, that however you may despise either me or my ministry, I shall not regard it, but shall frequently shew you your danger, and propose to you the remedy; and shall earnestly pity and pray for you, that God would shew you your error, and bring you home into his sheepfold, that you, from ravenous lions, may become peaceful lambs.

And as for you, O my brethren, who desire to chuse Christ for your Lord, and to experience his power upon your souls, and as yet do not find your desires and prayers answered; go on, and Christ will manifest himself unto you, as he does not unto the world; you shall be made to see and feel this love of Jesus upon your souls; you shall have a witness in your own breast, that you are the Lord's; therefore, do not fear, the Lord Jesus Christ will gather you with his elect, when he comes at that great day of accounts, to judge every one according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil: and, O that the thought of answering to God for all our actions, would make us more mindful about the consequences that will attend it.

And now let me address all of you, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to accept of mercy and grace while it is offered to you: Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; and will you not accept it, now it is offered unto you? do not stand out one moment longer; but come and

accept of Jesus Christ in his own way, and then you shall be taken up at the last day, and be with him for ever and ever: and sure this should make you desirous of being with that Jesus who has done so much for you, and is now interceding for you, and preparing mansions for you; where may we all arrive and sit down with Jesus to all eternity!

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

SERMON XX.

Worldly business no Plea for the Neglect of Religion.

Matthew viii. 22.

Let the dead bury their dead.

ST. *Paul* preaching at *Athens*, tells them, that as he passed by and beheld their devotions, he perceived they were in all things too *superstitious*. But was this apostle to rise, and come publishing the glad tidings of salvation in any of our populous cities, he would see no reason why he should charge the inhabitants with this; but rather as he passed by and observed the tenor of their life, say, I perceive in all things ye are too *worldly-minded*; ye are too eagerly bent on pursuing your lawful business; so eagerly, as either wholly to neglect, or at least too heedlesly to attend on the one thing needful.

There cannot then be a greater charity shewn to the Christian world, than to sound an alarm in their ears, and to warn them of the inexpressible danger, of continually grasping after the things of this life, without being

equally, nay a thousand times more concerned for their well-being in a future state.

And there is still the more occasion for such an alarm, because worldly-mindedness so easily and craftily besets the hearts of men. For out of a specious pretence of serving God in labouring for the meat which perisheth, they are insensibly lulled into such a spiritual slumber, as scarce to perceive their neglect to secure that which endureth to everlasting life.

The words of the text, if not at first view, yet when examined and explained, will be found applicable to this case, as containing an admirable caution not to pursue the affairs of this world, at the expence of our happiness in the next.

They are the words of Jesus Christ himself: the occasion of their being spoken was this; As he was conversing with those that were gathered round about him, he gave one of them an immediate summons to follow him: but he, either afraid to go after such a persecuted master, or rather loving this present world, says, “Suffer me first to go home and bury my father,” or, as most explain it, let me first go and dispatch some important business I have now in hand. But Jesus said unto him, “Let the dead bury their dead;” leave worldly business to worldly men, let thy secular business be left undone, rather than thou shouldst neglect to follow me.

Whether this person did as he was commanded, I know not; but this I know, that what Christ said here in person, he has often whispered with the small still voice of his holy Spirit, and said to many here present, that rise up early and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, Come draw off your affections from the things of this life; take up your cross and follow me. But they, willing to justify themselves, make answer, Lord, suffer us first to bury our fathers, or dispatch our secular affairs. I say unto all such,

“Let the dead bury their dead,” let your worldly business be left undone, rather than you should neglect to follow him.

From the words thus explained, naturally arises this proposition, that no business, though ever so important, can justify a neglect of true religion.

The truth of which I shall first shew, and then make an application of it.

I. *First* then, I am to prove, that no temporal business, though ever so important, can justify a neglect of true religion.

By the word *religion*, I do not mean any set of moral virtues, any partial amendment of ourselves, or formal attendance on any outward duties whatsoever: but an application of Christ’s whole and personal righteousness, made by faith to our hearts; a thorough real change of nature wrought in us by the invisible, yet powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, preserved and nourished in our souls by a constant use of all the means of grace, evidenced by a good life, and bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit.

This is true and undefiled religion, and for the perfecting this good work in our hearts, the eternal Son of God came down and shed his precious blood; for this end were we made, and sent into the world, and by this alone can we become the sons of God. Were we indeed to judge by the common practice of the world, we might think we were sent into it for no other purpose, than to care and toil for the uncertain riches of this life: but if we consult the lively oracles, they will inform us, that we were born for nobler ends, even to be born again from above, to be restored to the divine likeness by Jesus Christ, our second *Adam*, and thereby be made meet to inherit the kingdom of heaven; and consequently, there is an obligation laid upon all, even the most busy people, to secure this end; it being an undeniable truth, that all creatures ought to answer the end for which they were created.

Some indeed are for confining religion to the clergy, and think it only belongs to those who serve at the altar: but what a fatal mistake is this, seeing all persons are indifferently called by God to the same state of inward holiness. As we are all corrupt in our nature, so must we all be renewed and sanctified. And though it must be granted, that the clergy lie under double obligations to be examples to believers, in faith, zeal, charity, and whatever else is commendable and of good report, as being more immediately dedicated to the service of God; yet as we have been all baptized with one baptism into the death of Christ, we are all under the necessity of performing our baptismal covenant, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God: for the holy scriptures point out to us but one way of admission into the kingdom of Christ, through the narrow gate of a sound conversion: and he that does not enter into the sheepfold, whether clergy or lay-man, by this door, will find, to his everlasting confusion, there is no climbing up another way.

Besides, what a gross ignorance of the nature of true religion, as well as of our own happiness, does such a distinction discover? For what does our Saviour, by willing us to be religious, require of us? but to subdue our corrupt passions, to root out ill habits, to engraft the heavenly graces of God's most holy Spirit in their room; and, in one word, to fill us with all the fulness of God.

And will men be so much their own enemies, as to affirm this belongs only to those who minister in holy things? Does it not equally concern the most active man living? Is it the end of religion to make men happy, and is it not every one's privilege to be as happy as he can? Do persons in business find the corruptions of their nature, and disorder of their passions, so pleasing, that they care not whether they ever regulate or root them out? Or

will they consent that ministers shall be alone partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light? If not, as they desire the same end, why will they not make use of the same means? Do they think that God will create a new thing upon the earth, and, contrary to the purity of his nature, and immutability of his counsel, admit them into heaven in their natural state, because they have been encumbred about many worldly things? Search the scriptures, and see if they give any room for such a groundless hope.

But farther, one would imagine there was something of the highest concern and utmost importance in our temporal affairs, that they should divert so many from purifying their hearts by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

A covetous miser, who neglects religion by being continually intent on seeking great things for himself and those of his own houshold, flatters himself he herein acts most wisely; and at the same time will censure and condemn a young prodigal, who has no time to be devout, because he is so perpetually engaged in wasting his substance by riotous living and following of harlots. But yet a little while, and men will be convinced, that they are as much without excuse who lose their souls by hunting after riches, as those who lose them by hunting after sensual pleasures. For though business may assume an air of importance, when compared with other trifling amusements, yet when put in the balance with the loss of our precious and immortal souls, it is equally frivolous, according to that of our Saviour, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

And now what need we any further proof? We have heard the decision out of Christ’s own mouth. But because it is so difficult to convince such of this important truth, whose hearts are blinded by the deceitfulness of riches, that we had need cry out to them in the language of the prophet, “O earth, earth,

hear the word of the Lord," I shall lay before you one passage of scripture more, which I could wish were written on the tables of all our hearts. In the xivth of St. *Luke*, the 18th and following verses, our blessed Lord puts forth this parable, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, and sent his servant at supper-time, to call them that were bidden: but they all, with one consent, began to make excuse. The one said, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought a yoke of oxen, and I must needs go and prove them, I pray thee therefore have me excused. So the servant returned, and shewed his master all these things." And what follows? Did the master accept of their excuses? No, the text tells us the good man was angry, and said, "that none of those which were bidden, should taste of his supper." And what does this parable teach, but that the most lawful callings cannot justify our neglect; nay, that they are no longer lawful when they in any wise interfere with the great concerns of religion? For the marriage supper here spoken of, means the gospel; the master of the house is Christ; the servants sent out, are his ministers, whose duty it is, from time to time, to call the people to this marriage-feast, or, in other words, to be religious. Now we find those that were bidden, were very well and honestly employed. There was no harm in buying or seeing a piece of ground, or in going to prove a yoke of oxen; but here lay their fault, they were doing these things, when they were invited to come to the marriage feast.

Without doubt, persons may very honestly and commendably be employed in following their respective callings; but yet, if they are engaged so deeply in these, as to hinder their working out their salvation with fear and trembling, they must expect the same sentence with their predecessors in the parable, that none of them shall taste of Christ's supper: for our

particular calling, as of this or that profession, must never interfere with our general and precious calling, as Christians. Not that Christianity calls us entirely out of the world, the holy scriptures warrant no such doctrine.

It is very remarkable, that in the book of life, we find some almost of all kinds of occupations, who notwithstanding served God in their respective generations, and shone as so many lights in the world. Thus we hear of a good centurion in the evangelists, and a devout *Cornelius* in the *Acts*; a pious lawyer; and some that walked with God, even of *Nero*'s houshold, in the epistles; and our divine master himself, in his check to *Martha*, does not condemn her for minding, but for being cumbered or perplexed about many things.

No, you may, nay, you must labour, out of obedience to God, even for the meat which perisheth.

But I come, in the *Second* place, to apply what has been said.

I beseech you, by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, let not your concern for the meat which perisheth be at the expence of that which endureth to everlasting life; for, to repeat our blessed Saviour's words, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Were we always to live in the world, then worldly wisdom would be our highest wisdom: but forasmuch as we have here no continuing city, and were only sent into this world to have our natures changed, and to fit ourselves for that which is to come; then to neglect this important work for a little worldly gain, what is it but, with profane *Esau*, to sell our birth-right for a mess of pottage.

Alas! how unlike are Christians to Christianity! they are commanded to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and all other real

necessaries shall be added unto them; but they are fearful (O men of little faith!) that if they should do so, all other necessaries would be taken from them: they are strictly forbidden to be careful for the morrow, and yet they rest not night or day, but are continually heaping up riches for many years, though they know not who shall gather them. Is this acting like persons that are strangers and pilgrims upon earth? Is this keeping their baptismal vow? Or rather, is it not directly apostatizing from it, and deserting the service of Jesus Christ, to list themselves under the banner of mammon?

But what will be the hope of such worldlings, when God shall take away their souls? What if the almighty should say to each of them, as he did to the rich fool in the gospel, "this night shall thy soul be required of thee;" O then, what would all those things profit them, which they are now so busy in providing?

Was eternal life, that free gift of God in Christ Jesus, to be purchased with money; or could men carry their stocks beyond the grave, to buy oil for their lamps, i.e. grace for their hearts, when they should be called to meet the bridegroom, there might be some reason why God might well bear with them: but since their money is to perish with them; since it is certain, as they brought nothing into the world, so they can carry nothing out; or supposing they could, since there is no oil to be bought, no grace to be purchased when once the lamp of their natural life is gone out; would it not be much more prudent to spend the short time they have here allotted them, in buying oil while it may be had, and not for fear of having a little less of that which will quickly be another man's, eternally lose the true riches?

What think you? Is it to be supposed, it grieved that covetous worldling before mentioned, when his soul sprung into the world of spirits, that he could not stay here till he had pulled down his barns and built greater? Or

think you not that all things here below seemed equally little to him then, and he only repented that he had not employed more time in pulling down every high thought that exalted itself against the Almighty, and building up his soul in the knowledge and fear of God?

And thus it will be with all unhappy men, who like him are disquieting themselves in a vain pursuit after worldly riches, and at the same time are not rich towards God.

They may, for a season, seem excellently well employed in being solicitously careful about the important concerns of this life; but when once their eyes are opened by death, and their souls launched into eternity, they will then see the littleness of all sublunary cares, and wonder they should be so besotted to the things of another life, while they were, it may be, applauded for their great wisdom and profound sagacity in the affairs of this world.

Alas! how will they bemoan themselves for acting like the unjust steward, so very wisely in their temporal concerns, in calling their respective debtors so carefully, and asking how much every one owes to them, and yet never remembring to call themselves to an account, or enquire how much they owed to their own great Lord and master?

And now what shall I say more? The God of this world, and the inordinate desire of other things, must have wholly stifled the conscience of that man, who does not see the force of these plain reasonings.

Permit me only to add a word or two to the rich, and to persons that are freed from the business of this life.

But here I must pause a while, for I am sensible that it is but an ungrateful, and as some may imagine, an assuming thing, for such a novice

in religion to take upon him to instruct men in high stations, and who perhaps would disdain to set me with the dogs of their flock.

But however, since St. *Paul*, who knew what best became a young preacher, commanded *Timothy*, young as he was, to exhort and charge the rich with all authority; I hope none here that are so, will be offended, if with humility I beg leave to remind them, though they once knew this, that if persons in the most busy employs are indispensibly obliged to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling," much more ought they to do so, who are free from the toils and incumbrance of a lower way of life, and consequently have greater opportunities and leisure to prepare themselves for a future state.

But is this really the case? or do we not find, by fatal experience, that too many of those whom God has exalted above their brethren, who are "cloathed in purple and fine linnen, and fare sumptuously every day," by a sad abuse of God's great bounty towards them, think that their stations set them above religion, and so let the poor, who live by the sweat of their brows, attend more constantly on the means of grace than do they?

But woe unto such rich men! for they have received their consolation. Happy had it been if they had never been born: for if the careless irreligious tradesman cannot be saved, where will luxurious and wicked gentlemen appear?

Let me therefore, by way of conclusion, exhort all persons, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to make the renewal of their fallen nature, the one business of their lives; and to let no worldly profit, no worldly pleasure, divert them from the thoughts of it. Let this cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," be ever sounding in our ears; and let us live as creatures that are every moment liable to be hurried away by death to

judgment: let us remember, that this life is a state of infinite importance, a point between two eternities, and that after these few days are ended, there will remain no more sacrifice for sin; let us be often asking ourselves, how we shall wish we had lived when we leave the world? And then we shall always live in such a state, as we shall never fear to die in. Whether we live, we shall live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we shall die unto the Lord; so that living or dying we may be the Lord's.

To which end, let us beseech God, the protector of all them that put their trust in him, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, to increase and multiply upon us his mercy, that he being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXI.

Christ the only Rest for the Weary and Heavy-Laden.

Matthew xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

NOTHING is more generally known than the duties which belong to Christianity; and yet, how amazing is it, nothing is less practised? There is much of it in name and shew, but little of it in the heart and conversation; indeed, if going to church, and to the sacrament, or, if our being called after the name of Christ, and being baptized into that name; if that will make us Christians, I believe all of us would have a claim thereto: but if it consists in the heart, that there must be an inward principle wrought in us by faith; that there must be a change of the whole nature, a putting off the old man with his deeds, a turning from sin unto God, a cleaving only unto the Son of Righteousness; and that there must be a new birth, and we experience the pangs thereof; and that you must feel yourselves weary and heavy laden with your sins, before you will seek for deliverance from them; if this is to

be the case, if there is so much in being children of God, alas! how many who please themselves with an outside shew, a name to live whilst they are dead; and how few that have any share in this spiritual state, in this true and living name? How few are they who are weary and heavy laden with their sins, and seek to Christ for rest? They say, in a formal customary manner, we are sinners, and there is no health in us; but how few feel themselves sinners, and are so opprest in their own spirits, that they have no quiet nor rest in them, because of the burden of their sins, and the weight that is fallen and lays on their minds?

Under these burdens, these heavy burdens, they are at a loss what to do whereby they may obtain rest; they fly to their works, they go to a minister, and he tells them to read, to pray, and meditate, and take the sacrament: thus they go away, and read, and pray, and meditate almost without ceasing, and never neglect the sacrament whenever there is an opportunity for the taking of it. Well, when the poor soul has done all this, it still finds no ease, there is yet no relief: Well, what must you do then? To lie still under the burden they cannot, and to get rid of it they cannot: O what must the burdened soul do! Why, goes to the clergyman again, and tells him the case, and what it has done, and that it is no better. Well, he asks, have you given alms to the poor? Why no. Then go and do that, and you will find rest. Thus the poor sinner is hurried from duty to duty, and still finds no rest: all things are uneasy and disquiet within, and there remains no rest in the soul. And if it was to go through all the duties of religion, and read over a thousand manuals of prayers, none would ever give the soul any rest; nothing will, until it goes to the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is the only true rest; that is the rest which abideth, and will continue for ever. It is not in your own works, nor in your endeavours: no; when Christ comes into your souls, he

pardons you, without any respect to your works, either past, present, or to come.

From the words, my brethren, I have now read, I shall

I. Shew you who are the weary and heavy laden.

II. Inquire what is meant by coming to Christ. And,

III. Conclude with exhorting you to accept of the invitation which the Lord Jesus Christ gives unto you to come unto him, with the assurance of finding rest.

First, I am to shew you, who are the weary and heavy-laden.

And here it will be necessary to consider who are not; and then, to consider who they are that are really so.

1. Those who think themselves good enough, and are pleased that they are not so bad as others, these are not weary or heavy laden.

No, these Pharisees are not thus troubled; they laugh and jest at those who talk of feeling their sins, and think there is no occasion to make so much ado about religion: it is to be righteous over-much, and the means to destroy yourselves. They think if they do but mean well, and say their prayers, as they call them, it is sufficient: though they may say a prayer, yea, thousands of prayers, and all the while be only offering up the sacrifice of fools. They may call God, Father, every day, when it is only mocking of God, and offering up false fire unto him; and it would be just for him to serve them, as he did *Nahab* and *Abihu*, destroy them, cut them off from the face of the earth: but he is waiting to be gracious, and willing to try a little longer, whether you will bring forth any thing more than the leaves of an outward profession, which is not all that the Lord requires: no, he wants the heart; and unless you honour him with that, he does not regard your mouths, when the other is far from him. You may say over your prayers all your lives, and

yet you may never pray over one: therefore, while you flatter yourselves you are good enough, and that you are in a state of salvation, you are only deceiving your own souls, and hastening on your own destruction. Come unto him, not as being good enough, but as vile sinners, as poor, and blind, and naked, and miserable, and then Jesus will have compassion.

O ye Pharisees, what fruits do ye bring forth? Why, you are moral, polite creatures; you do your endeavours, you do what you can, and so Jesus is to make up the rest. You esteem yourselves fine, rational, and polite beings, and think it is too unfashionable to pray; it is not polite enough: perhaps you have read some prayers, but knew not how to pray from your hearts; no, by no means: that was being righteous over-much indeed.

But when once you are sensible of your being lost, damned creatures, and see hell gaping ready to receive you; if God was but to cut the thread of life, O then, then you would cry earnestly unto the Lord to receive you, to open the door of mercy unto you; your tones would then be changed, you would no more flatter yourselves with your abilities and good wishes: no, you would see how unable you were, how incapable to save yourselves; that there is no fitness, no free will in you: no fitness, but for eternal damnation, no free will but that of doing evil; and that when you would do good, evil is present with you, and the thing that ye would not, that do ye. He knows the secret intent of every heart; and this is a pleasure to you, my dear brethren, who come on purpose to meet with him, though it be in a field. And, however some may esteem me a mountebank, and an enthusiast, one that is only going to make you methodically mad; they may breathe out their invectives against me, yet Christ knows all; he takes notice of it, and I shall leave it to him to plead my cause, for he is a gracious Master: I have already found him so, and am sure he will continue so. Vengeance is his, and he will

repay it. Let them revile me; let them cast me out of their synagogues, and have my name in reproach, I shall not answer them by reviling again, or in speaking evil against them: no, that is not the Spirit of Christ, but meekness, patience, long-suffering, kindness, &c.

Ye pharisees, who are going about to establish your own righteousness; you, who are too polite to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; you, who are all for a little shew, a little outside work; who lead moral, civil, decent lives, Christ will not know you at the great day, but will say unto you, O ye Pharisees, was there any place for me in your love? Alas! you are full of anger and malice, and self-will; yet you pretended to love and serve me, and to be my people: but, however, I despise you; I, who am God, and knoweth the secret of all hearts; I, who am truth itself, the faithful and true witness, say unto you, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, into that place of torment, prepared for the devil and his angels." Good God! and must these discreet polite creatures, who never did any one harm, but led such civil, decent lives, must they suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? Cannot their righteous souls be saved? Where then must the sinner and the ungodly appear? Where wilt thou, O sabbath-breaker, appear, thou, who canst take thy pleasure, thy recreation, on the Lord's-day, who refusest to hear the word of God, who wilt not come to church to be instructed in the ways of the Lord? Where will you, O ye adulterers, fornicators, and such-like of this generation appear? Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, and them he will condemn. Then you will not call these tricks of youth: no, but you will call on the rocks and the mountains to fall on you, to hide you from the fury and anger of the Lord. Where wilt thou, O man, appear, that takes pleasure in making a mock of sin, who despisest all reproof, who throws about thy jests as a madman does

fire, and asks whether thou art not in sport? Where wilt thou, O man, appear, that makes it thy business to preach against the children of the Most High; thou, who art inventing methods in order to stop the progress of the gospel, and using thy utmost power to quash the preaching thereof; who art raising of evil reports against the disciples of Christ, and esteemest them madmen, fools, schismatics, and a parcel of rabble? Thou, O man, with all thy letter-learning, wilt surely see the judgment-seat of Christ, though, perhaps, sorely against your will; to be cast by him into eternal fire, a place prepared for the devil and his angels. There is a burning tophet kindled by the fury of an avenging God, which will never, never be quenched. The devil longs to embrace you in his hellish arms, whenever the sentence is past, where you must for ever bear the weight of your sin: there is no redemption then; the day of grace is past; the door of hope is shut; mercy will be no more offered, but you must be shut out from God for ever. O who can dwell with everlasting burnings!

However you may think of hell, indeed it is not a painted fire; it is not an imagination to keep people in awe: then, then you will feel the power of the almighty arm. If you will not lay hold on his golden sceptre, he will break you with his iron rod. O ye Pharisees, who are now so good, so much better than others, how will ye stand before Christ, when drest in his glory as judge? You Arians, may now despise his divinity; then you shall have a proof of it; he will shew, that he has all power, and that he was no subordinate God; he will shew you that he has all power in heaven and earth that he was King of kings, and Lord of lords; that he was the mighty God, the everlasting Father; and this power that he has, he will exercise in preserving you to no other end, but to punish you for ever. Thus you, who please yourselves with being good enough now, who are not weary and

heavy laden with a sense of your sins here, will be weary and heavy laden with a sense of your punishment hereafter.

2. Those, my brethren, are not weary and heavy laden with a sense of their sins, who can delight themselves in the polite entertainments of the age, and follow the sinful diversions of life.

Now they can go to balls and assemblies, play-houses and horse-racing; they have no thought of their sins; they know not what it is to weep for sin, or humble themselves under the mighty hand of God; they can laugh away their sorrows, and sing away their cares, and drive away these melancholy thoughts; they are too polite to entertain any sad thoughts; the talk of death and judgment is irksome to them, because it damps their mirth; they could not endure to think of their sin and danger; they could not go to a play, and think of hell; they could not go quietly to a masquerade, and think of their danger; they could not go to a ball or an assembly in peace, if they thought of their sins.

And so it is proved, even to a demonstration, that these are not weary and heavy laden: for if they are not thoughtful about their sins, they will never be weary and heavy laden of them. But at the day of judgment all will be over: they shall lose all their carnal mirth, all their pleasure, all their delight will be gone for ever.

They will say then of their laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, What dost thou? Their merry conceits, and witty jests against the poor despised people of God, are then over. Their mirth was but as the crackling of thorns under a pot; it made a great blaze and unseemly noise for a while, but it was presently gone, and will return no more.

They think now, that if they were to fast or to pray, and meditate and mourn, they should be righteous over-much, and destroy themselves; their

lives would be a continual trouble, and it would make them run mad. Alas, my brethren, what misery must that life be, where there is no more pleasant days, no more balls or plays, no cards or dice, those wasters of precious time, no horse-racing and cock-fighting, from whence no good ever came, unless abusing God Almighty's creatures, and putting them to that use which he never designed them, can be called so. How miserable will your life be, when all your joys are over, when your pleasures are all past, and no more mirth or pastime? Do you think there is one merry heart in hell? one pleasing countenance? or jesting, scoffing, swearing tongue? A sermon now is irksome: the offer of salvation, by the blood of Jesus Christ, is now termed enthusiasm; but then you would give thousands of worlds, if in your power, for one tender of mercy, for one offer of grace, which now you so much despise.

Now, you are not weary of your diversions, nor are you heavy laden with the sins, with which they are accompanied; but then you will be weary of your punishment, and the aggravation which attends it. Your cards and dice, your hawks and hounds, and bowls, and your pleasant sports, will then be over. What mirth will you have in remembering your sports and diversions? I would not have you mistake me, and say, I am only preaching death and damnation to you; I am only shewing you what will be the consequence of continuing in these sinful pleasures; and if the devil does not hurry you away with half a sermon, I shall shew you how to avoid these dangers, which I now preach up as the effect of sin unrepented of. I mention this, lest you should be hurried away by the devil: but be not offended, if I point out unto you more of the terrors which will attend your following these polite and fashionable entertainments of the present age, and of not being weary and heavy laden with a sense of your sins.

They who delight in drinking wine to excess, and who are drunkards, what bitter draughts will they have instead of wine and ale? The heat of lust will be then also abated; they will no more sing the song of the drunkard; no more spend their time in courting their mistresses, in lascivious discourse, in amorous songs, in wanton dalliances, in brutish defilements: no, these are all over; and it will but prick each other to the heart to look one another in the face. Then they will wish, that instead of sinning together, they had prayed together; had frequented religious societies; had stirred up each other to love and holiness, and endeavoured to convince each other of the evil of sin, and how obnoxious they are to the wrath of God; and the necessity of being weary and heavy laden with a sense thereof; that they might have escaped the punishment which they suffer, by their following the sinful and polite diversions of the age they fell into. But as it was against God himself they had sinned, so no less than God will punish them for their offences: he hath prepared these torments for his enemies; his continual anger will still be devouring of them; his breath of indignation will kindle the flame; his wrath will be a continual burden to their souls. Woe be to him who falls under the stroke of the Almighty!

Thus they are not weary and heavy laden with their sins, who can follow the polite and fashionable entertainments of the age. But,

Secondly, I am to shew you what it is to be weary and heavy laden with sins. And

1. You may be said, my brethren, to be weary and heavy laden, when your sins are grievous unto you, and it is with grief and trouble you commit them.

You, who are awakened unto a sense of your sins, who see how hateful they are to God, and how they lay you open to his wrath and indignation,

and would willingly avoid them; who hate yourselves for committing them; when you are thus convinced of sin, when you see the terrors of the law, and are afraid of his judgments; then you may be said to be weary of your sins. And O how terrible do they appear when you are first awakened to a sense of them; when you see nothing but the wrath of God ready to fall upon you, and you are afraid of his judgments! O how heavy is your sin to you then! Then you feel the weight thereof, and that it is grievous to be borne.

2. When you are obliged to cry out under the burden of your sins, and know not what to do for relief; when this is your case, you are weary of your sins. It does not consist in a weariness all of a sudden: no, it is the continual burden of your soul, it is your grief and concern that you cannot live without offending God, and sinning against him; and these sins are so many and so great, that you fear they will not be forgiven.

I come, *Secondly*, to shew you what is meant by coming to Christ.

It is not, my brethren, coming with your own works: no, you must come in full dependance upon the Lord Jesus Christ, looking on him as the Lord who died to save sinners: Go to him, tell him you are lost, undone, miserable sinners, and that you deserve nothing but hell; and when you thus go to the Lord Jesus Christ out of yourself, in full dependance on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will find him an able and a willing saviour: he is pleased to see sinners coming to him in a sense of their own unworthiness; and when their case seems to be most dangerous, most distressed, then the Lord in his mercy steps in and gives you his grace; he puts his Spirit within you, takes away your heart of stone, and gives you a heart of flesh. Stand not out then against this Lord, but go unto him, not in your own strength, but in the strength of Jesus Christ.

And this brings me, *Thirdly*, to consider the exhortation Christ gives unto all of you, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to come unto him that you may have rest. And if Jesus Christ gives you rest, you may be sure it will be a rest indeed; it will be such a rest as your soul wants; it will be a rest which the world can neither give nor take away. O come all of ye this night, and you shall find rest: Jesus Christ hath promised it. Here is a gracious invitation, and do not let a little rain hurry you away from the hearing of it; do but consider what the devil and damned spirits would give to have the offer of mercy, and to accept of Christ, that they may be delivered from the torments they labour under, and must do so for ever; or, how pleasing would this rain be to them to cool their parched tongues; but they are denied both, while you have mercy offered to you; free and rich mercy to come to Christ: here is food for your souls, and the rain is to bring forth the fruits of the earth, as food for your bodies. Here is mercy upon mercy.

Let me beseech you to come unto Christ, and he will give you rest: you shall find rest unto your souls. O you, my weary, burthened brethren, do but go to Christ in this manner, and though you go to him weary, you shall find rest before you come from him: let not any thing short of the Lord Jesus Christ be your rest; for wherever you seek you will be disappointed; but if you do but seek unto the Lord Jesus Christ, there you will find a fulness of every thing which your weary soul wants. Go to him this night; here is an invitation to all you who are weary souls. He does not call you, O Pharisees; no, it is only you weary sinners; and sure you will not stay from him, but accept of his invitation; do not delay; one moment may be dangerous: death may take you off suddenly. You know not but that a fit of the apoplexy may hurry you from time into eternity: therefore, be not for

staying till you have something to bring; come in all your rags, in all your filthiness, in all your distresses, and you will soon find Jesus Christ ready to help, and to relieve you: he loves you as well in your rags, as in your best garments; he regards not your dress; no, do but come unto him, and you shall soon find rest for your souls.

What say you? Shall I tell my Master you will come unto him, and that you will accept him on his own terms. Let me, my brethren, beseech you to take Jesus without any thing of your own righteousness: for if you expect to mix any thing of yourself with Christ, you build upon a sandy foundation; but if you take Christ for your rest, he will be that unto you. Let me beseech you to build upon this rock of ages. O my brethren, think of the gracious invitation, "Come unto me," to Jesus Christ: it is he that calls you: And will you not go?

Come, come unto him. If your souls were not immortal, and you in danger of losing them, I would not thus speak unto you; but the love of your souls constrains me to speak: methinks this would constrain me to speak unto you for ever. Come then by faith, and lay hold of the Lord Jesus: though he be in heaven, he now calleth thee. Come, all ye drunkards, swearers, sabbath-breakers, adulterers, fornicators; come, all ye scoffers, harlots, thieves, and murderers, and Jesus Christ will save you; he will give you rest, if you are weary of your sins. O come lay hold upon him. Had I less love for your souls, I might speak less; but that love of God, which is shed abroad in my heart, will not permit me to leave you, till I see whether you will come to Christ or no. O for your life receive him, for fear he may never call you any more. Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; it may be this night the cry may be made. How would you bear this, if you were sure to die before the morning light? God grant you may begin to live, that when the king of terrors shall

come, you may have nothing to do but to commit your souls into the hands of a faithful Redeemer.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all honour, praises, dominion, and power, henceforth and for evermore, *Amen*, *Amen*.

SERMON XXII.

The Folly and Danger of parting with Christ for the Pleasures and Profits of Life.

Matthew viii. 23, to the End.

And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: But he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was, a good way off from them, an herd of many swine, feeding. So the devils

besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go: And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them, fled and went their ways into the city, and told every thing; and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

IF we were but sensible of the great necessity there is, in this our day, of being real Christians, sure we should not be contented with being nominal ones; but we are sunk into I know not what; we are no better than baptised heathens: And how amazing is it, that we should profess the name of Christ, and yet so little converse about him; surely, this name whereby we are called, should be the theme of our discourse here, and of our eternal *Hallellujahs* in a world to come. But is it not more amazing, to consider, that instead of the name of Jesus, whereby we are to have salvation, we are taught to look for it in ourselves, and that there must be a fitness in us before God bestows his grace and favour upon us. But what doctrine is this? Not the doctrine of the scripture, not the doctrine of Jesus, not that of the primitive Christians, not that of the reformation, nor that of the articles of the church of *England*: No, it is the doctrine of the devil: this is making Christ but half a Saviour, and driving man into an error of the greatest consequence, in making him go to Jesus in his own strength, and not in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ: But, my brethren, unless you go in the strength of Jesus Christ; unless you depend only upon him for salvation; unless he is your wisdom, righteousness and sanctification, he will never be

your redemption. Our salvation is the free gift of God; it is owing to his free love, and the free grace of Jesus Christ, that ever you are saved.

Do not flatter yourselves of being good enough, because you are morally so; because you go to church, say the prayers, and take the sacrament, therefore you think no more is required: alas, you are deceiving your own souls; and if God, in his free grace and mercy, does not shew you your error, it will only be leading you a softer way to your eternal ruin; but God forbid that any of you, to whom I am now speaking, should imagine this; no, you must be abased, and God must be exalted, or you will never begin at the right end, you will never see Jesus with comfort or satisfaction, unless you go to him only on the account of what he has done and suffered.

Is it not plain to a demonstration, that we are acting the part of the *Gergesenes*, who came and desired Jesus to depart from them: Let us consider the words, and then we shall see how exactly we are performing the part of these men over again.

And when he was entered into a ship his disciples followed him.

Christ had been working of many miracles, as we read a few verses before; and as he continually went about doing good, so now he was going to the country of the *Gergesenes* to dispossess two, who were possessed with devils; and his disciples followed him: No doubt they were reproached and pointed at, for following such a babbler, as the Scribes and Pharisees esteemed the Lord Jesus Christ: Doubtless they were pointed at, jeered, scoffed, and esteemed madmen, enthusiasts, and a parcel of rabble; but still they followed the Lord Jesus Christ, they did not mind a little reproach; no, they loved their Master too well to forbear following him for the sake of a little persecution. And if you do but love the Lord Jesus Christ, love him

above all, you will follow him in spight of the malice of all the Scribes and Pharisees of this generation.

And behold there arose a great tempest on the sea.

The presence of Christ in the ship, did not preserve the disciples from fears and troubles; they were filled with uneasiness, although Christ was with them: this was only for a trial of their faith, to see if they would stand fast for the Lord in a persecuting time. My dear brethren, if the Lord is trying of you, do not give out; no, stand fast in all that the Lord may call you to suffer: It is easy to follow Christ when all things are safe: but your love to Jesus Christ would be seen more, if you must lose your lives, or deny your Jesus; it would be a trial of your love, when fire and faggot was before you, if you would rush into that, rather than flie from the truth as it is in Jesus. Though all things are calm now, the storm is gathering, and by and by it will break; it is at present no bigger than a man's hand; but when it is full it will break, and then you will see whether you are sound Christians or not. Persecution would scatter the hypocrites, and make nominal Christians afraid to worship God; they would then soon turn unto the world and the things of it.

And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose and rebuked the winds and sea, and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Here we may see the great compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ; no sooner had the disciples awakened him, and he saw their danger, but he rebuked the winds and seas, and all things were calm: Thus it was in a natural way, and will be so in a spiritual one; for no sooner does Jesus Christ speak

peace to a troubled soul, but all is calm and quiet: Now none but God could have performed this great miracle, and therefore it is no wonder that his disciples and the men of the ship were amazed to see the wonders he performed; and they could not forbear to express their sense thereof, by inquiring, “What manner of man is this!”

And when the Lord has brought you out of trouble, you will be amazed at the gracious dealings of the Lord with you, and wonder that he would so easily remove your troubles from you, when you have deserved nothing but wrath and destruction, and to be punished to all eternity.

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

Two men, who were possessed bodily with that evil one who is going about seeking whom he may devour, met Jesus; as soon as they saw him they were afraid, and cried out: though they made every one afraid of them, yet they no sooner saw Christ, but their power left them, and they cried out, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?” We know that thou art God; we do not want thee, we have no power over thee, but thou hast over us, and we fear thou art come to torment us before our time; we know that we are to be brought to judgment, and therefore we would not be tormented until that time come.

And there was, a good way off from them, a herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go into the herd of swine.

The evil spirits were sensible that Christ was come to dispossess them, and that their time was now come, when they must leave the bodies of these two men; for when Christ comes, who is stronger than the strong man armed, all must fall before him; they could not stand against the power of Christ: And here we may observe, that though the devil is an enemy, yet he is a chained one; he cannot hurt a poor swine until he has power given him from above: and we may likewise see the malice of the devil, that he would hurt a poor swine rather than do no mischief; and the devil would, if in his power, destroy each of your souls, but Christ, by his mighty power, prevents him.

And he said unto them, Go: And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

Here observe, that no sooner had Christ given the devils permission to enter the swine, but they did, and their malice was so great, that the swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and were drowned.

What poor spite was here, that the devil should disturb poor swine! And the city, therefore, was so grieved for the loss of a little wealth, that they came and besought Christ to depart; they did not want his company; they preferred a few poor swine before the company of Christ; a few worldly goods, a little pleasure, or any thing rather than Christ, part with Christ before any thing; but one, who is sensible of the love of Christ, will part with all, rather than with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus far the letter of the story goes; perhaps you think there is nothing to be learned herefrom, and that this is all you are to understand by it; but if so, my brethren, you are much mistaken; for here is an excellent lesson to be learned, and that you will see, by considering the words again, in a spiritual sense.

And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

And do not you frequently experience great tempests in this world? does not the sea of temptation beat over your souls? you are afraid lest you should be overcome by them; you can see no way to escape, for your souls are covered with waves, and you expect to be swallowed up in the tempest; you are afraid lest you should fall into the hands of the evil one. O do not fear, for Jesus Christ, though he may be asleep to your thinking, yet will keep you, he will preserve you from the raging of the men, of the Pharisees of this world; they may rage and spit forth all their venom against you, still Christ will deliver, preserve and protect you; if you but seek unto him in a sense of your own helplessness and unworthiness, you will soon find he is a God ready to pardon and forgive. O that all that hear me would be persuaded to bow their knee, and their hearts, as soon as they go home: but alas, how many of our Christians go to God, day by day, and call him, Father, which is but mocking of God, when the devil is their father: None have a right to call him father, but those who have received the spirit of adoption, whereby they have a right to call him, “Abba, Father.” Could the brute beasts speak, they might call God father as well as some of you; for he is their Creator to whom they owe their being; but this will not entitle you to call God father, in a spiritual sense; no, you must be born again of God; however you may flatter yourselves, you must have an inward

principle wrought in your hearts by faith. This you must experience, this, this you must feel before you are Christians indeed.

The Lord Jesus Christ takes notice of each of you: you may think the Lord does not take notice of us, because we are in a field, and out of church walls; but he does observe with what view you came this evening to hear his word; he knows whether it was to satisfy your curiosity, or to find out wherewith you might ridicule the preacher. The thoughts and intentions of all your hearts are not hidden from Jesus Christ; though he may seem to be asleep, because you are, at present, insensible of his workings upon your heart, and he may not seem to take notice of you, and regard you, no more than he did the *Syrophœnician* woman; yet he will turn to you and behold you with love; the Lord will be mindful of you in due time, and speak peace to your troubled soul, though the sea of troubles is beating over you, though the Pharisees of this day are scoffing at you, yet, when Christ rebukes, then they shall cease.

Do not depend on yourself: say unto him, "Save us, Lord, or we perish:" beseech him to be your guide, and your salvation: I beseech you, by the tender mercies of God, which are in Christ Jesus, that you present yourselves to him, as your reasonable service.

Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, from the death of sin, and Christ then will give you the light of his righteousness. Come to Christ and you shall be welcome; O come unto this blessed Jesus, come notwithstanding your vileness; for if you come not you will perish: If Christ does not save you, your own good meaning, your own good intentions cannot; no, as you are in your blood, so you must perish in your blood; but if you come to Christ you will find mercy, you shall not perish. You cannot find salvation in any other but in Christ; if the disciples could have saved

themselves, they would not have awoken Jesus Christ; but they were sensible that no one could save them but him; and therefore they cried out unto him; and so you, who are under the sense of sin, who are in fear of hell, if you seek unto your own works, you only seek your own death; for there is no fitness in you. I speak the truth in Christ Jesus, I lie not, there is no fitness in you, but a fitness for eternal damnation; for what are you by nature, but children of wrath, and your hearts are Satan's garrison. Because you have gone to church, said the prayers, gone to the sacrament, and done no one any harm, you speak peace to your souls; and all is in peace you think, and your case is good enough; but indeed, all is a false peace, and if you have no other peace than this, you must shortly lie down in everlasting flames; this is an ungrounded, self created peace, and if you trust to this peace you will perish.

But do as the disciples did when they were in distress; they go to Christ and say to him, "Lord, save us, we perish." I offer you salvation this day; the door of mercy is not yet shut, there does yet remain a sacrifice for sin, for all that will accept of the Lord Jesus Christ; he only knows the inmost thoughts of thy heart, he will embrace you in the arms of his love; he sees the first risings of grace in you, and would willingly encourage it: the angels long for your being in the love and favour of God; they will rejoice to see you turn from sin unto him. All the ministers of the blessed Jesus would be glad to be instruments to turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

And he saith to them, why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?

And so, my brethren, I may say to you; why are you fearful to leave your sins and turn to God? O turn to him, turn in a sense of your own unworthiness; tell him how polluted you are, how vile, and be not faithless,

but believe; do not go in your own strength, and then you need not fear. Why fear ye that the Lord Jesus Christ will not accept of you? your sins will be no hindrance, your unworthiness will be no hindrance; if your own corrupt hearts do not keep you back, or if your own good works do not hinder you from coming, nothing will hinder Christ from receiving of you: he loves to see poor sinners coming to him, he is pleased to see them lie at his feet pleading his promises: and if you thus come to Christ, he will not send you away without his Spirit; no, but will receive and bless you.

O do not put a slight on infinite love: what would you have Christ do more? Is it not enough for him to come on purpose to save? Will you not serve God in your souls, as well as with your bodies? If not, you are only deceiving yourselves, and mocking of God; he must have the heart. O ye of little faith, why are ye fearful lest he should not accept of you? If you will not believe me, sure you will believe the Lord Jesus Christ; he has told thee that he will receive you: then why tarry ye, and do not go to him directly? Does he desire impossibilities? It is only, "Give me thy heart:" or, does he want your heart only for the same end as the devil does, to make you miserable? no, he only wants you to believe on him, that you might be saved. This, this, is all the dear Saviour desires, to make you happy, that you may leave your sins, to sit down eternally with him, at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

Thus, you see, it was only in the power of Christ to stop the raging of the sea; he rebuked it: the disciples might have spoken for ever, and it would not have ceased: so it is with the word preached; I may preach to you while I live; I may speak till I can speak no more; but the doctrines of Christ will

never do you good, unless he impress them upon your hearts: O then, in all thy troubles look up to Christ, that he may rebuke them; and if he speaks the word, then they shall cease. If the Pharisees of this generation scoff and jeer you, if they say all manner of evil against you, do not answer them; leave it unto Christ to rebuke them; for all you can say will be of no more signification, than the disciples speaking to the sea; but when Christ speaks the word, then they shall cease; let it not discourage you, for if you will live godly in Christ Jesus, you must suffer persecution.

It is true, that those who are sincerely good, are set up for marks for every one to shoot at. There is a continual enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; if you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because Christ hath chosen you out of the world, therefore it hateth you.

Do not think of following Christ into glory, unless you go through the press here. Look forward, my brethren, into eternity, and behold Christ coming, and his reward with him, to give a kind recompence for all the temptations and difficulties of this present life.

But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey him!

The men of the ship were amazed to see the miracle that Jesus Christ wrought only by his word; they thought he was something more than a man. And have not we as much reason to admire, that when we are overwhelmed with troubles, from within and without, that Jesus Christ, only by the word of his power, should speak peace, and then there is peace indeed. When God first awakens us with a sense of sin, and sets his terrors in array against us, then there are troubles and tempests; for Satan having got possession, before he will give place, he will fight and drive hard to keep the soul from

closing with Jesus: But when Christ comes, he storms the heart, he breaks the peace, he giveth it most terrible alarms of judgment and hell, he sets all in a combustion of fear and sorrow, 'till he hath forced it to yield to his mere mercy, and take him for its governor; then Satan is cast out; then the storm is rebuked, and he establishes a firm and lasting peace.

Can the sea be still while the wind is raging? no, it is impossible: so it is that there can be no peace in the soul, while it is at enmity with Christ; indeed, it may flatter itself and speak peace, but there can be no true peace: tho' thou, O Pharisee, may harden and fortify thy heart against fear, grief, and trouble, yet, as sure as God is true, they will batter down thy proud and fortified spirit, and seize upon it, and drive thee to amazement. This will be done here, or hereafter; here in mercy, or hereafter in wrath and judgment.

O my brethren, consider what Christ hath done, and you will be astonished that he has done so much for such wicked wretches as you and I are. If you are easy under the storm and tempest of sin, and do not cry to Christ for salvation, thou art in a dangerous condition: and it is a wonder to consider, how a man that is not sure of having made his peace with God, can eat, or drink, or live in peace; that thou art not afraid, when thou liest down, that thou should'st awake in hell: but if Christ speak peace unto thy soul, who can then speak trouble? None; no, not men or devils: Therefore, lie down at the feet of Christ whom you have resisted, and say, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? and he will rebuke the winds and seas of thy troubled mind, and all things will be calm.

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who went about doing good continually, very well knew, that he should meet two poor men in this country of the *Gergesenes*, who were possessed with devils; and Jesus Christ went on purpose that way, that he might relieve them. The devil, where he has the power, never wants will: but as I said before, so I say again, though the devil is an enemy, yet he is a chained one; he could not destroy these two poor men, he could not hurt the people that passed that way, he could only terrify them: and thus it is with you; the devil tries his utmost skill and power to frighten you from coming to the Lord Jesus Christ; he uses the utmost of his endeavours to keep poor sick and weary sinners from coming to Jesus; if he can but make you lose your souls, it is the end he aims at.

And how many souls does he keep from Christ, for fear of reproach? Many thousands would willingly see Christ in his glory, in the world to come, and would be happy with him there, but they are afraid of being now laughed at, and of hearing the pharisees say, here is another of his followers: they are afraid of losing their worldly business, or of being counted methodistically mad and fit for bedlam. I doubt not but many are kept from Jesus Christ, for fear of a little hurt or inconveniency.

What will such say, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall appear in his glory? Would you be glad to be confessed by him then, you must now not be ashamed of confessing him before men: let not the fierceness of the devil keep you back from Christ, for fear of being counted fools; for the time will come, when it will be found who are truly wise, and who are truly mad.

Are you afraid to stand up for the cause of Christ in the world? Dare not you be singularly good? Are you afraid of being members of Jesus Christ? I tell you, such persons would crucify him afresh were he in the world. But do not you, my brethren, so learn Christ; let not the temptations of the devil

keep you from coming to the Lord Jesus Christ; he may be fierce, he may hurry you from place to place, but strive with him, so that he may not drive you from Christ; and if you seek unto Christ, he will so help you that you shall resist the devil, and then he will fly from you; Christ will dispossess him, be not afraid therefore to meet Jesus Christ; tell him all that your souls want, and he will give it to you; and you shall not be any longer troubled with the fierce outrages of the devil.

And they cried out, saying, what have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come to torment us before the time?

As soon as the devils observed Jesus coming near, then they were afraid, lest he was come to punish them before that day of accounts, when all must be brought to judgment.

The devils themselves are enough to convince all our polite Arians and Socinians. They here own the Lord Jesus Christ to be God blessed for ever; they feel his power, and are assured of his being the God who must condemn them at the great day of accounts; and they were afraid lest the Lord Jesus Christ was come to punish them now. But though the devils believe the divinity of Christ, yet the world swarms with Arians and Socinians.

The Arians make Christ no more than a titular God, a subordinate deity, one who was more than man, and yet less than God; that he was a prophet sent from God they own, but deny him to be equal with the Father. But I hope, my brethren, he is to you, what our creed makes him, God of God, very God of very God, co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father; that as there was not a moment of time in which God the Father was not, so there is not a moment of time in which God the Son was not. For he says himself, “All things were made by him;” and if they were made by him, he must be

God; and whoever reads but the word of God, will find divine homage is paid to him, “and that he thought it no robbery to be equal with God;” he is “the Alpha and Omega.” These and a great many more places might be brought to prove the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ; he could never have made satisfaction for our sins if he had not been God as well as Man. As Man he suffered; as God he satisfied; so was God and man in one person; he took our nature upon him, and was offered upon the cross for the sins of all those who come unto him, which if he had not been God he could never have satisfied for. It may be proved, even to a demonstration, that the Lord Jesus Christ is God, and that he is equal with the Father.

The Socinians do not go so far as the others; they look on Christ to be no more than a good man, who told the people their duty, and died in defence of the doctrines which he delivered unto them.

But I hope there are none such here, that have so low and dishonourable thoughts of the blessed Jesus, and that thus despise the divinity of the Lord who bought them. No, I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation. Think you, that any one who denies the deity of Christ can ever be saved by him, living and dying in that state? Surely, the time will come, when they who have denied his Deity, shall feel the power of it hereafter; they shall feel that he is God as well as man; then he will be owned as God by all those who now dare to deny his truths; but God forbid it should go undetermined till then! Woe unto the polite infidels of this generation, for the devils will rise up in judgment against them.

If any such are here, consider what you are doing of, before it is too late; return, return ye unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you, and to Jesus Christ, and he will abundantly pardon. O my friends, let me beseech

you to consider what you are about, lest you fall into hell, and there be none to deliver you.

And the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go: And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

Here we may see, that no sooner had the devil power, but he puts it into execution; thus, if the devil has but power to tempt, or to hurry a soul, O how grievous a tyrant he is, hurrying from one temptation to another, from one sin unto another, and would, if it were possible, hurry you all into hell with as much violence, as he did the poor swine into the sea; but Christ by his grace prevents it. Jesus Christ died for souls, and therefore the devil cannot do with them as he will; he may have the will, but he cannot get the power. It is plain, that when the devil himself, or persecuting men, get the power, they will harrass the poor Christians; every thing is too good for them, and they are not worthy to be set with the dogs of the flock. My brethren, how joyful would many be, if the laws of our land would permit them to destroy us; how would the Pharisees hurry us to prison and to death; but, blessed be God, he does not say to them, as to the devil, "Go:" No, he bids them stay, he hedges their way up with thorns that they cannot stir to hurt us; they would fain, but they dare not destroy us; nothing withholds them but the power of the blessed Jesus. And therefore, be not afraid of their wrath though it is cruel, and of their anger though it be fierce: let them shoot their arrows, even bitter words, against us, blessed be God, the shield of faith will be a preservative against them all.

And when you are thus preserved, it will be the occasion of joy in the Holy Ghost; though many look on the joy of the Holy Ghost as enthusiasm and madness, and say that there is no such thing; but well do I know there is, it carries its own evidence along with it. Plead therefore with God, in the name of Jesus Christ; continue to wrestle with him, until he bestows the blessing upon you, and gives you a feeling of that joy which the world intermeddles not with, and which they are strangers to: indeed the devil may stir up his agents to hurry us from one trouble to another; but it will not signify, for the Lord Jesus Christ will not suffer him to hurry us into hell; no, but will give us his Spirit, which will be a preservative against all the assaults of the devil. Now see what followed this miracle, which Jesus had wrought, by permitting the devil to enter into the herd of swine.

And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing; and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

The people were so amazed to see the power that Christ had, and the malice with which the devil was possessed, that they were afraid, and told all that had befallen the possessed of the devils: and so, when the spirit of God has been at work on your souls, and you are brought to feel the power of God upon your hearts, you will be so overjoyed that you will tell to every one what great things God has done for your souls; you will be so full of joy, that you will declare the whole working of God on your hearts, and you will declare how you have been enabled to overcome Satan, and how you were affected at such a sermon, in such a place, and at such a time.

You will then love to talk of Jesus; no conversation will be so pleasing as that of the Lord Jesus Christ; no, he will be altogether lovely unto you, when you have once tasted of his love, and felt the power of his grace upon your hearts.

And behold the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

The whole city came to meet Jesus, not to worship, nor to thank him for the releasing of the two poor men who were possessed; no, but to beseech him to go from them; they valued their swine more than the Lord Jesus Christ, and had rather part from him, than them: and have we not among us, thousands who call themselves Christians, who had rather part with Christ than their pleasures? A play, a ball, or an assembly is far more agreeable to them than the company and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ: if they can but indulge their sensual appetite, please and pamper their bellies, satisfy the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, they regard no more, but rest contented, as if they were to live here always. O my dear brethren, I hope none of you can rest contented with such proceedings as these, but that you like the company of the Lord Jesus too well to part with him for a few delights of this life: and are there not many, who part with Christ for their own good works, and think they can go to heaven, if they do but go to church and say their prayers and take the sacrament? but alas! they will be much deceived, for if they rest in any thing short of the Lord Jesus, if they do not make him the chief corner-stone, they will fall infinitely short of what they flattered themselves to attain unto.

I would speak a few words to you before I part from you this evening, by way of application. Let me beseech you to come to Jesus Christ; I invite you all to come to him and receive him as your Lord and Saviour; he is ready to receive you: if you are afraid to go because you are in a lost condition, he came to save such; and to such as were weary and heavy laden, such as feel the weight and burden of their sins, he has promised he will give rest: such as feel the weight and burden of their sins on their souls,

a burden too heavy for them to bear, are weary of it, and know not how to obtain deliverance of it, in the name of my Lord and master, I invite you to come to him, that you may find rest for your souls.

If you will but come unto him he will not reproach you, as justly he might; he will not reflect upon you for not coming sooner unto him; no, my dear brethren, he will rejoice and be glad, and will say unto you, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you:" these words he said to others; and if you will but come unto him, by faith in his blood, he is ready to say the same unto you now, as he did to them formerly, for "he is the same to-day, yesterday and for ever:" though he suffered on the cross seventeen hundred years ago, yet he is the same in goodness and power as ever he was.

He calls you, by his ministers; O come unto him, beg of him to break your stubborn hearts, that you may be willing to be brought to him in his own way, to be made poor in spirit, and entitled to an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

O come and drink of the water of life; you may buy without money and without price; he is labouring to bring you back from sin, and from Satan unto himself: open the door of your hearts, and the King of glory shall enter in.

But if you are strangers to this doctrine, and account it foolishness; or, if you think you have enough of your own to recommend you to the favour of God, however you may go to church, or receive the sacrament, you have no true love to the Lord Jesus Christ; you are strangers to the truth of grace in your hearts, and are unacquainted with the new-birth; you do not know what it is to have your natures changed; and 'till you do experience these things, you never can enter into the kingdom of God.

What shall I say, my brethren, unto you? My heart is full, it is quite full, and I must speak, or I shall burst. What, do you think your souls of no value? do you esteem them as not worth saving? Are your pleasures worth more than your souls? Had you rather regard the diversions of this life, than the salvation of your souls? If so, you will never be partakers with him in glory; but if you come unto him, he will give you a new nature, supply you with his grace here, and bring you to glory hereafter; and there you may sing praises and hallelujahs to the Lamb for ever.

And may this be the happy end of all who hear me! may the Lord guide you by his counsel, until he comes to fetch you to heaven, and make you partakers of his glory!

May he direct you in his ways, and lead you in those paths which lead to everlasting life! May you be holy here, and happy hereafter: may your lives answer the profession you make, that we may all be found at the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he shall come to judge the world according to our works, whether they be good or evil! and that we then may be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

SERMON XXIII.

Marks of a true Conversion.

Matthew xviii. 3.

Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

I SUPPOSE I may take it for granted, that all of you, among whom I am now about to preach the kingdom of God, are fully convinced, that it is appointed for all men once to die, and that ye all really believe that after death comes the judgment, and that the consequence of that judgment will be, that ye must be doomed to dwell in the blackness of darkness, or ascend to dwell with the blessed God, for ever and ever. I may take it for granted also, that whatever your practice in common life may be, there is not one, though ever so profligate and abandoned, but hopes to go to that place, which the scriptures call Heaven, when he dies. And, I think, if I know any thing of mine own heart, my heart's desire, as well as my prayer to God, for you all, is, that I may see you sitting down in the kingdom of our heavenly Father. But then, though we all hope to go to heaven when we die, yet, if we

may judge by people's lives, and our Lord says, "that by their fruits we may know them," I am afraid it will be found, that thousands, and ten thousands, who hope to go to this blessed place after death, are not now in the way to it while they live. Though we call ourselves Christians, and would consider it as an affront put upon us, for any one to doubt whether we were Christians or not; yet there are a great many, who bear the name of Christ, that yet do not so much as know what real Christianity is. Hence it is, that if you ask a great many, upon what their hopes of heaven are founded, they will tell you, that they belong to this, or that, or the other denomination, and part of Christians, into which *Christendom* is now unhappily divided. If you ask others, upon what foundation they have built their hope of heaven, they will tell you, that they have been baptized, that their fathers and mothers presented them to the Lord Jesus Christ in their infancy; and though, instead of fighting under Christ's banners they have been fighting against him, almost ever since they were baptised, yet because they have been admitted to church, and their names are in the Register-book of the parish, therefore they will make us believe, that their names are also written in the book of life. But a great many, who will not build their hopes of salvation upon such a sorry rotten foundation as this, yet if they are, what we generally call, negatively good people; if they live so as their neighbours cannot say that they do any body harm, they do not doubt but they shall be happy when they die; nay, I have found many such die, as the scripture speaks, "without any bands in their death." And if a person is what the world calls an honest moral man, if he does justly, and, what the world calls, loves a little mercy, is now and then good-natured, reacheth out his hand to the poor, receives the sacrament once or twice a year, and is outwardly sober and honest; the world looks upon such an one as a Christian indeed, and doubtless we are to

judge charitably of every such person. There are many likewise, who go on in a round of duties, a model of performances, that think they shall go to heaven; but if you examine them, though they have a Christ in their heads, they have no Christ in their hearts.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew this full well; he knew how desperately wicked and deceitful mens hearts were; he knew very well how many would go to hell even by the very gates of heaven, how many would climb up even to the door, and go so near as to knock at it, and yet after all be dismissed with a "verily I know you not." The Lord, therefore, plainly tells us, what great change must be wrought in us, and what must be done for us, before we can have any well grounded hopes of entering into the kingdom of heaven. Hence, he tells *Nicodemus*, "that unless a man be born again, and from above, and unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And of all the solemn declarations of our Lord, I mean with respect to this, perhaps the words of the text are one of the most solemn, "except, (says Christ) ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The words, if you look back to the context, are plainly directed to the disciples; for we are told, "that at the same time came the disciples unto Jesus." And I think it is plain from many parts of Scripture, that these disciples, to whom our Lord addressed himself at this time, were in some degree converted before. If we take the words strictly, they are applicable only to those, that have already gotten some, though but weak, faith in Christ. Our Lord means, that though they had already tasted the grace of God, yet there was so much of the old man, so much indwelling sin, and corruption, yet remaining in their hearts, that unless they were more converted than they were, unless a greater change past upon their souls, and sanctification was still carried on, they

could give but very little evidence of their belonging to his kingdom, which was not to be set up in outward grandeur, as they supposed, but was to be a spiritual kingdom, begun here, but compleated in the kingdom of God hereafter. But though the words had a peculiar reference to our Lord's disciples; yet as our Lord makes such a declaration as this in other places of Scripture, especially in that discourse to *Nicodemus*, I believe the words may be justly applied to saints and sinners; and as I suppose there are two sorts of people here, some who know Christ, and some of you that do not know him; some that are converted, and some that are strangers to conversion, I shall endeavour so to speak, that if God shall be pleased to assist me, and to give you an hearing ear and an obedient heart, both saints and sinners may have their portion.

First, I shall endeavour to show you in what respects we are to understand this assertion of our Lord's, "that we must be converted and become like little children." I shall then,

Secondly, Speak to those who profess a little of this child-like temper.

And *Lastly*, shall speak to you, who have no reason to think that this change has ever past upon your souls. And

First, I shall endeavour to show you, what we are to understand by our Lord's saying, "Except ye be converted and become as little children." But I think, before I speak to this point, it may be proper to premise one or two particulars.

1. I think, that the words plainly imply, that before you or I can have any well-grounded, scriptural hope, of being happy in a future state, there must be some great, some notable, and amazing change pass upon our souls. I believe, there is not one adult person in the congregation, but will readily confess, that a great change hath past upon their bodies, since they came

first into the world, and were infants dandled upon their mothers knees. It is true, ye have no more members than ye had then; but how are these altered! Tho' you are in one respect the same ye were, for the number of your limbs, and as to the shape of your body, yet if a person that knew you when ye were in your cradle, had been absent from you for some years, and saw you when grown up, ten thousand to one if he would know you at all, ye are so altered, so different from what ye were, when ye were little ones. And as the words plainly imply, that there has a great change past upon our bodies since we were children, so before we can go to heaven, there must as great a change pass upon our souls; Our souls considered in a physical sense are still the same, there is to be no philosophical change wrought on them: But then, as for our temper, habit and conduct, we must be so changed and altered, that those who knew us the other day, when in a state of sin, and before we knew Christ, and are acquainted with us now, must see such an alteration, that they may stand as much amazed at it, as a person at the alteration wrought on any person he has not seen for twenty years from his infancy.

2. But I think it proper to premise something farther, because this text is the grand strong-hold of *Arminians*, and others. They learn of the devil to bring texts to propagate bad principles: when the devil had a mind to tempt Jesus Christ, because Christ quoted scripture, therefore Satan did so too. And such persons, that their doctrine and bad principles may go down the better, would fain persuade unwary and unstable souls, that they are founded upon the word of God. Though the doctrine of original sin, is a doctrine written in such legible characters in the word of God, that he who runs may read it; and though, I think, every thing without us, and every thing within us, plainly proclaims that we are fallen creatures; though the

very heathens, who had no other light, but the dim light of unassisted reason, complained of this, for they felt the wound, and discovered the disease, but were ignorant of the cause of it; yet there are too many persons of those who have been baptized in the name of Christ, that dare to speak against the doctrine of original sin, and are angry with those ill-natured ministers, who paint man in such black colours. Say they, "It cannot be that children come into the world with the guilt of *Adam*'s sin lying upon them." Why? Desire them to prove it from Scripture, and they will urge this very text, our Lord tells us, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now their argument runs thus, "It is implied in the words of the text, that little children are innocent, and that they come into the world like a mere blank piece of white paper, otherwise our Lord must argue absurdly, for he could never pretend to say, that we must be converted, and be made like wicked creatures; that would be no conversion." But, my dear friends, this is to make Jesus Christ speak what he never intended, and what cannot be deduced from his words. That little children are guilty, I mean, that they are conceived and born in sin, is plain from the whole tenor of the book of God. *David* was a man after God's own heart, yet, says he, "I was conceived in sin." *Jeremiah* speaking of every one's heart, says, "the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things." God's servants unanimously declare, (and *Paul* cites it from one of them) "that we are altogether now become abominable, altogether gone out of the way of original righteousness, there is not one of us that doth good (by nature), no not one." And I appeal to any of you that are mothers and fathers, if ye do not discern original sin or corruption in your children, as soon as they come into the world; and as they grow up, if ye do not discover self-will, and an

aversion to goodness. What is the reason your children are so averse to instruction, but because they bring enmity into the world with them, against a good and gracious God? So then, it is plain from scripture and fact, that children are born in sin, and consequently that they are children of wrath. And for my part, I think, that the death of every child is a plain proof of original sin; sickness and death came into the world by sin, and it seems not consistent with God's goodness and justice, to let a little child be sick or die, unless *Adam*'s first sin was imputed to him. If any charge God with injustice for imputing *Adam*'s sin to a little child, behold we have gotten a second *Adam*, to bring our children to him. Therefore, when our Lord says, "unless ye are converted, and become as little children," we are not to understand, as though our Lord would insinuate, that little children are perfectly innocent; but in a comparative, and as I shall shew you by and by, in a rational sense. Little children are innocent, compare them with grown people; but take them as they are, and as they come into the world, they have hearts that are sensual, and minds which are carnal. And I mention this with the greatest concern, because I verily believe, unless parents are convinced of this, they will never take proper care of their children's education. If parents were convinced, that children's hearts were so bad as they are, you would never be fond of letting them go to balls, assemblies, and plays, the natural tendency of which is to debauch their minds, and make them the children of the devil. If parents were convinced of this, I believe they would pray more, when they bring their children to be baptized, and would not make it a mere matter of form. And I believe, if they really were convinced, that their children were conceived in sin, they would always put up that petition, before their children came into the world, which I have heard that a good woman always did put up, "Lord Jesus, let

me never bear a child for hell or the devil." O! is it not to be feared, that thousands of children will appear, at the great day, before God, and in presence of angels and men will say, Father and mother, next to the wickedness of mine own heart, I owe my damnation to your bad education of me.

Having premised these two particulars, I now proceed to shew in what sense we are really to understand the words, that we must be converted and become like little children. The Evangelist tells us, "that the disciples at this time came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" These disciples had imbibed the common prevailing notion, that the Lord Jesus Christ was to be a temporal prince; they dreamed of nothing but being ministers of state, of sitting on Christ's right-hand in his kingdom, and lording it over God's people; they thought themselves qualified for state offices, as generally ignorant people are apt to conceive of themselves. Well, say they, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Which of us shall have the chief management of public affairs? A pretty question for a few poor fishermen, who scarcely knew how to drag their nets to shore, much less how to govern a kingdom. Our Lord, therefore, in the 2d verse, to mortify them, calls a little child, and sets him in the midst of them. This action was as much as if our Lord had said, "Poor creatures! your imaginations are very towering; you dispute who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; I will make this little child preach to you, or I will preach to you by him: Verily I say unto you, (I who am truth itself, I who know in what manner my subjects are to enter into my kingdom; I say unto you, ye are so far from being in a right temper for my kingdom, that) except ye be converted, and become as this little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, (unless ye are, comparatively speaking, as loose to the

world, as loose to crowns, scepters, and kingdoms, and earthly things, as this poor little child I have in my hand) ye shall not enter into my kingdom." So that what our Lord is speaking of, is not the innocency of little children, if you consider the relation they stand in to God, and as they are in themselves, when brought into the world; but what our Lord means is, that as to ambition and lust after the world, we must in this sense become as little children. Is there never a little boy or girl in this congregation? Ask a poor little child, that can just speak, about a crown, scepter, or kingdom, the poor creature has no notion about it: give a little boy or girl a small thing to play with, it will leave the world to other people. Now in this sense we must be converted, and become as little children; that is, we must be as loose to the world, comparatively speaking, as a little child.

Do not mistake me, I am not going to persuade you to shut up your shops, or leave your business; I am not going to persuade you, that if ye will be Christians, ye must turn hermits, and retire out of the world: ye cannot leave your wicked hearts behind you, when you leave the world; for I find when I am alone, my wicked heart has followed me, go where I will. No, the religion of Jesus is a social religion. But though Jesus Christ does not call us to go out of the world, shut up our shops, and leave our children to be provided for by miracles; yet this must be said to the honour of Christianity, if we are really converted, we shall be loose from the world. Though we are engaged in it, and are obliged to work for our children; though we are obliged to follow trades and merchandize, and to be serviceable to the commonwealth; yet if we are real Christians, we shall be loose to the world; though I will not pretend to say that all real Christians have attained to the same degree of spiritual-mindedness. This is the primary meaning of these

words, that we must be converted and become as little children; nevertheless, I suppose the words are to be understood in other senses.

When our Lord says, we must be converted and become as little children, I suppose he means also, that we must be sensible of our weakness, comparatively speaking, as a little child. Every one looks upon a little child, as a poor weak creature; as one that ought to go to school and learn some new lesson every day; and as simple and artless: one without guile, having not learned the abominable art, called dissimulation. Now in all these senses, I believe we are to understand the words of the text.——Are little children sensible of their weakness? Must they be led by the hand? Must we take hold of them or they will fall? So, if we are converted, if the grace of God be really in our hearts, my dear friends, however we may have thought of ourselves once, whatever were our former high exalted imaginations; yet we shall now be sensible of our weakness; we shall no more say, "We are rich and increased with goods, and lack nothing;" we shall be inwardly poor: we shall feel "that we are poor, miserable, blind, and naked." And as a little child gives up its hand to be guided by a parent or a nurse, so those who are truly converted, and are real Christians, will give up the heart, their understandings, their wills, their affections, to be guided by the word, providence, and the Spirit of the Lord. Hence it is, that the Apostle, speaking of the sons of God, says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are (and to be sure he means they only are) the sons of God."

And as little children look upon themselves to be ignorant creatures, so those that are converted, do look upon themselves as ignorant too. Hence it is, that *John*, speaking to Christians, calls them little children; "I have written unto you, little children." And Christ's flock is called a little flock, not only because little in number, but also because those who are members

of his flock, are indeed little in their own eyes. Hence that great man, that great apostle of the *Gentiles*, that spiritual father of so many thousands of souls, that man, who in the opinion of Dr. *Goodwin*, "sits nearest the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, in glory," that chosen vessel, the Apostle *Paul*, when he speaks of himself, says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the *Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ." Perhaps some of you, when you read these words, will be apt to think that *Paul* did not speak true, that he did not really feel what he said; because you judge *Paul*'s heart by your own proud hearts: but the more ye get of the grace of God, and the more ye are partakers of the divine life, the more will ye see your own meanness and vileness, and be less in your own eyes. Hence it is, that Mr. *Flavel*, in his book called, *Husbandry Spiritualized*, compares young Christians to green corn; which before it is ripe, shoots up very high, but there is little solidity in it: whereas, an old Christian is like ripe corn; it doth not lift up its head so much, but then it is more weighty, and fit to be cut down, and put into the farmer's barn. Young Christians are also like little rivulets; ye know rivulets are shallow, yet make great noise; but an old Christian, he makes not much noise, he goes on sweetly, like a deep river sliding into the ocean.

And as a little child is looked upon as an harmless creature, and generally speaks true; so, if we are converted, and become as little children, we shall be guileless as well as harmless. What said the dear Redeemer when he saw *Nathaniel*? As though it was a rare sight he gazed upon, and would have others gaze upon it; "Behold an *Israelite* indeed:" Why so? "In whom is no guile." Do not mistake me; I am not saying, that Christians ought not to be prudent; they ought exceedingly to pray to God for prudence, otherwise they may follow the delusions of the devil, and by their imprudence give

wrong touches to the ark of God. It was the lamentation of a great man, “God has given me many gifts, but God has not given me prudence.” Therefore, when I say, a Christian must be guileless, I do not mean, he should expose himself, and lie open to every one’s assault: we should pray for the wisdom of the serpent, though we shall generally learn this wisdom by our blunders and imprudence: and we must make some advance in Christianity, before we know our imprudence. A person really converted, can say, as it is reported of a philosopher, “I wish there was a window in my breast, that every one may see the uprightness of my heart and intentions:” And though there is too much of the old man in us, yet, if we are really converted, there will be in us no allowed guile, we shall be harmless. And that is the reason why the poor Christian is too often imposed upon; he judgeth other people by himself; having an honest heart, he thinks every one as honest as himself, and therefore is a prey to every one. I might enlarge upon each of these points, it is a copious and important truth; but I do not intend to multiply many marks and heads.

And therefore, as I have something to say by way of personal application, give me leave therefore, with the utmost tenderness, and at the same time with faithfulness, to call upon you, my dear friends. My text is introduced in an awful manner, “Verily I say unto you;” and what Jesus said then, he says now to you, to me, and to as many as sit under a preached gospel, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. Let me exhort you to see whether ye are converted; whether such a great and almighty change has passed upon any of your souls. As I told you before, so I tell you again, ye all hope to go to heaven, and I pray God Almighty ye may be all there: when I see such a congregation as this, if my heart is in a proper frame, I feel myself ready to lay down my life, to be instrumental only to save one soul. It

makes my heart bleed within me, it makes me sometimes most unwilling to preach, lest that word that I hope will do good, may increase the damnation of any, and perhaps of a great part of the auditory, through their own unbelief. Give me leave to deal faithfully with your souls. I have your dead warrant in my hand: Christ has said it, Jesus will stand to it, it is like the laws of the *Medes* and *Persians*, it altereth not. Hark, O man! hark, O woman! he that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Though this is *Saturday* night, and ye are now preparing for the sabbath, for what you know, you may yet never live to see the sabbath. You have had awful proofs of this lately; a woman died but yesterday, a man died the day before, another was killed by something that fell from a house, and it may be in twenty-four hours more, many of you may be carried into an unalterable state. Now then, for God's sake, for your own souls sake, if ye have a mind to dwell with God, and cannot bear the thought of dwelling in everlasting burning, before I go any further, silently put up one prayer, or say *Amen* to the prayer I would put in your mouths; "Lord, search me and try me; Lord, examine my heart, and let my conscience speak; O let me know whether I am converted or not!" What say ye, my dear hearers? what say ye, my fellow-sinners? what say ye, my guilty brethren? Has God by his blessed Spirit wrought such a change in your hearts? I do not ask you, whether God has made you angels? That I know will never be; I only ask you, Whether ye have any well-grounded hope to think that God has made you new creatures in Christ Jesus? So renewed and changed your natures, that you can say, I humbly hope, that as to the habitual temper and tendency of my mind, that my heart is free from wickedness; I have a husband, I have a

wife, I have also children, I keep a shop, I mind my business; but I love these creatures for God's sake, and do every thing for Christ: and if God was now to call me away, according to the habitual temper of my mind, I can say, Lord, I am ready; and however I love the creatures, I hope I can say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? Whom have I in heaven, O my God and my dear Redeemer, that I desire in comparison of thee? Can you thank God for the creatures, and say at the same time, these are not my Christ? I speak in plain language, you know my way of preaching: I do not want to play the orator, I do not want to be counted a scholar; I want to speak so as I may reach poor people's hearts. What say ye, my dear hearers? Are ye sensible of your weakness? Do ye feel that ye are poor, miserable, blind, and naked by nature? Do ye give up your hearts, your affections, your wills, your understanding to be guided by the Spirit of God, as a little child gives up its hand to be guided by its parent? Are ye little in your own eyes? Do ye think meanly of yourselves? And do you want to learn something new every day? I mention these marks, because I am apt to believe they are more adapted to a great many of your capacities. A great many of you have not that flowing of affection ye sometimes had, therefore ye are for giving up all your evidences, and making way for the devil's coming into your heart. You are not brought up to the mount as ye used to be, therefore ye conclude ye have no grace at all. But if the Lord Jesus Christ has emptied thee, and humbled thee, if he is giving thee to see and know that thou art nothing; though thou art not growing upward, thou art growing downward; and though thou hast not so much joy, yet thy heart is emptying to be more abundantly replenished by and by. Can any of you follow me? Then, give God thanks, and take the comfort of it.

If thou art thus converted, and become a little child, I welcome thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus, into God's dear family; I welcome thee, in the name of the dear Redeemer, into the company of God's children. O ye dear souls, though the world sees nothing in you, though there be no outward difference between you and others, yet I look upon you in another light, even as so many kings sons and daughters: all hail! in the name of God, I wish every one of you joy from my soul, ye sons and daughters of the King of kings. Will not you henceforth exercise a child-like temper? Will not such a thought melt down your hearts, when I tell you, that the great God, who might have frowned you to hell for your secret sins, that nobody knew of but God and your own souls, and who might have damned you times without number, hath cast the mantle of his love over you; his voice hath been, Let that man, that woman live, for I have found a ransom. O will ye not cry out, Why me, Lord? Was King *George* to send for any of your children, and were you to hear they were to be his adopted sons, how highly honoured would you think your children to be? What great condescension was it for *Pharaoh*'s daughter to take up *Moses*, a poor child exposed in an ark of bulrushes, and breed him up for her child? But what is that happiness in comparison of thine, who was the other day a child of the devil, but now by converting grace art become a child of God? Are ye converted? Are ye become like little children? Then what must ye do? My dear hearers, be obedient to God, remember God is your father; and as every one of you must know what a dreadful cross it is to have a wicked, disobedient child; if ye do not want your children to be disobedient to you, for Christ's sake be not disobedient to your heavenly parent. If God be your father, obey him: if God be your father, serve him; love him with all your heart, love him with all your might, with all your soul, and with all your strength. If God be your

father, fly from every thing that may displease him; and walk worthy of that God, who has called you to his kingdom and glory. If ye are converted and become like little children, then behave as little children: they long for the breast, and with it will be contented. Are ye new-born babes? then desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. I do not want that Arminian husks should go down with you; ye are kings sons and daughters, and have a more refined taste; you must have the doctrines of grace; and blessed be God that you dwell in a country, where the sincere word is so plainly preached. Are ye children? then grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Have any of you children that do not grow? do not ye lament these children, and cry over them; do not ye say, my child will never be fit for any thing in the world? Well, doth it grieve you to see a child that will not grow; how much must it grieve the heart of Christ to see you grow so little? Will ye be always children? Will ye be always learning the first principles of Christianity, and never press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? God forbid. Let the language of your heart be, "Lord Jesus help me to grow, help me to learn more, learn me to live so as my progress may be known to all!"

Are ye God's children? Are ye converted, and become like little children? Then deal with God as your little children do with you; as soon as ever they want any thing, or if any body hurt them, I appeal to yourselves if they do not directly run to their parent. Well, are ye God's children? Doth the devil trouble you? Doth the world trouble you? Go tell your father of it, go directly and complain to God. Perhaps you may say, I cannot utter fine words: but do any of you expect fine words from your children? If they come crying, and can speak but half words, do not your hearts yearn over

them? And has not God unspeakably more pity to you? If ye can only make signs to him; “As a father pitieth his children, so will the Lord pity them that fear him.” I pray you therefore be bold with your father, saying, “Abba, Father,” Satan troubles me, the world troubles me, my own mother’s children are angry with me; heavenly Father, plead my cause! the Lord will then speak for you some way or other.

Are ye converted, and become as little children, have ye entered into God’s family? Then assure yourselves, that your heavenly father will chasten you now and then; “for what son is there whom the father chastneth not: if ye are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.” It is recorded of bishop *Latimer*, that in the house where he came to lodge, he overheard the master of the house say, I thank God I never had a cross in my life: O said he, then I will not stay here. I believe there is not a child of God, when in a good frame, but has prayed for great humility; they have prayed for great faith, they have prayed for great love, they have prayed for all the graces of the Spirit: Do ye know, when ye put up these prayers, that ye did also say, Lord send us great trials: for how is it possible to know ye have great faith, humility and love, unless God put you into great trials, that ye may know whether ye have them or not. I mention this, because a great many of the children of God (I am sure it has been a temptation to me many times, when I have been under God’s smarting rod) when they have great trials, think God is giving them over. If therefore ye are God’s children; if ye are converted and become as little children; do not expect that God will be like a foolish parent; no, he is a jealous God, he loves his child too well to spare his rod. How did he correct *Miriam*? How did he correct *Moses*? How hath God in all ages corrected his dearest children? Therefore if ye are converted, and become as little

children, if God hath taken away a child, or your substance, if God suffers friends to forsake you, and if you are forsaken as it were both by God and man, say, Lord I thank thee! I am a perverse child, or God would not strike me so often and so hard. Do not blame your heavenly Father, but blame yourselves; he is a loving God, and a tender Father, "he is afflicted in all our afflictions:" therefore when God spake to *Moses*, he spake out of the bush; as much as to say, "*Moses*, this bush represents my people; as this bush is burning with fire, so are my children to burn with affliction; but I am in the bush; if the bush burns, I will burn with it, I will be with them in the furnace, I will be with them in the water, and though the water come over them, it shall not overflow them."

Are ye God's children? Are ye converted and become as little children? Then will ye not long to go home and see your Father? O happy they that have gotten home before you; happy they that are up yonder, happy they who have ascended above this field of conflict. I know not what you may think of it, but since I heard that some, whose hearts God was pleased to work upon, are gone to glory, I am sometimes filled with grief, that God is not pleased to let me go home too. How can you see so much coldness among God's people? How can ye see God's people like the moon, waxing and waning? Who can but desire to be forever with the Lord? Thanks be to God, the time is soon coming; thanks be to God, he will come and will not tarry. Do not be impatient, God in his own time will fetch you home. And though ye may be brought to short allowance now, though some of you may be narrow in your circumstances, yet do not repine; a God, and the gospel of Christ, with brown bread, are great riches. In thy Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; though thou art now tormented, yet by and by thou shalt be comforted; the angels will look upon it as an honour to convey

thee to *Abraham*'s bosom, though thou art but a *Lazarus* here. By the frame of my heart, I am much inclined to speak comfortably to God's people.

But I only mention one thing more, and that is, if ye are converted, and become as little children, then for God's sake take care of doing what children often do; they are too apt to quarrel one with another. O love one another; "he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." *Joseph* knew that his brethren were in danger of falling out, therefore when he left them, says he, "fall not out by the way." Ye are all children of the same Father, ye are all going to the same place; why should ye differ? The world has enough against us, the devil has enough against us, without our quarelling with each other; O walk in love. If I could preach no more, if I was not able to hold out to the end of my sermon, I would say as *John* did, when he was grown old and could not preach, "Little children, love one another:" if ye are God's children, then love one another. There is nothing grieves me more, than the differences amongst God's people. O hasten that time, when we shall either go to heaven, or never quarrel any more!

Would to God I could speak to all of you in this comfortable language; but my master tells me, I must "not give that which is holy to dogs, I must not cast pearls before swine;" therefore, though I have been speaking comfortably, yet what I have been saying, especially in this latter part of the discourse, belongs to children; it is children's bread, it belongs to God's people. If any of you are graceless, christless, unconverted creatures, I charge you not to touch it, I fence it in the name of God; here is a flaming sword turning every way to keep you from this bread of life, till ye are turned to Jesus Christ. And therefore, as I suppose many of you are unconverted, and graceless, go home, and away to your closets, and down with your stubborn hearts before God; if ye have not done it before, let this

be the night: Or, do not stay till ye go home; begin now, while standing here; pray to God, and let the language of thy heart be, Lord convert me! Lord make me a little child, Lord Jesus let me not be banished from thy kingdom! My dear friends, there is a great deal more implied in the words, than is expressed: when Christ says, "Ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," it is as much as to say, "ye shall certainly go to hell, ye shall certainly be damned, and dwell in the blackness of darkness for ever, ye shall go where the worm dies not, and where the fire is not quenched." The Lord God impress it upon your souls! May an arrow (as one lately wrote me in a letter) dipped in the blood of Christ, reach every unconverted sinner's heart! May God fulfil the text to every one of your souls! It is he alone that can do it. If ye confess your sins, and leave them, and lay hold on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God shall be given you; if you will go and say, turn me, O my God! thou knowest not, O man, what the return of God may be to thee. Did I think that preaching would be to the purpose, did I think that arguments would induce you to come, I would continue my discourse till midnight. And however some of you may hate me without a cause, would to God every one in this congregation was as much concerned for himself, as at present (blessed be God) I feel myself concerned for him. O that my head were waters, O that mine eyes were a fountain of tears, that I might weep over an unconverted, graceless, wicked, and adulterous generation. Precious souls, for God's sake think what will become of you when ye die, if you die without being converted; if ye go hence without the wedding garment, God will strike you speechless, and ye shall be banished from his presence for ever and ever. I know ye cannot dwell with everlasting burnings; behold then I shew you a way of escape; Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth, the Lord Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.

It is his Spirit must convert you, come to Christ, and ye shall have it; and may God for Christ's sake give it to you all, and convert you, that we may all meet, never to part again, in his heavenly kingdom; even so Lord Jesus, Amen and Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

What think ye of Christ?
Matthew xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

WHEN it pleased the eternal Son of God to tabernacle among us, and preach the glad tidings of salvation to a fallen world, different opinions were entertained by different parties concerning him. As to his person, some said he was *Moses*; others that he was *Elias*, *Jeremias*, or one of the ancient prophets; few acknowledged him to be what he really was, God blessed for evermore. And as to his doctrine; though the common people, being free from prejudice, were persuaded of the heavenly tendency of his going about to do good, and for the generality, heard him gladly, and said he was a good man; yet the envious, worldly-minded, self-righteous governors and teachers of the *Jewish* church, being grieved at his success on the one hand, and unable (having never been taught of God) to understand the purity of his doctrine, on the other; notwithstanding our Lord spake as never man spake, and did such miracles which no man could possibly do, unless God

was with him; yet they not only were so infatuated, as to say, that he deceived the people, but also were so blasphemous as to affirm, that he was in league with the devil himself, and cast out devils by *Beelzebub* the prince of devils. Nay, our Lord's own brethren and kinsmen, according to the flesh, were so blinded by prejudice and unbelief, that on a certain day, when he went out to teach the multitudes in the fields, they sent to take hold on him, urging this as a reason for their conduct, "That he was besides himself."

Thus was the King and the Lord of glory judged by man's judgment, when manifest in flesh: far be it from any of his ministers to expect better treatment. No, if we come in the spirit and power of our Master, in this, as in every other part of his sufferings, we must follow his steps. The like reproaches which were cast on him, will be thrown on us also. Those that received our Lord and his doctrine, will receive and hear us for his name's sake. The poor, blessed be God, as our present meeting abundantly testifies, receive the gospel, and the common people hear us gladly; whilst those who are sitting in *Moses*' chair, and love to wear long robes, being ignorant of the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and having never felt the power of God upon their hearts, will be continually crying out against us, as madmen, deceivers of the people, and as acting under the influence of evil spirits.

But he is unworthy the name of a minister of the gospel of peace, who is unwilling, not only to have his name cast out as evil, but also to die for the truths of the Lord Jesus. It is the character of *hirelings* and *false prophets*, who care not for the sheep, to have all men speak well of them. "Blessed are you, (says our Lord to his first apostles, and in them to all succeeding ministers) when men speak all manner of evil against you falsely for my

name's sake." And indeed it is impossible but such offences must come: for men will always judge of others, according to the principles from which they act themselves. And if they care not to yield obedience to the doctrines which we deliver, they must necessarily, in self-defence, speak against the preachers, lest they should be asked that question, which the Pharisees of old feared to have retorted on them, if they confessed that *John* was a prophet, "Why then did you not believe on him?" In all such cases, we have nothing to do but to search our own hearts, and if we can assure our consciences, before God, that we act with a single eye to his glory, we are chearfully to go on in our work, and not in the least to regard what men or devils can say against, or do unto us.

But to return. You have heard what various thoughts there were concerning Jesus Christ, whilst here on earth: nor is he otherwise treated, even now he is exalted to sit down at the right hand of his Father in heaven. A stranger to Christianity, was he to hear, that we all profess to hold one Lord, would naturally infer, that we all thought and spoke one and the same thing about him. But alas! to our shame be it mentioned, though Christ be not divided in himself, yet professors are sadly divided in their thoughts about him; and that not only as to the circumstances of his religion, but also of those essential truths which must necessarily be believed and received by us, if ever we hope to be heirs of eternal salvation.

Some, and I fear a multitude which no man can easily number, there are amongst us, who call themselves Christians, and yet seldom or never seriously think of Jesus Christ at all. They can think of their shops and their farms, their plays, their balls, their assemblies, and horse-races (entertainments which directly tend to exclude religion out of the world); but as for Christ, the author and finisher of faith, the Lord who has bought

poor sinners with his precious blood, and who is the only thing worth thinking of, alas! he is not in all, or at most in very few of their thoughts. But believe me, O ye earthly, sensual, carnally-minded professors, however little you may think of Christ now, or however industriously you may strive to keep him out of your thoughts, by pursuing the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, yet there is a time coming, when you will wish you had thought of Christ more, and of your profits and pleasures less. For the gay, the polite, the rich also must die as well as others, and leave their pomps and vanities, and all their wealth behind them. And O! what thoughts will you entertain concerning Jesus Christ, in that hour?

But I must not pursue these reflections: they would carry me too far from the main design of this discourse, which is to shew, what those who are truly desirous to know how to worship God in spirit and in truth, ought to think concerning Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent to be the end of the law for righteousness to all them that shall believe.

I trust, *my brethren*, you are more noble than to think me too strict or scrupulous, in thus attempting to regulate your thoughts about Jesus Christ: for by our thoughts, as well as our words and actions, are we to be judged at the great day. And in vain do we hope to believe in, or worship Christ aright, unless our principles, on which our faith and practice are founded, are agreeable to the form of sound words delivered to us in the scriptures of truth.

Besides, many deceivers are gone abroad into the world. Mere heathen morality, and not Jesus Christ, is preached in most of our churches. And how should people think rightly of Christ, of whom they have scarcely heard? Bear with me a little then, whilst, to inform your consciences, I ask

you a few questions concerning Jesus Christ: for there is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but his.

First, What think you about the person of Christ? “Whose Son is he?” This is the question our Lord put to the Pharisees in the words following the text; and never was it more necessary to repeat this question than in these last days. For numbers that are called after the name of Christ, and I fear, many that pretend to preach him, are so far advanced in the blasphemous chair, as openly to deny his being really, truly, and properly God. But no one that ever was partaker of his Spirit, will speak thus lightly of him. No; if they are asked, as *Peter* and his brethren were, “But whom say ye that I am?” they will reply without hesitation, “Thou art Christ the Son of the ever-living God.” For the confession of our Lord’s divinity, is the rock upon which he builds his church. Was it possible to take this away, the gates of hell would quickly prevail against it. My brethren, if Jesus Christ be not very God of very God, I would never preach the gospel of Christ again. For it would not be gospel; it would be only a system of moral ethics: *Seneca*, *Cicero*, or any of the *Gentile* philosophers, would be as good a Saviour as Jesus of *Nazareth*. It is the divinity of our Lord that gives a sanction to his death, and makes him such a high-priest as became us, one who by the infinite merits of his suffering could make a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction and oblation to infinitely offended justice. And whatsoever minister of the church of *England*, makes use of her forms, and eats of her bread, and yet holds not this doctrine (as I fear too many such are crept in amongst us) such a one belongs only to the synagogue of Satan. He is not a child or minister of God: no; he is a wolf in sheep’s cloathing; he is a child and minister of that wicked one the devil.

Many will think these hard sayings: But I think it no breach of charity to affirm, that an *Arian* or *Socinian* cannot be a Christian. The one would make us believe Jesus Christ is only a *created* God, which is a self-contradiction: and the other would have us look on him only as a good man; and instead of owning his death to be an atonement for the sins of the world, would persuade us, that Christ died only to seal the truth of his doctrine with his blood. But if Jesus Christ be no more than a mere man, if he be not truly God, he was the vilest sinner that ever appeared in the world. For he accepted of divine adoration from the man who had been born blind, as we read *John* ix. 38. "And he said, Lord I believe, and worshipped him." Besides, if Christ be not properly God, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins: for no created being, though of the highest order, could possibly merit any thing at God's hands: it was our Lord's divinity, that alone qualified him to take away the sins of the world; and therefore we hear St. *John* pronouncing so positively, that "the Word (Jesus Christ) was not only with God, but was God." For the like reason, St. *Paul* says, "that he was in the form of God: That in him dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily." Nay, Jesus Christ assumed the title which God gave to himself, when he sent *Moses* to deliver his people *Israel*. "Before *Abraham* was, I am." And again, "I and my father are one." Which last words, though our modern infidels would evade and wrest, as they do other scriptures, to their own damnation, yet it is evident that the *Jews* understood our Lord, when he spake thus, as making himself equal with God; otherwise, why did they stone him as a blasphemer? And now, why should it be thought a breach of charity, to affirm, that those who deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, in the strictest sense of the word, cannot be Christians? For they are greater infidels than the devils themselves, who confessed that they knew who he

was, “even the holy one of God.” They not only believe, but, which is more than the unbelievers of this generation do, they tremble. And was it possible for arch-hereticks, to be released from their chains of darkness, under which (unless they altered their principles before they died) they are now reserved to the judgment of the great day, I am persuaded they would inform us, how hell had convinced them of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and that they would advise their followers to abhor their principles, lest they should come into the same place, and thereby increase each others torments.

But, *Secondly*, What think you of the manhood or incarnation of Jesus Christ? For Christ was not only God, but he was God and man in one person. Thus runs the text and context, “When the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? They say unto him, The Son of *David*. How then, says our divine master, does *David* in spirit call him Lord?” From which passage it is evident, that we do not think rightly of the person of Jesus Christ, unless we believe him to be perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

For it is on this account that he is called Christ, or the *anointed one*, who through his own voluntary offer was set apart by the father, and strengthened and qualified by the anointing or communication of the Holy Ghost, to be a mediator between Him and offending man.

The reason why the Son of God took upon him our nature, was, the fall of our first parents. I hope there is no one present so atheistical, as to think, that man made himself: no, it was God that made us, and not we ourselves. And I would willingly think, that no one is so blasphemous as to suppose, that if God did make us, he made us such creatures as we now find ourselves to be. For this would be giving God’s word the lie, which tells us,

that “in the image of God (not in the image which we now bear on our souls) made he man.” As God made man, so God made him perfect. He placed him in the garden of *Eden*, and condescended to enter into a covenant with him, promising him eternal life, upon condition of unsinning obedience; and threatening eternal death, if he broke his law, and did eat the forbidden fruit.

Man did eat; and herein acting as our representative, thereby involved both himself and us in that curse, which God, the righteous judge, had said should be the consequence of his disobedience. But here begins that mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh. For (sing, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth!) the eternal Father, foreseeing how Satan would bruise the heel of man, had in his eternal counsel provided a means whereby he might bruise that accursed Serpent’s head. Man is permitted to fall, and become subject to death; but Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of light, very God of very God, offers to die to make an atonement for his transgression, and to fulfil all righteousness in his stead. And because it was impossible for him to do this as he was God, and yet since man had offended, it was necessary it should be done in the person of man; rather than we should perish, this everlasting God, this Prince of Peace, this Antient of Days, in the fulness of time, had a body prepared for him by the Holy Ghost, and became an infant. In this body he performed a compleat obedience to the law of God; whereby he, in our stead, fulfilled the covenant of works, and at last became subject to death, even death upon the cross; that as God he might satisfy, as man he might obey and suffer; and being God and man in one person, might once more procure a union between God and our souls.

And now, What think you of this love of Christ? Do not you think it was wondrous great? Especially when you consider, that we were Christ's bitter enemies, and that he would have been infinitely happy in himself, notwithstanding we had perished for ever. Whatever you may think of it, I know the blessed angels, who are not so much concerned in this mystery of godliness as we, think most highly of it. They do, they will desire to look into, and admire it, through all eternity. Why, why O ye sinners, will you not think of this love of Christ? Surely it must melt down the most hardened heart. Whilst I am speaking, the thought of this infinite and condescending love fires and warms my soul. I could dwell on it for ever. But it is expedient for you, that I should ask you another question concerning Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, What think you about being justified by Christ? I believe I can answer for some of you: for many, I fear, think to be justified or looked upon as righteous in God's sight, without Jesus Christ. But such will find themselves dreadfully mistaken: for out of Christ, "God is a consuming fire." Others satisfy themselves, with believing that Christ was God and man, and that he came into the world to save sinners in general; whereas, their chief concern ought to be, how they may be assured that Jesus Christ came into the world to save them in particular. "The life that I now live in the flesh, (says the Apostle) is by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Observe, *for me*: it is this immediate application of Jesus Christ to our own hearts, that renders his merits effectual to our eternal salvation. An unapplied Christ will do us no service at all. Others there are who go still farther: for they think that Jesus Christ is God-man; that he is to be applied to their hearts; and that they can be justified in God's sight, only in or through him: but then they make him only in part a saviour:

They are for doing what they can themselves, and then Jesus Christ is to make up the deficiencies of their righteousness. This is the sum and substance of our modern divinity. And was it possible for me to know the thoughts of most that hear me this day, I believe they would tell me, this was the scheme they had laid, and perhaps depended on for some years, for their eternal salvation. Is it not then high time, my brethren, for you to entertain quite different thoughts concerning justification by Jesus Christ? For if you think thus, you are in the case of those unhappy *Jews*, who went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit to, and consequently missed of that righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. What think you then, if I tell you, that you are to be justified freely through faith in Jesus Christ, without any regard to any work or fitness foreseen in us at all? For salvation is the free gift of God. I know no fitness in man, but a fitness to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone for ever. Our righteousnesses, in God's sight, are but as filthy rags: he cannot away with them. Our holiness, if we have any, is not the cause, but the effect of our justification in God's sight. "We love God, because he first loved us." We must not come to God as the proud Pharisee did, bringing in as it were a reckoning of our services; we must come in the temper and language of the poor Publican, smiting upon our breasts, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" for Jesus Christ justifies us whilst we are ungodly. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The poor in spirit only, they who are willing to go out of themselves, and rely wholly on the righteousness of another, are so blessed as to be members of his kingdom. The righteousness, the whole righteousness of Jesus Christ, is to be imputed to us, instead of our own: "For we are not under the law, but under grace: and to as many as walk after this rule, peace be on them:" for

they, and they only are the true *Israel* of God. In the great work of man's redemption, boasting is entirely excluded: which could not be, if only one of our works was to be joined with the merits of Christ. Our salvation is all of God, from the beginning to the end: it is not of works, lest any man should boast: man has no hand in it: it is Christ who is to be made to us of God the Father, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal redemption. His active as well as his passive obedience, is to be applied to poor sinners. He has fulfilled all righteousness in our stead, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. All we have to do, is to lay hold on this righteousness by faith: and the very moment we do apprehend it by a lively faith, that very moment we may be assured, that the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all sin: "For the promise is to us and to our children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call." If we and our whole houses believe, we shall be saved as well as the Jaylor and his house: for the righteousness of Jesus Christ is an everlasting, as well as a perfect righteousness. It is as effectual to all who believe in him now, as formerly; and so it will be, till time shall be no more. Search the scriptures, as the *Bereans* did, and see whether these things are not so. Search St. *Paul*'s epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, and there you will find this doctrine so plainly taught you, that, unless you have eyes and see not, he that runs may read. Search the *Eleventh Article* of our Church: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings."

This doctrine of our free justification by faith in Christ Jesus, however censured and evil spoken of by our present Masters of *Israel*, was highly esteemed by our wise fore-fathers: for in the subsequent words of the forementioned article, it is called a most *wholesome doctrine*, and very full

of comfort: and so it is to all that are weary and heavy laden, and are truly willing to find rest in Jesus Christ.

This is gospel, this is glad tidings of great joy to all that feel themselves poor, lost, undone, damned sinners. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters of life, and drink freely; come and buy without money and without price.” Behold a fountain opened in your Saviour’s side, for sin and for all uncleanness. “Look unto him whom you have pierced:” look unto him by faith, and verily you shall be saved, though you came here only to ridicule and blaspheme, and never thought of God or of Christ before.

Not that you must think God will save you because, or on account of your faith; for faith is a work, and then you would be justified for your works: but when I tell you, we are to be justified by faith, I mean that faith is the instrument whereby the sinner applies or brings home the redemption of Jesus Christ to his heart. And to whomsoever God gives such a faith, (for it is the free gift of God) he may lift up his head with boldness, he need not fear; he is a spiritual son of our spiritual *David*; he is passed from death to life, he shall never come into condemnation. This is the gospel which we preach. If any man or angel preach any other gospel, than this of our being freely justified through faith in Christ Jesus, we have the authority of the greatest Apostle, to pronounce him accursed.

And now, my brethren, what think you of this foolishness of preaching? To you that have tasted the good word of life, who have been enlightened to see the riches of God’s free grace in Christ Jesus, I am persuaded it is precious, and has distilled like the dew into your souls. And O that all were like-minded! But I am afraid, numbers are ready to go away contradicting and blaspheming. Tell me, are there not many of you saying within yourselves, “This is a licentious doctrine; this preacher is opening a door for

encouragement in sin." But this does not surprize me at all, it is a stale, antiquated objection, as old as the doctrine of justification itself; and (which by the way is not much to the credit of those who urge it now) it was made by an infidel. St. *Paul*, in his epistle to the *Romans*, after he had, in the first five chapters, demonstrably proved the doctrine of justification by faith alone; in the sixth, brings in an unbeliever saying, "Shall we continue in sin then, that grace may abound?" But as he rejected such an inference with a "God forbid!" so do I: for the faith which we preach, is not a dead speculative faith, an assenting to things credible, as credible, as it is commonly defined: it is not a faith of the head only, but a faith of the heart. It is a living principle wrought in the soul, by the Spirit of the ever-living God, convincing the sinner of his lost, undone condition by nature; enabling him to apply and lay hold on the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, freely offered him in the gospel, and continually exciting him, out of a principle of love and gratitude, to shew forth that faith, by abounding in every good word and work. This is the sum and substance of the doctrine that has been delivered. And if this be a licentious doctrine, judge ye. No, my brethren, this is not destroying, but teaching you how to do good works, from a proper principle. For to use the words of our Church in another of her Articles, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of the Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; rather, for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." So that they who bid you do, and then live, are just as wise as those who would persuade you to build a beautiful magnificent house, without laying a foundation.

It is true, the doctrine of our free justification by faith in Christ Jesus, like other gospel truths, may and will be abused by men of corrupt minds, reprobates concerning the faith; but they who receive the truth of God in the love of it, will always be shewing their faith by their works. For this reason, St. *Paul*, after he had told the *Ephesians*, "By grace they were saved through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast," immediately adds, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And in his epistle to *Titus*, having given him directions to tell the people they were justified by grace, directly subjoins, chapter iii. verse 8. "I will that you affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Agreeable to this, we are told in our Twelfth Article, "That albeit good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ; and do spring necessarily out of a true and lively faith, insomuch, that a lively faith may be as evidently known by them, as a tree discerned by the fruit."

What would I give, that this Article was duly understood and preached by all that have subscribed to it! The ark of the Lord would not then be driven into the wilderness, nor would so many persons dissent from the Church of *England*. For I am fully persuaded, that it is not so much on account of rites and ceremonies, as our not preaching the truth as it is in Jesus, that so many have been obliged to go and seek for food elsewhere. Did not we fall from our established doctrines, few, comparatively speaking, would fall from the Established Church. Where Christ is preached, though it be in a church or on a common, dissenters of all denominations have, and do most freely come. But if our clergy will preach only the law, and not shew the way of

salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, the charge of schism at the day of judgment, I fear, will chiefly lye at their door. The true sheep of Christ know the voice of Christ's true shepherds, and strangers they will not hear.

Observe, my dear brethren, the words of the Article, "Good works are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification." How then can they precede, or be any way the cause of it? Our persons must be justified, before our performances can be accepted. God had respect to *Abel* before he had respect to his offering: and therefore the righteousness of Jesus Christ must be freely imputed to, and apprehended by us through faith, before we can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God: for out of Christ, as I hinted before, God is a consuming fire: and whatsoever is not of faith in Christ, is sin.

That people mistake the doctrine of free justification, I believe, is partly owing to their not rightly considering the different persons to whom St. *Paul* and St. *James* wrote in their epistles; as also the different kind of justification each of them writes about. The former asserts in line upon line, argument upon argument, "That we are justified by faith alone:" The latter put this question, "Was not *Abraham* justified by works?" From whence many, not considering the different views of these holy men, and the different persons they wrote to, have blended and joined faith and works, in order to justify us in the sight of God. But this is a capital mistake; for St. *Paul* was writing to the *Jewish* proselytes, who sought righteousness by the works, not of the ceremonial only, but of the moral law. In contradistinction to that, he tells them, they were to look for justification in God's sight, only by the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ apprehended by faith. St. *James* had a different set of people to deal with; such who abused the doctrines of free justification, and thought they should be saved (as numbers among us do now) upon their barely professing to believe on Jesus Christ. These the

holy Apostle endeavours wisely to convince, that such a faith was only a dead and false faith; and therefore, it behoved all who would be blessed with faithful *Abraham*, to shew forth their faith by their works, as he did: "For was not *Abraham* justified by works?" Did he not prove that his faith was a true justifying faith, by its being productive of good works? From whence it is plain, that St. *James* is talking of a declarative justification before men; shew me, demonstrate, evidence to me, that thou hast a true faith, by thy works: Whereas, St. *Paul* is talking only of our being justified in the sight of God; and thus he proves, that *Abraham*, as we also are to be, was justified before ever the moral or ceremonial law was given to the *Jews*: for it is written, "*Abraham* believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Take the substance of what has been said on this head, in the few following words. Every man that is saved, is justified three ways: *First*, *meritoriously*, by the death of Jesus Christ: "It is the blood of Jesus Christ alone that cleanses us from all sin." *Secondly*, *instrumentally*, by faith: faith is the means or instrument whereby the merits of Jesus Christ are applied to the sinner's heart: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." *Thirdly*, we are justified *declaratively*; namely, by good works: good works declare and prove to the world, that our faith is a true saving faith. "Was not *Abraham* justified by works?" And again, "Shew me thy faith by thy works."

It may not be improper to illustrate this doctrine by an example or two. I suppose no one will pretend to say, that there was any fitness for salvation in *Zaccheus* the publican, when he came to see Jesus out of no better principle, than that whereby perhaps thousands are led to hear me preach; I mean, curiosity: but Jesus Christ prevented and called him by his free grace,

and sweetly, but irresistibly inclined him to obey that call; as, I pray God, he may influence all you that come only to see who the preacher is. *Zaccheus* received our Lord joyfully into his house, and at the same time by faith received him into his heart: *Zaccheus* was then freely justified in the sight of God. But behold the immediate fruits of that justification! He stands forth in the midst, and as before he had believed in his heart, he now makes confession with his mouth to salvation: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give unto the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold." And thus it will be with thee, O believer, as soon as ever God's dear Son is revealed in thee by a living faith; thou wilt have no rest in thy spirit, till out of love and gratitude for what God has done for thy soul, thou shewest forth thy faith by thy works.

Again, I suppose every body will grant there was no fitness for salvation in the persecutor *Saul*; no more than there is in those persecuting zealots of these last days, who are already breathing out threatenings, and, if in their power, would breathe out slaughter also, against the disciples of the Lord.

Now our Lord, we know, freely prevented him by his grace, (and O that he would thus effectually call the persecutors of this generation) and by a light from heaven struck him to the ground. At the same time, by his Spirit, he pricked him to the heart, convinced him of sin, and caused him to cry out, "Who art thou, Lord?" Christ replies, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Faith then was instantaneously given to him, and behold, immediately *Saul* cries out, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" And so will every poor soul that believes on the Lord Jesus with his whole heart. He will be always asking, Lord, what shall I do for thee? Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Not to justify himself, but only to evidence the

sincerity of his love and thankfulness to his all-merciful High-priest, for plucking him as a firebrand out of the fire.

Perhaps many self-righteous persons amongst you, may flatter yourselves, that you are not so wicked as either *Zaccheus* or *Saul* was, and consequently there is a greater fitness for salvation in you than in them. But if you think thus, indeed you think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think: for by nature we are all alike, all equally fallen short of the glory of God, all equally dead in trespasses and sins, and there needs the same almighty power to be exerted in converting any one of the most sober, good-natured, moral persons here present, as there was in converting the publican *Zaccheus*, or that notorious persecutor *Saul*. And was it possible for you to ascend into the highest heaven, and to enquire of the spirits of just men made perfect, I am persuaded they would tell you this doctrine is from God. But we have a more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to give heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. My brethren, the word is nigh you; search the scriptures; beg of God to make you willing to be saved in this day of his power: for it is not flesh and blood, but the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that alone can reveal these things unto you.

Fourthly and *Lastly*, What think you of Jesus Christ being formed within you? For whom Christ justifies, them he also sanctifies. Although he finds, yet he does not leave us unholy. A true Christian may not so properly be said to live, as Jesus Christ to live in him. For they only that are led by the Spirit of Christ, are the true sons of God.

As I observed before, so I tell you again, the faith which we preach is not a dead, but a lively active faith wrought in the soul, working a thorough change, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the whole man: and unless Christ be thus in you, notwithstanding you may be orthodox as to the

foregoing principles, notwithstanding you may have good desires, and attend constantly on the means of grace; yet, in St. *Paul*'s opinion, you are out of a state of salvation. "Know you not, (says that Apostle to the *Corinthians*, a church famous for its gifts above any church under heaven) that Christ is in you, (by his Spirit) unless you are reprobates?"

For Christ came not only to save us from the guilt, but from the power of our sins: till he has done this, however he may be a Saviour to others, we can have no assurance or well-grounded hope, that he has saved us: for it is by receiving his blessed Spirit into our hearts, and feeling him witnessing with our spirits, that we are the sons of God, that we can be certified of our being sealed to the day of redemption.

This is a great mystery; but I speak of Christ and the new-birth. Marvel not at my asking you, what you think about Christ being formed within you? For either God must change his nature, or we ours. For as in *Adam* we all have spiritually died, so all that are effectually saved by Christ, must in Christ be spiritually made alive. His only end in dying and rising again, and interceding for us now in heaven, is to redeem us from the misery of our fallen nature, and, by the operation of his blessed Spirit, to make us meet to be partakers of the heavenly inheritance with the saints in light. None but those that thus are changed by his grace here, shall appear with him in glory hereafter.

Examine yourselves, therefore, my brethren, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves; and think it not sufficient to say in your creed, I believe in Jesus Christ: many say so, who do not believe, who are reprobates, and yet in a state of death. You take God's name in vain, when you call him Father, and your prayers are turned into sin, unless you believe in Christ, so

as to have your life hid with him in God, and to receive life and nourishment from him, as branches do from the vine.

I know, indeed, the men of this generation deny there is any such thing as feeling Christ within them; but alas! to what a dreadful condition would such reduce us, even to the state of the abandoned heathen, who, St. *Paul* tells us, "were past feeling." The Apostle prays, that the *Ephesians* may abound in all knowledge and spiritual understanding, or as it might be rendered, spiritual sensation. And in the office for the visitation of the sick, the minister prays, that the Lord may make the sick person know and feel, that there is no other name under heaven given unto men, in whom and through whom they may receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus. For there is a spiritual, as well as a corporeal feeling; and though this is not communicated to us in a sensible manner, as outward objects affect our senses, yet it is as real as any sensible or visible sensation, and may be as truly felt and discerned by the soul, as any impression from without can be felt by the body. All who are born again of God, know that I lie not.

What think you, Sirs, did *Naaman* feel, when he was cured of his leprosy? Did the woman feel virtue coming out of Jesus Christ, when she touched the hem of his garment, and was cured of her bloody issue? So surely mayst thou feel, O believer, when Jesus Christ dwelleth in thy heart. I pray God to make you all know and feel this, ere you depart hence.

O my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you. I trust I feel something of that hidden, but powerful presence of Christ, whilst I am preaching to you. Indeed it is sweet, it is exceedingly comfortable. All the harm I wish you, who without cause are my enemies, is, that you felt the like. Believe me, though it would be hell to my soul, to return to a natural state again, yet

I would willingly change states with you for a little while, that you might know what it is to have Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith. Do not turn your backs; do not let the devil hurry you away: be not afraid of convictions; do not think worse of the doctrine, because preached without the church walls. Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, preached on a mount, in a ship, and a field; and I am persuaded, many have felt his gracious presence here. Indeed we speak what we know. Do not reject the kingdom of God against yourselves: be so wise as to receive our witness. I cannot, I will not let you go; stay a little, let us reason together. However lightly you may esteem your souls, I know our Lord has set an unspeakable value on them. He thought them worthy of his most precious blood. I beseech you, therefore, O sinners, be ye reconciled to God. I hope you do not fear being accepted in the beloved. Behold, he calleth you; behold, he prevents and follows you with his mercy, and hath sent forth his servants into the highways and hedges, to compel you to come in. Remember then, that at such an hour of such a day, in such a year, in this place, you were all told what you ought to think concerning Jesus Christ. If you now perish, it will not be for lack of knowledge: I am free from the blood of you all. You cannot say I have been preaching damnation to you; you cannot say I have, like legal preachers, been requiring you to make brick without straw. I have not bidden you to make yourselves saints, and then come to God; but I have offered you salvation on as cheap terms as you can desire. I have offered you Christ's whole wisdom, Christ's whole righteousness, Christ's whole sanctification and eternal redemption, if you will but believe on him. If you say, you cannot believe, you say right; for faith, as well as every other blessing, is the gift of God: but then wait upon God, and who knows but he may have mercy on thee? Why do we not entertain more loving thoughts of

Christ? Or do you think he will have mercy on others, and not on you? But are you not sinners? And did not Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners? If you say you are the chief of sinners; I answer, that will be no hindrance to your salvation, indeed it will not, if you lay hold on him by faith. Read the Evangelists, and see how kindly he behaved to his disciples who fled from and denied him: "Go tell my brethren," says he. He did not say, Go tell those traitors; but, "Go tell my brethren, and *Peter*:" as though he had said, Go tell my brethren in general, and poor *Peter* in particular, "that I am risen;" O comfort his poor drooping heart, tell him I am reconciled to him; bid him weep no more so bitterly: for though with oaths and curses he thrice denied me, yet I have died for his sins, I am risen again for his justification: I freely forgive him all. Thus slow to anger, and of great kindness, was our all-merciful High-priest. And do you think he has changed his nature, and forgets poor sinners, now he is exalted to the right-hand of God? No, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and sitteth there only to make intercession for us. Come then, ye harlots, Come ye publicans, come ye most abandoned of sinners, come and believe on Jesus Christ. Though the whole world despise you and cast you out, yet he will not disdain to take you up. O amazing, O infinitely condescending love! even you, he will not be ashamed to call his brethren. How will you escape if you neglect such a glorious offer of salvation? What would the damned spirits, now in the prison of hell, give, if Christ was so freely offered to their souls? And why are not we lifting up our eyes in torments? Does any one out of this great multitude dare say, he does not deserve damnation? If not, why are we left, and others taken away by death? What is this but an instance of God's free grace, and a sign of his good will towards us? Let God's goodness lead us to repentance! O let there be joy in heaven over

some of you repenting! Though we are in a field, I am persuaded the blessed angels are hovering now around us, and do long, “as the hart panteth after the water-brooks,” to sing an anthem at your conversion. Blessed be God, I hope their joy will be fulfilled. An awful silence appears amongst us. I have good hope that the words which the Lord has enabled me to speak in your ears this day, have not altogether fallen to the ground. Your tears and deep attention, are an evidence, that the Lord God is amongst us of a truth. Come, ye Pharisees, come and see, in spite of your satanical rage and fury, the Lord Jesus is getting himself the victory. And brethren, I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, if one soul of you, by the blessing of God, be brought to think savingly of Jesus Christ this day, I care not if my enemies were permitted to carry me to prison, and put my feet fast in the stocks, as soon as I have delivered this sermon. Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God is, that you may be saved. For this cause I follow my Master without the camp. I care not how much of his sacred reproach I bear, so that some of you be converted from the errors of your ways. I rejoice, yea and I will rejoice. Ye men, ye devils, do your worst: the Lord who sent, will support me. And when Christ, who is our life, and whom I have now been preaching, shall appear, I also, together with his despised little ones, shall appear with him in glory. And then, what will you think of Christ? I know what you will think of him. You will then think him to be the fairest among ten thousand: You will then think and feel him to be a just and sin-avenging judge. Be ye then persuaded to kiss him lest he be angry, and so you be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord. Behold, I come to you as the angel did to *Lot*. Flee, flee, for your lives; haste, linger no longer in your spiritual *Sodom*, for otherwise you will be eternally destroyed. Numbers, no doubt, there are amongst you, that may regard me

no more than *Lot*'s sons-in-law regarded him. I am persuaded I seem to some of you as one that mocketh: but I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not; as sure as fire and brimstone was rained from the Lord out of heaven, to destroy *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, so surely, at the great day, shall the vials of God's wrath be poured on you, if you do not think seriously of, and act agreeable to the gospel of the Lord's Christ. Behold, I have told you before; and I pray God, all you that forget him may seriously think of what has been said, before he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON XXV.

The wise and foolish Virgins.

Matthew xxv. 13.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh.

THE apostle *Paul*, in his epistle to the *Hebrews*, informs us, "That it is appointed for all men once to die; after that is the judgment." And I think, if any consideration be sufficient to awaken a sleeping drowsy world, it must be this, That there will be a day wherein these heavens shall be wrapt up like a scroll, this element melt with fervent heat, the earth and all things therein be burnt up, and every soul, of every nation and language, summoned to appear before the dreadful tribunal of the righteous Judge of quick and dead, to receive rewards and punishments, according to the deeds done in their bodies. The great apostle just mentioned, when brought before *Felix*, could think of no better means to convert that sinful man, than to reason of temperance, righteousness, and more especially of a judgment to come. The first might in some measure affect, but, I am persuaded, it was

the last consideration, a judgment to come, that made him to tremble: and so bad as the world is now grown, yet there are few have their consciences so far seared, as to deny that there will be a reckoning hereafter. The promiscuous dispensations of providence in this life, wherein we see good men afflicted, destitute, tormented, and the wicked permitted triumphantly to ride over their heads, has been always looked upon as an indisputable argument, by the generality of men, that there will be a day in which God will judge the world in righteousness, and administer equity unto his people. Some indeed are so bold as to deny it, while they are engaged in the pursuit of the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. But follow them to their death-beds, ask them, when their souls are ready to launch into eternity, what they then think of a judgment to come? and they will tell you, they dare not give their consciences the lie any longer. They feel a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation in their hearts. Since then these things are so, does it not highly concern each of us, my brethren, before we come on a bed of sickness, seriously to examine how the account stands between God and our souls, and how it will fare with us in that day? As for the openly prophane, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the adulterer, and such-like, there is no doubt of what will become of them; without repentance they shall never enter into the kingdom of God and his Christ: no; their damnation slumbereth not; a burning fiery *Tophet*, kindled by the fury of God's eternal wrath, is prepared for their reception, wherein they must suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. Nor is there the least doubt of the state of true believers. For though they are despised and rejected of natural men, yet being born again of God, they are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. They have the earnest of the promised inheritance in their hearts, and are assured, that a new and living way is made open for them,

into the holy of holies, by the blood of Jesus Christ, into which an abundant entrance shall be administered to them at the great day of account. The only question is, what will become of the *almost Christian*, one that is content to go, as he thinks, in a middle way to heaven, without being prophane on the one hand, or, as he falsly imagines, righteous over-much on the other? Many there are in every congregation, and consequently some here present, of this stamp. And what is worst of all, it is more easy to convince the most notorious publicans and sinners of their being out of a state of salvation, than any of these. Notwithstanding, if Jesus Christ may be our judge, they shall as certainly be rejected and disowned by him at the last day, as though they lived in open defiance of all his laws. For what says our Lord in the parable of which the words of the text are a conclusion, and which I intend to make the subject of my present discourse. "Then," at the day of judgment, which he had been discoursing of in the foregoing, and prosecutes in this chapter, "shall the kingdom of heaven, (the state of professors in the gospel church) be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." In which words, is a manifest allusion to a custom prevailing in our Lord's time among the *Jews* at marriage solemnities, which were generally at night, and at which it was customary for the persons of the bride-chamber to go out in procession, with many lights, to meet the bridegroom. By the *bridegroom*, you are here to understand Jesus Christ. The church, i.e. true believers, are his *spouse*; he is united to them by one spirit, even in this life; but the solemnizing of these sacred nuptials, is reserved till the day of judgment, when he shall come to take them home to himself, and present them before men and angels, as his purchase, to his Father, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. By the ten virgins we are to understand, the professors of Christianity in general.

All are called virgins, because all are called to be saints. Whosoever names the name of Christ, is obliged by that very profession to depart from all iniquity. But the pure and chaste in heart, are the only persons that will be so blessed as to see God. As Christ was born of a virgin, so he can dwell in none but virgin souls, made pure and holy by the cohabitation of his holy Spirit. What says the apostle? "All are not *Israelites* that are of *Israel*," all are not Christians that are called after the name of Christ: No, says our Lord, in the 2d verse, "Five of those virgins were wise," true believers, "and five were foolish," formal hypocrites. But why are five said to be wise, and the other five foolish? Hear what our Lord says in the following verses; "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." They that were foolish took their lamps of an outward profession. They would go to church, say over several manuals of prayers, come perhaps into a field to hear a sermon, give at a collection, and receive the sacrament constantly, nay, oftner than once a month. But then here lay the mistake; they had no oil in their lamps, no principle of grace, no living faith in their hearts, without which, though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burnt, it would profit us nothing. In short, they were exact, nay, perhaps superstitious bigots as to the form, but all the while they were strangers to, and, in effect, denied the power of godliness in their hearts. They would go to church, but at the same time, think it no harm to go to a ball or an assembly, notwithstanding they promised at their baptism, to renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. They were so exceedingly fearful of being righteous over-much, that they would even persecute those that were truly devout, if they attempted to go a step farther than themselves. In one word, they never effectually felt the power of the world to come. They

thought they might be Christians without so much inward feeling, and therefore, notwithstanding their high pretensions, had only a name to live.

And now, Sirs, let me pause a while, and in the name of God, whom I endeavour to serve in the gospel of his dear Son, give me leave to ask one question. Whilst I have been drawing, though in miniature, the character of these foolish virgins, have not many of your consciences made the application, and with a small, still, though articulate voice, said, Thou man, thou woman, art one of those foolish virgins, for thy sentiments and practice agree thereto? Stifle not, but rather encourage these convictions; and who knows, but that the Lord who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him faithfully, may so work upon you even by this foolishness of preaching, as to make you wise virgins before you return home?

What they were you shall know immediately: “But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.” Observe, the wise, the true believers, had their lamps as well as the foolish virgins; for Christianity does not require us to cast off all outward forms; we may use forms, and yet not be formal: for instance, it is possible to worship God in a set form of prayer, and yet worship him in spirit and in truth. And therefore, brethren, let us not judge one another. The wise virgins had their lamps; herein did not lie the difference between them and the foolish, that one worshipped God with a form, and the other did not: No: as the Pharisee and Publican went up to the temple to pray, so these wise and foolish virgins might go to the same place of worship, and sit under the same ministry; but then the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps; they kept up the form, but did not rest in it; their words in prayer were the language of their hearts, and they were no strangers to inward feelings; they were not afraid of searching doctrines, nor affronted when ministers told them they deserved to be damned; they

were not self-righteous, but were willing that Jesus Christ should have all the glory of their salvation; they were convinced that the merits of Jesus Christ were to be apprehended only by faith; but yet were they as careful to maintain good works, as though they were to be justified by them: in short, their obedience flowed from love and gratitude, and was chearful, constant, uniform, universal, like that obedience which the holy angels pay our Father in heaven.

Here then let me exhort you to pause again; and if any of you can faithfully apply these characters to your hearts, give God the glory, and take the comfort to your own souls; you are not false but true believers. Jesus Christ has been made of God to you wisdom, even that wisdom, whereby you shall be made wise unto salvation. God sees a difference between you and foolish virgins, if natural men will not. You need not be uneasy, though one chance and fate in this life may happen to you both. I say, one chance and fate; for, verse 5. “while the bridegroom tarried,” in the space of time which passed between our Lord’s ascension and his coming again to judgment, “they all slumbered and slept.” The wise as well as foolish died, for dust we are, and to dust we must return. It is no reflection at all upon the divine goodness, that believers, as well as hypocrites, must pass through the valley of the shadow of death; for Christ has taken away the sting of death, so that we need fear no evil. It is to them a passage to everlasting life: death is only terrible to those who have no hope, because they live without faith in the world. Whosoever there are amongst you, that have received the first-fruits of the spirit, I am persuaded you are ready to cry out, we would not live here always, we long to be dissolved, that we may be with Jesus Christ; and though worms must destroy our bodies as well as others, yet we are

content, being assured that our Redeemer liveth, that he will stand at the latter days upon the earth, and that in our flesh we shall see God.

But it is not so with hypocrites and unbelievers beyond the grave; for what says our Lord? “And at midnight:” observe, at midnight, when all was hushed and quiet, and no one dreaming of any such thing, “a cry was made;” the voice of the arch-angel and the trump of God was heard sounding this general alarm; to things in heaven, to things in earth, and to things in the waters under the earth, “Behold!” mark how this awful summons is ushered in with the word *behold*, to engage our attention? “Behold the bridegroom cometh!” even Jesus Christ, the desire of nations, the bridegroom of his spouse the church: Because he tarried for a while to exercise the faith of saints, and give sinners space to repent, scoffers were apt to cry out, “Where is the promise of his coming? But the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as these men account slackness.” For behold, he that was to come, now cometh, and will not tarry any longer: he cometh to be glorified in his saints, and to take vengeance on them that know not God, and have not obeyed his gospel: he cometh not as a poor despised *Galilean*; not to be laid in a stinking manger; not to be despised and rejected of men; not to be blindfolded, spit upon, and buffeted; not to be nailed to an accursed tree; he cometh not as the Son of man, but as he really was, the eternal Son of the eternal God: He cometh riding on the wings of the wind, in the glory of the Father and his holy angels, and to be had in everlasting reverence of all that shall be round about him. “Go ye forth to meet him;” arise, ye dead, ye foolish, as well as wise virgin, arise and come to judgment. Multitudes, no doubt, that hear this awakening cry, would rejoice if the rocks might fall on, and the hills cover them from the presence of the Lamb: what would they give, if as they lived as beasts, they might

now die like the beasts that perish? How would they rejoice, if those same excuses which they made on this side eternity for not attending on holy ordinances, would serve to keep them from appearing before the heavenly bridegroom! But as *Adam*, notwithstanding his fig-leaves, and the trees of the garden, could not hide himself from God, when arrested with an "*Adam*, where art thou?" So now the decree is gone forth, and the trump of God has given its last sound; all tongues, people, nations, and languages, both wise and foolish virgins, must come into his presence, and bow beneath his footstool; even *Pontius Pilate*, *Annas* and *Caiaphas*; even the proud persecuting high-priests and Pharisees of this generation, must appear before him: for says our Lord, "then, (when the cry was made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh!) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the graves were opened, the sea gave up its dead, and all those virgins, both wise and foolish, arose and trimmed their lamps," or endeavoured to put themselves in a proper posture to meet the bridegroom.

But how may we imagine the foolish virgins were surprized, when, notwithstanding their high thoughts and proud imaginations of their security, they now find themselves wholly naked, and void of that inward holiness and purity of heart, without which no man living at that day shall comfortably meet the Lord! I doubt not, but many of these foolish virgins, whilst in this world, were cloathed in purple and fine linnen, fared sumptuously every day, and disdained to set the wise virgins, some of whom might be as poor as *Lazarus*, even with the dogs of their flock. These were looked upon by them as enthusiasts and madmen, as persons that were righteous over-much, and who intended to turn the world upside down: but now death hath opened their eyes, and convinced them, to their eternal sorrow, that he is not a true Christian, who is only one outwardly. Now they

find (though, alas! too late) they, and not the wise virgins, had been beside themselves. Now their proud hearts are made to stoop, their lofty looks are brought low; and as *Dives* entreated that *Lazarus* might dip the tip of his finger in water, and be sent to cool his tongue, so these foolish virgins, these formal hypocrites, are obliged to turn beggars to those whom they once despised: “Give us of your oil;” O! impart to us a little of that grace and holy spirit, for the insisting on which we fools accounted your lives madness; for alas! “our lamps are gone out;” we had only the form of godliness; we were whited sepulchres; we were heart-hypocrites; we contented ourselves with desiring to be good; and though confident of salvation whilst we lived, yet our hope is entirely gone, now God has taken away our souls: Give us therefore, O! give us, though we once despised you, give us of your oil, for our lamps of an outward profession, and transient convictions, are quite gone out. “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith the Lord.” My brethren in Christ, hear what the foolish say to the wise virgins, and learn in patience to possess your souls. If you are true followers of the lowly Jesus, I am persuaded you have your names cast out, and all manner of evil spoken falsly against you, for his name’s sake; for no one ever did or will live godly in Christ Jesus, without suffering persecution; nay, I doubt not but your chief foes are those of your own houshold: tell me, do not your carnal relations and friends vex your tender souls day by day, in bidding you spare yourselves, and take heed lest you go too far: And as you passed along to come and hear the word of God, have you not heard many a Pharisee cry out, Here comes another troop of his followers! Brethren, be not surprized, Christ’s servants were always the world’s fools; you know it hated him before it hated you. Rejoice and be exceeding glad. Yet a little while, and behold the bridegroom cometh, and

then shall you hear these formal scoffing Pharisees saying unto you, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.” When you are reviled, revile not again: when you suffer, threaten not; commit your souls into the hands of him that judgeth righteously: for behold the day cometh, when the children of God shall speak for themselves.

The wise virgins, in the parable, no doubt endured the same cruel mockings as you may do; but as the lamb before the shearers is dumb, so in this life opened they not their mouths; but now we find they can give their enemies an answer: “Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.” These words are not to be understood as though they were spoken in an insulting manner; for true charity teaches us to use the worst of sinners, and our most bitter enemies, with the meekness and gentleness of Christ: Though *Dives* was in hell, yet *Abraham* does not say, Thou villain, but only, “Son, remember:” and I am persuaded, had it been in the power of these wise virgins, they would have dealt with the foolish virgins, as, God knows, I would willingly deal with my most inveterate enemies, not only give them of their oil, but also exalt them to the right hand of God. It was not then for want of love, but the fear of wanting a sufficiency for themselves, that made them return this answer, “Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you:” for they that have most grace, have none to spare; none but self-righteous, foolish virgins think they are good enough, or have already attained. Those who are truly wise are always most distrustful of themselves, pressing forwards to the things that are before, and think it well if after they have done all, they can make their calling and election sure. “Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.” These words indeed seem to be spoken in a triumphant, but certainly they were uttered in

the most compassionate manner; “go ye to them that sell, and buy for yourselves;” unhappy virgins! you accounted our lives folly; whilst with you in the body, how often have you condemned us for our zeal in running to hear the word of God, and looked upon us as enthusiasts, for talking and affirming, that we must be led by the spirit, and walk by the spirit, and feel the spirit of God witnessing with our spirits, that we are his children? But now you would be glad to be partakers of this privilege, but it is not ours to give. You contented yourselves with seeking, when you should have been striving to enter in at the strait gate. And now go to them that sell, if you can, and buy for yourselves.

And what say you to this, ye foolish formal professors? For I doubt not but curiosity and novelty hath brought many such, even to this despised place, to hear a sermon. Can you hear this reply to the foolish virgins, and yet not tremble? Why, yet a little while, and thus it shall be done to you. Rejoice and bolster yourselves up in your duties and forms; endeavour to cover your nakedness with the fig-leaves of an outward profession and a legal righteousness, and despise the true servants of Christ as much as you please, yet know, that all your hopes will fail you when God brings you into judgment. For not he who commendeth himself is justified, but he whom the Lord commendeth.

But to return; we do not hear of any reply the foolish virgins make: No, their consciences condemned them; like the person without a wedding-garment, they are struck dumb, and are now filled with anxious thoughts how they shall buy oil, that they may lift up their heads before the bridegroom. “But whilst they went to buy,” verse 10, whilst they were thinking what they should do, the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, the king, the husband of his spouse the church, cometh, attended with thousands and

twenty times ten thousands of saints and angels, publicly to count up his jewels; “and they that were ready,” the wise virgins who had oil in their lamps, and were sealed by his spirit to the day of redemption, these having on the wedding garment of an imputed righteousness, and a new nature, “went in with him to the marriage.”

But who can express the transports that these wise virgins felt, when they were thus admitted, in holy triumph, into the presence and full enjoyment of him, whom their souls hungred and thirsted after! No doubt they had tasted of his love, and by faith had often fed on him in their hearts, when sitting down to commemorate his last supper here on earth; but how full may we think their hearts and tongues were of his praises, when they see themselves seated together to eat bread in his heavenly kingdom. And what was best of all, “the door was shut,” and shut them in, to enjoy the ever blessed God, and the company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, without interruption for evermore. I say, without interruption; for in this life, their eyes often gushed out with water, because men kept not God’s law; and they could never come to appear before the Lord, or to hear his word, but Satan and his emissaries would come also to disturb them; but now “the door is shut,” now there is a perfect communion of saints, which they in vain longed for in this lower world; now tares no longer grow up with the wheat; not one single hypocrite or unbeliever can screen himself amongst them. “Now the wicked cease from troubling, and now their weary souls enjoy an everlasting rest.”

Once more, O believers, let me exhort you in patience to possess your souls. God, if he has freely justified you by faith in his son, and given you his spirit, has sealed you to be his; and has secured you, as surely as he secured *Noah*, when he locked him in the ark. But though heirs of God, and

joint heirs with Christ, and neither men nor devils can pluck you out of your heavenly Father's hands, yet you must be tossed about with manifold temptations; however, lift up your heads, the day of your perfect, compleat redemption draweth nigh. Behold the bridegroom cometh to take you to himself, the door shall be shut, and you shall be for ever with the Lord.

But I even tremble to tell you, O nominal Christians, that the door will be shut, I mean the door of mercy, never, never to be opened to give you admission, though you should continue knocking to all eternity. For thus speaks our Lord, verse 11. "Afterwards," after those that were ready went in, and the door was shut; after they had, to their sorrow, found that no oil was to be bought, no grace to be procured, "came also the other virgins;" and as *Esau*, after *Jacob* had gotten the blessing, cried with an exceeding bitter cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my father;" so they came saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Observe the importunity of these foolish virgins, implied in the words, "Lord, Lord." Whilst in the body, I suppose they only read, did not pray over their prayers. If you now tell them, they should "pray without ceasing," they should pray from their hearts, and feel the want of what they prayed for; they would answer, they could not tell what you mean by inward feelings; that God did not require us to be always on our knees, but if a man did justly, and loved mercy, and did as the church forms required him, it was as much as the Lord required at his hands.

I fear, sirs, too many among us are of this mind: nay, I fear there are many so polite, so void of the love of God, as to think it too great a piece of self-denial, to rise early to offer up a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. If any such, by the good providence of God, are brought hither this morning, I beseech you to consider your ways, and remember, if you are not awakened out of your spiritual lethargy,

and live a life of prayer here, you shall but in vain cry out with the foolish virgins, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," hereafter. Observe farther, the impudence, as well as importunity of these other virgins; "Lord, Lord," say they, as though they were intimately acquainted with the holy Jesus. Like numbers among us, who because they go to church, repeat their creeds, and receive the blessed sacrament, think they have a right to call Jesus their Saviour, and dare call God their Father, when they put up the Lord's prayer. But Jesus is not your Saviour. The devil, not God, is your father, unless your hearts are purified by faith, and you are born again from above. It is not merely being baptized by water, but being born again of the Holy Ghost that must qualify you for salvation; and it will do you no service at the great day, to say unto Christ, Lord, my name is in the register of such and such a parish. I am persuaded, the foolish virgins could say this and more; but what answer did Jesus make? He answered and said, verse 12. "Verily, I say unto you:" He puts the word Verily, to assure them he was in earnest. "I say unto you," I who am truth itself, I whom you have owned in words, but in works denied, "verily, I say unto you, I know you not." These words must not be understood literally; for whatever Arians and Socinians may say to the contrary, yet we affirm, that Jesus Christ is God, God blessed for ever, and therefore knoweth all things. He saw *Nathaniel*, when under the fig-tree: he sees, and is now looking down from heaven, his dwelling-place, upon us, to see how we behave in these fields. Brethren, I know nothing of the thoughts and intents of your hearts, in coming hither; but Jesus Christ knows who come like new-born babes, desirous to be fed with the sincere milk of the word; and he knows who came to hear what the babler says, and to run away with part of a broken sentence, that they may have whereof to accuse him. This expression then, "I know you not," must not be

understood literally; no, it implies a knowledge of approbation, as though Christ had said, “You call me, Lord, Lord, but you have not done the things that I have said; you desire me to open the door, but how can you come in hither not having on a wedding garment? Alas, you are naked! Where is my outward righteousness imputed to you? Where is my inherent righteousness wrought in you? Where is my divine image stamped upon your souls? How dare you call me Lord, Lord, when you have not received the Holy Ghost, whereby I seal all that are truly mine? Verily, I know you not; depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

And now, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear what manner of persons these were, whom Jesus Christ dismissed with this answer. Remember, I entreat you, remember they are not sent away for being fornicators, swearers, sabbath-breakers, or prodigals. No, in all probability, as I observed before, they were, touching the outward observances of the moral law, blameless; they were constant as to the form of religion; and if they did no good, yet no one could say, they did any one any harm. The only thing for which they were condemned, and eternally banished from the presence of the Lord, (for so much is implied in “I know you not”) was this, they had no oil in their lamps, no principle of a true living faith and holiness in their hearts. And if persons may go to church, receive the sacrament, lead honest moral lives, and yet be sent to hell at the last day, as they certainly will be if they advance no farther, Where wilt thou, O drunkard? Where wilt thou, O swearer? Where wilt thou, O sabbath-breaker? Where wilt thou that deniest divine revelation, and even the form of godliness? Where will you, and such-like sinners appear? I know very well. You must appear before the dreadful tribunal of Jesus Christ: however you may, like *Felix*, put off the prosecution of your convictions, yet you, as well as others, must arise after

death, and appear in judgment; you will then find, to your eternal sorrow, what I just hinted at in the beginning of this discourse, that your damnation slumbereth not: sin has blinded your hearts, and hardened your foreheads now, but yet a little while, and our Lord will ease him of his adversaries. Methinks, by faith, I see the heavens opened, and the holy Jesus coming, with his face brighter than ten thousand suns, darting fury upon you from his eyes! Methinks I see you rising from your graves, trembling and astonished, and crying out, who can abide this day of his coming!

And now what inference shall I draw from what has been delivered? Our Lord, in the words of the text, has drawn one for me; "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

"*Watch*;" that is, be upon your guard, and keep your graces in continual exercise: For as when we are commanded to watch unto prayer, it signifies that we should continue instant in that duty; so when we are required to watch in general, it means that we should put on the whole armour of God, and live every day as though it was our last. And O! that the Lord may now enable me to lift up my voice like a trumpet! For had I a thousand tongues, or could I speak so loud that the whole world might hear me, I could not sound a more useful alarm than that which is contained in the text. Watch therefore, my brethren, I beseech you by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, watch; be upon your guard; awake, ye that sleep in the dust: for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. Perhaps to-day, perhaps this midnight, the cry may be made: "for in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the trump is to sound." However, supposing the final day of judgment may yet be a great way off, the day of death is certainly near at hand: for what is our life? "It is but a vapour," but a span long, soon passeth it away, and we are gone. Blessed be God, we are all here well; but

who, out of this great multitude, dares say, I shall go home to my house in safety? Who knows, but whilst I am speaking, God may commission his ministring spirits immediately to call some of you away by a sudden stroke, to give an account with what attention you have heard this sermon. You know, my brethren, some such instances we have lately had. And what angel or spirit hath assured us, that some of you shall not be the next? "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man will come:" And it is chiefly for this reason, that God has hidden the day of our deaths from us. For since I know not but I may die to-morrow, why, O my soul, may each of us say, wilt thou not watch to-day? Since I know not but I may die the next moment, why wilt thou not prepare for dying this? Many such reflections as these, my brethren, croud in upon my mind. At present, blessed be the Lord, who delights to magnify his strength in a poor worm's weakness, I am at a stand, not so much about what I shall say, as what I shall leave unsaid. My belly, like *Elihu*'s, is, as it were, full of new wines; "out of the abundance of my heart my mouth speaketh." The seeing so great a multitude standing before me; a sense of the infinite majesty of that God in whose name I preach, and before whom I as well as you must appear, to give an account; and the uncertainty there is whether I shall live another day, to speak to you any more: these considerations, especially the presence of God, which I now feel upon my soul, furnishes me with so much matter, that I scarce know where to begin, or where to end my application. However, for method-sake, by the divine assistance, I will branch it into three particulars.

And *first*, I would remind you that are notoriously ungodly, of what our Lord says in the text: For though I have said that your damnation slumbereth not, whilst you continue in an impenitent state; yet that was only

to set you upon your watch, to convince you of your danger, and excite you to cry out, “What shall we do to be saved?” I appeal to all that hear me, whether I have said, the door of mercy should be shut against you, if you believe on Jesus Christ: No, if you are the chief of sinners; if you are murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers; if you are emphatically the dung and offscouring of all things; yet if you believe on Jesus Christ, and cry unto him with the same faith as the expiring thief, “Lord, remember me, now thou art in thy kingdom;” I will pawn my eternal salvation upon it, if he does not shortly translate you to his heavenly paradise. Wonder not at my speaking with so much assurance: For I know “it is a faithful and true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save (all truly affected and believing) sinners:” Nay, so great is his love, that I am persuaded, was it necessary, he would come again into the world, and die a second time for them on the cross. But, blessed be God, when our Lord bowed down his head, and gave up the ghost, our redemption was finished. It is not our sins, but our want of a lively faith in his blood, that will prove our condemnation: if you draw near to him by faith, though ye are the worst of sinners, yet he will not say unto you, “Verily I know you not.” No, a door of mercy shall be opened to you. Look then, look then, by an eye of faith, to that God-man whom ye have pierced. Behold him bleeding, panting, dying upon the cross, with arms stretched out ready to embrace you all. Hark! how he groans! See how all nature is in an agony! The rocks rend, the graves open; the sun withdraws its light, ashamed as it were to see the God of nature suffer; and all this to usher in man’s great redemption. Nay, the Holy Jesus, in the very agonies and pangs of death, prays for his very murderers; “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” If then you have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to

an open shame, yet do not despair, only believe, and even this shall be forgiven. You have read, at least you have heard, no doubt, how three thousand were converted at St. *Peter*'s preaching one single sermon, after our Lord's ascension into heaven; and many of the crucifiers of the Lord of glory undoubtedly were amongst them; and why should you despair? For "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The Holy Ghost shall be sent down on you, as well as on them, if you do but believe; for Christ ascended up on high to receive this gift even for the vilest of men. Come then, all ye that are weary and heavy laden with the sense of your sins, lay hold on Christ by faith, and he will give you rest; for salvation is the free gift of God to all them that believe. And though you may think this too good news to be true, yet I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, this is the gospel, this is the glad tidings which we are commissioned to preach to every creature. Be not faithless then, but believing. Let not the devil lead you captive at his will any longer; for all the wages he gives his servants is death, death often in this life, death everlasting in the next: But the free gift of God, is eternal life to all that believe in Jesus Christ. Pharisees are and will be offended at my coming here, and offering you salvation on such cheap terms; but the more they bid me hold my peace, the more will I cry out and proclaim to convicted sinners, that Jesus, *David*'s Son according to the flesh, but *David*'s Lord as he was God, will have mercy upon all that by a living faith truly turn to him. If this is to be vile, I pray God, I may be more vile. If they will not let me preach Christ crucified, and offer salvation to poor sinners in a church, I will preach him in the lanes, streets, highways and hedges; and nothing pleases me better, than to think I am now in one of the devils strongest holds. Surely, the Lord has not sent me and all you hither for nothing; no, blessed be God, the fields are white ready unto

harvest, and many souls I hope will be gathered into his heavenly garner. It is true, it is the midnight of the church, especially the poor church of *England*; but God has lately sent forth his servants to cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh:" I beseech you, O sinners, hearken unto the voice! Let me espouse you by faith to my dear master; and henceforward "watch and pray," that you may be ready to go forth to meet him.

Secondly, I would apply myself to those amongst you, that are not openly profane, but by depending on a formal round of duties, deceive your own souls, and are only foolish virgins. But I must speak to your conviction, rather than your comfort. My dear brethren, do not deceive your own souls. You have heard how far the foolish virgins went, and yet were answered with "Verily I know you not:" The reason is, because none but such who have a living faith in Jesus Christ, and are truly born again, can possibly enter into the kingdom of heaven. You may, perhaps, live honest and outwardly moral lives, but if you depend on that morality, or join your works with your faith, in order to justify you before God, you have no lot or share in Christ's redemption: For what is this but to deny the Lord that has bought you? What is this but making yourselves your own Saviours? taking the crown from Jesus Christ, and putting it on your own heads? The crime of the devil, some have supposed, consisted in this, that he would not bow to Jesus Christ, when the Father commanded all the angels to worship him; and what do you less? You will not own and submit to his righteousness; and though you pretend to worship him with your lips, yet your hearts are far from him; besides you, in effect, deny the operations of his blessed spirit, you mistake common for effectual grace; you hope to be saved, because you have good desires, and a few short convictions; and what is this, but to give God, his word, and all his saints, the lie? A *Jew*, a *Turk*, has

equally as good grounds whereon to build his hopes of salvation. Need I not then to cry out to you, ye foolish virgins, watch. Beg of God to convince you of your self-righteousness, and the secret unbelief of your hearts; or otherwise, whensoever the cry shall be made, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," you will find yourselves utterly unprepared to go forth to meet him: You may cry "Lord, Lord;" but the answer will be, "Verily, I know you not."

Thirdly, I would speak a word or two by way of exhortation to those who are wise virgins, and are assured that they have on a wedding-garment. That there are many such amongst you, who by grace have renounced your own righteousness, and know that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is imputed to you, I make no doubt. God has his secret ones in the worst of times; and I am persuaded he has not let so loud a gospel cry to be made amongst his people, as of late has been heard, for nothing. No, I am confident, the Holy Ghost has been given to many at the preaching of faith, and has powerfully fallen upon many, whilst they have been hearing the word. You are now then no longer foolish, but wise virgins; notwithstanding, I beseech you also to suffer the word of exhortation; for wise virgins are too apt, whilst the bridegroom tarries, to slumber and sleep. Watch therefore, my dear brethren, watch and pray, at this time especially; for perhaps a time of suffering is at hand. The ark of the Lord begins already to be driven into the wilderness. Be ye therefore upon your watch, and still persevere in following your Lord, even without the camp, bearing his reproach: the cry that has been lately made, has awakened the devil and his servants; they begin to rage horribly; and well they may; for I hope their kingdom is in danger. Watch therefore, for if we are not always upon our guard, a time of trial may overtake us unawares; and, instead of owning, like *Peter* we may

be tempted to deny our master. Set death and eternity often before you. Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, and consider how little a while it will be, ere he comes to judgment; and then our reproach shall be wiped away; the accusers of us and our brethren shall be cast down, and we all shall be lodged in heaven for ever, with our dear Lord Jesus.

Lastly; what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch: high and low, rich and poor, young and old, one with another, I beseech you, by the mercies of Jesus, to be upon your guard: fly, fly to Jesus Christ, that heavenly bridegroom: behold he desires to take you to himself, miserable, poor, blind and naked as you are; he is willing to cloath you with his everlasting righteousness, and make you partakers of that glory, which he enjoyed with the Father before the world began. Do not turn a deaf ear to me; do not reject the message on account of the meanness of the messenger. I am a child; but the Lord has chosen me, that the glory might be all his own. Had he sent to invite you by a learned rabbi, you might have been tempted to think the man had done something; but now God has sent a child, that the excellency of the power may be seen not to be of man, but of God. Let the learned Pharisees then despise my youth: I care not how vile I appear in the sight of such men; I glory in it. And I am persuaded, if any of you should be married to Christ by this preaching, you will have no reason to repent, when you come to heaven, that God sent a child to cry, “Behold the bridegroom cometh!” O! my brethren, the thought of being instrumental in bringing one of you to glory, fills me with fresh zeal. Once more I entreat you, “Watch, watch and pray:” for the Lord Jesus will receive all that call upon him faithfully. Let that cry, “Behold the bridegroom cometh,” be continually sounding in your ears; and begin now to live, as though you were assured, this night you were to “go forth to meet him.” I could say more, but the

other business and duties of the day oblige me to stop. May the Lord give you all an hearing ear, and obedient heart, and so closely unite you to himself by one spirit, that when he shall come in terrible majesty, to judge mankind, you may be found having on a wedding garment, and ready to go in with him to the marriage.

Grant this, O Lord, for thy dear Son's sake!

SERMON XXVI.

The Eternity of Hell-Torments.

To the INHABITANTS of Savannah in Georgia.

My dear Friends,

THOUGH the following sermon has been preached elsewhere, yet as the occasion of my preaching it among you was particular, as you seemed to give an uncommon attention to it in public, and afterwards expressed your satisfaction in it to me, when I came to visit you in your own houses, I thought proper to offer it to you.

And here I cannot but bless God for the general dislike of heretical principles that I have found among you; as also for your zeal and approbation of my conduct, when the glory of God and your welfare, have obliged me to resent and publicly declare against the antichristian tenets of some lately under my charge.

I need only exhort you to beg of God to give you a true faith, and to add to your faith virtue, that you may adorn the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

Your constant daily attendance upon public worship, the gladness wherewith you have received me into your houses, the mildness wherewith you have submitted to my reproofs, more especially the great (though unmerited) concern you shewed at my departure, induce me to hope this will be your endeavour.

How long God of his good providence will keep me from you, I know not. However, you may assure yourselves I will return according to my promise, as soon as I have received imposition of hands, and compleated the other business that called me hither.

In the mean while, accept of this, as a pledge of the undissembled love of

Your affectionate though unworthy pastor,

London,

1738.

George Whitefield.

Matthew xxv. 46.

These shall go away into everlasting punishment.

THE excellency of the gospel dispensation, is greatly evidenced by those sanctions of rewards and punishments, which it offers to the choice of all its hearers, in order to engage them to be obedient to its precepts. For it promises no less than eternal happiness to the good, and denounces no slighter a punishment than everlasting misery against the wicked: On the one hand, “It is a savour of life unto life,” on the other, “A savour of death unto death.” And though one would imagine, the bare mentioning of the former would be sufficient to draw men to their duty, yet ministers in all ages have found it necessary, frequently to remind their people of the latter, and to set before them the terrors of the Lord, as so many powerful dissuasives from sin.

But whence is it that men are so disingenuous? The reason seems to be this: The promise of eternal happiness is so agreeable to the inclinations and wishes of mankind, that all who call themselves Christians, universally and willingly subscribe to the belief of it: but then there is something so shocking in the consideration of eternal torments, and seemingly such an infinite disproportion between an endless duration of pain, and a short life spent in pleasure, that men (some at least of them) can scarcely be brought to confess it as an article of their faith, that an eternity of misery awaits the wicked in a future state.

I shall therefore at this time, beg leave to insist on the proof of this part of one of the Articles of our Creed; and endeavour to make good what our blessed Lord has here threatened in the words of the text, “These (that is, the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

Accordingly, without considering the words as they stand in relation to the context, I shall resolve all I have to say, into this one general proposition, “That the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter, are eternal.”

But before I proceed to make good this, I must inform you that I take it for granted,

All present do stedfastly believe, They have something within them, which we call a soul, and which is capable of surviving the dissolution of the body, and of being miserable or happy to all eternity.

I take it for granted farther, That you believe a divine revelation; that those books, emphatically called the Scriptures, were written by the inspiration of God, and that the things therein contained, are founded upon eternal truth.

I take it for granted, That you believe, that the Son of God came down to die for sinners; and that there is but one Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus.

These things being granted, (and they were necessary to be premised) proceed we now to make good the one general proposition asserted in the text, That the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal. “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” The

First argument I shall advance to prove that the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter, are eternal, is, That the word of God himself assures us, in line upon line, that it will be so.

To quote all the texts that might be produced in proof of this, would be endless. Let it suffice to instance only in a few. In the Old Testament, in the book of *Daniel*, chapter xii. verse 2. we are told, that “some shall awake to everlasting life, and others to everlasting contempt.” In the book of *Isaiah*, it is said, that “the worm of those that have transgressed God’s law, and die impenitently, shall not die, nor their fire be quenched.” And in another place, the holy Prophet, struck, no doubt, with astonishment and horror at the prospect of the continuance of the torments of the damned, breaks out into this moving expostulation, “Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?”

The New Testament is still fuller as to this point, it being a revelation which brought this and such-like particulars to a clear light. The Apostle *Jude* tells us of the profane despisers of dignities in his days, that “for them was reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” And in the book of the *Revelations*, it is written, that “the smoke of the torments of the wicked ascendeth for ever and ever.” And if we believe the witness of men inspired, the witness of the Son of God, who had the Spirit given him, as Mediator, without measure, is still far greater: and in St. *Mark*’s gospel, He repeats

this solemn declaration three several times, “It is better for thee to enter into life maimed;” that is, it is better to forego the gratification of thy lust, or incur the displeasure of a friend, which may be as dear to thee as a hand, or as useful as a foot, “than having two hands and feet, (that is, for indulging the one, or disobeying God to oblige the other) to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

And here again, in the words of the text, “These (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

I know it has been objected by some who have denied the eternity of hell-torments, That the words *everlasting* and *ever and ever*, are often used in the Holy Scriptures, (especially in the Old Testament) when they signify not an endless duration, but a limited term of time.

And this we readily grant: but then we reply, That when the words are used with this limitation, they either manifestly appear to be used so from the context; or are put in opposition to occasional types which God gave his people on some special occasions, as when it is said, “It shall be a perpetual or everlasting statute,” or, “a statute for ever;” that is, a standing type, and not merely transient or occasional, as was the pillar of cloud, the manna, and such-like. Or, lastly, they have a relation to that covenant, God made with his spiritually *Israel*; which, if understood in a spiritual sense, will be everlasting, though the ceremonial dispensation be abolished.

Besides, it ought to be observed, that some of the passages just now referred to, have neither of these words so much as mentioned in them, and cannot possibly be interpreted, so as to denote only a limited term of years.

But let that be as it will, it is evident even to a demonstration, that the words of the text will not admit of such a restrained signification, as appears from their being directly opposed to the words immediately

following, “That the righteous shall go into life eternal.” From which words, all are ready to grant, that the life promised to the righteous will be eternal. And why the punishment threatened to the wicked should not be understood to be eternal likewise, when the very same word in the original, is used to express the duration of each, no shadow of a reason can be given.

But, *Secondly*, There cannot be one argument urged, why God should reward his saints with everlasting happiness, which will not equally prove that he ought to punish sinners with eternal misery.

For, since we know nothing (at least for a certainty) how he will deal with either, but by a Divine Revelation; and since, as was proved by the foregoing argument, he hath as positively threatened eternally to punish the wicked, as to reward the good; it follows, that his truth will be as much impeached and called in question, did he not inflict his punishments, as it would be, if he did not confer his rewards.

To this also it has been objected, That though God is obliged by promise to give his rewards, yet his veracity could not be called in question, supposing he should not execute his threatenings, as he actually did not in the case of *Nineveh*; which God expressly declared by his Prophet *Jonah*, “should be destroyed in forty days:” notwithstanding the sequel of the story informs us, that *Nineveh* was spared.

But in answer to this objection we affirm, that God’s threatenings, as well as promises, are without repentance; and for this reason, because they are both founded on the eternal laws of right reason. Accordingly we always find, that where the conditions were not performed, on the non-performance of which the threatenings were denounced, God always executed the punishment threatened. The driving *Adam* out of *Eden*, the destruction of the old world by a deluge of water, and the overthrow of *Sodom* and

Gomorrah, are, and will be always so many standing monuments of God's executing his threatenings when denounced, though to our weak apprehensions, the punishment may seem far to exceed the crime.

It is true, God did spare *Nineveh*, and that because the inhabitants did actually repent, and therefore performed the conditions upon which it was supposed, by the Prophet's being sent to warn them, the threatened punishment should be withheld.

And so in respect to gospel threatenings. If men will so far consult their own welfare, as to comply with the gospel, God certainly will not punish them, but on the contrary, confer upon them his rewards. But to affirm that he will not punish, and that eternally to, impenitent, obstinate sinners, according as he hath threatened; what is it, in effect, but to make God like a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent?

But the absurdity of such an opinion will appear still more evident from

The *Third* argument I shall offer to prove, that the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, From the nature of the Christian covenant.

And here I must again observe, that it was taken for granted at the beginning of this discourse, that you believe the Son of God came down to save sinners; and that there is but one Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus.

And here I take it for granted farther, (unless you believe the absurd and unwarrantable doctrine of purgatory) that you are fully persuaded, this life is the only time allotted by Almighty God for working out our salvation, and that after a few years are passed over, there will remain no more sacrifice for sin.

And if this be granted (and who dares deny it?) it follows, that if a wicked man dieth in his wickedness, and under the wrath of God, he must continue

in that state to all eternity. For, since there is no possibility of their being delivered out of such a condition, but by and through Christ; and since, at the hour of death, the time of Christ's mediation and intercession for him is irrecoverably gone; the same reason that may be given, why God should punish a sinner that dieth under the guilt of his sins for a single day, will equally hold good, why he should continue to punish him for a year, an age, nay to all eternity.

But I hasten to the *Fourth* and last argument, to prove, That the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, Because the devil's punishment is to be so.

That there is such a being whom we call the devil; that he was once an angel of light, but for his pride and rebellion against God, was cast down from heaven, and is now permitted, with the rest of the spiritual wickednesses, to walk to and fro, seeking whom they may devour; that there is a place of torment reserved for them, or, to use the Apostle's words, "That they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day;" are truths all here present were supposed to be convinced of, at the beginning of this discourse, you believing the Holy Scriptures to be written by the inspiration of God, wherein these truths are delivered.

But then if we allow all this, and think it no injustice in God to punish those once glorious spirits for their rebellion; how can we think it unjust in him, to punish wicked men for their impenitency to all eternity?

You will say, perhaps, that they have sinned against greater light, and therefore deserve a greater punishment. And so we grant that the punishment of the fallen angels may be greater as to degree; than that of wicked men; but then we affirm; it will be equal as to the eternal duration of

it: for in that day, as the lively oracles of God inform us, shall the Son of Man say to them on his left hand, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Where we find that impenitent sinners are to be cast into the same everlasting fire, with the devil and his angels; and that too very justly. For though they may have sinned against greater light, yet Christians sin against greater mercy. Since Christ took not hold of, did not die for, the fallen angels, but for men and for our salvation. So that if God spared not those excellent beings, assure thyself, O obstinate sinner, whoever thou art, he will by no means spare thee.

From what then has been said it plainly appears, that verily the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter, are eternal. And if so, brethren, how ought we to fly to Jesus Christ for refuge; how holy ought we to be in all manner of conversation and godliness, that we may be accounted worthy to escape this wrath to come!

But before I proceed to a practical exhortation, permit me to draw an inference or two from what has been said.

And *First*, If the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, what shall we say to those, who make an open profession in their creed to believe a life everlasting, a life of misery as well as happiness, and yet dare to live in the actual commission of those sins which will unavoidably, without repentance, bring them into that place of torment? Thou believest that the punishments of the impenitently wicked in another life, are eternal: “Thou dost well, the devils also believe and tremble.” But know, O vain man, unless this belief doth influence thy practice, and makes thee bid adieu to thy sins, every time thou repeatest thy creed, thou doest in effect say, I believe I shall be undone for ever.

But, *Secondly*, If the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, then let this serve as a caution to such persons, (and it is to be feared there are some such) who go about to dissuade others from the belief of such an important truth: There being no surer way, in all probability, to encourage and promote infidelity and prophaneness, than the broaching or maintaining so unwarrantable a doctrine. For if the positive threats of God concerning the eternity of hell-torments, are already found insufficient to deter men from sin, what a higher pitch of wickedness may we imagine they will quickly arrive at, when they are taught to entertain any hopes of a future recovery out of them; or, what is still worse, that their souls are hereafter to be annihilated, and become like the beasts that perish? But wo unto such blind leaders of the blind. No wonder if they both fall into the ditch. And let such corrupters of God's word know, that I testify unto every man that heareth me this day, "That if any one shall add unto, or take away from the words that are written in the book of God, God shall take his part out of the book of life, and shall add unto him all the plagues that are in that book."

Thirdly and *Lastly*, If the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, then this may serve as a reproof for those who quarrel with God, and say it is inconsistent with his justice, to punish a person to all eternity, only for enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. But such persons must be told, that it is not their thinking or calling God unjust, will make him so, no more than a condemned prisoner's saying the law or judge is unjust, will render either duly chargeable with such an imputation. But knowest thou, O worm, what blasphemy thou art guilty of, in charging God with injustice? "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Wilt thou presume to arraign the Almighty at the bar of thy shallow

reasoning? and call him unjust, for punishing thee eternally, only because thou wishest it may not be so? But hath God said it, and shall he not do it? He hath said it: and let God be true, though every man be a liar. “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” Assuredly he will. And if sinners will not own his justice in his threatenings here, they will be compelled ere long to own and feel them, when tormented by him hereafter.

But to come to a more practical application of what has been delivered.

You have heard, brethren, the eternity of hell-torments plainly proved, from the express declarations of holy scriptures, and consequences naturally drawn from them. And now there seems to need no great art of rhetoric to persuade any understanding person to avoid and abhor those sins, which without repentance will certainly plunge him into this eternal gulph. The disproportion between the pleasure and the pain (if there be any pleasure in sin) is so infinitely great, that supposing it was only possible, though not certain, that the wicked would be everlastingly punished, no one that has the reason of a man, for the enjoying a little momentary pleasure, would, one might imagine, run the hazard of enduring eternal pain. But since the torments of the damned are not only possible, but certain, (since God himself, who cannot lie, has told us so) for men, notwithstanding, to persist in their disobedience, and then flatter themselves, that God will not make good his threatenings, is a most egregious instance of folly and presumption.

Dives himself supposed, that if one rose from the dead, his brethren would amend their lives; but Christians, it seems, will not repent, though the Son of God died and rose again, and told them what they must expect, if they continue obstinate in evil-doing.

Would we now and then draw off our thoughts from sensible objects, and by faith meditate a while on the miseries of the damned, I doubt not but we should, as it were, hear many an unhappy soul venting his fruitless sorrows, in some such piteous moans as these.

"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" O foolish mortal that I was, thus to bring myself into these never-ceasing tortures, for the transitory enjoyment of a few short-lived pleasures, which scarcely afforded me any satisfaction, even when I most indulged myself in them. Alas! are these the wages, these the effects of sin? Are all the grand deceiver's inviting promises come to this? O damned apostate! First to delude me with pretended promises of happiness, and after several years drudgery in his service, thus to involve me in eternal woe. O that I had never hearkened to his beguiling insinuations! O that I had rejected his very first suggestions with the utmost detestation and abhorrence! O that I had taken up my cross and followed Christ! O that I had never ridiculed serious godliness; and out of a false politeness, condemned the truly pious as too severe, enthusiastic, or superstitious! For I then had been happy indeed, happy beyond expression, happy to all eternity, yonder in those blessed regions where they sit, cloathed with unspeakable glory, and chanting forth their seraphic hallelujahs to the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne for ever. But, alas! these reflections come now too late: these wishes now are vain and fruitless. I have not suffered, and therefore must not reign with them. I have in effect denied the Lord that bought me, and therefore justly am I now denied by him. But must I live for ever tormented in these flames? Must this body of mine, which not long since lay in state, was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, must it

be here eternally confined, and made the mockery of insulting devils? O eternity! that thought fills me with despair: I must be miserable for ever.

Come then, all ye self-deluding, self-deluded sinners, and imagine yourselves for once in the place of that truly wretched man I have been here describing. Think, I beseech you by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, think with yourselves, how racking, how unsupportable the never-dying worm of a self-condemning conscience will hereafter be to you. Think how impossible it will be for you to dwell with everlasting burnings.

Come, all ye Christians of a lukewarm, *Laodicean* spirit, ye *Gallio*'s in religion, who care a little, but not enough for the things of God; O think, think with yourselves, how deplorable it will be to lose the enjoyment of heaven, and run into endless torments, merely because you will be content to be almost, and will not strive to be altogether Christians. Consider, I beseech you consider, how you will rave and curse that fatal stupidity which made you believe any thing less than true faith in Jesus, productive of a life of strict piety, self-denial, and mortification, can keep you from those torments, the eternity of which I have been endeavouring to prove.

But I can no more. These thoughts are too melancholy for me to dwell on, as well as for you to hear; and God knows, as punishing is his strange work, so denouncing his threatenings is mine. But if the bare mentioning the torments of the damned is so shocking, how terrible must the enduring of them be!

And now, are not some of you ready to cry out, "These are hard sayings, who can bear them?"

But let not sincere Christians be in the least terrified at what has been delivered: No, for you is reserved a crown, a kingdom, an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. Christ never said that the righteous, the

believing, the upright, the sincere, but the wicked, merciless, negatively good professors before described, shall go into everlasting punishment. For you, who love him in sincerity, a new and living way is laid open into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus Christ: and an abundant entrance will be administered unto you, at the great day of account, into eternal life. Take heed, therefore, and beware that there be not in any of you a root of bitterness springing up of unbelief: but on the contrary, stedfastly and heartily rely on the many precious promises reached out to you in the gospel, knowing that he who hath promised is faithful, and therefore will perform.

But let no obstinately wicked professors dare to apply any of the divine promises to themselves: “For it is not meet to take the childrens meat and give it unto dogs:” No, to such the terrors of the Lord only belong. And as certainly as Christ will say to his true followers, “Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world;” so he will unalterably pronounce this dreadful sentence against all that die in their sins, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

From which unhappy state, may God of his infinite mercy deliver us all through Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee O Father, and thee O Holy Ghost, three Persons and one eternal God, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, power, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore.

SERMON XXVII.

Blind *Bartimeus*.
Mark x. 52.

And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

WHEN the apostle *Peter* was recommending Jesus of *Nazareth*, in one of his sermons to the *Jews*, he gave him a short, but withal a glorious and exalted character, "That he went about doing good." He went about, he sought occasions of doing good; it was his meat and drink to do the works of him that sent him, whilst the day of his public administration lasted. Justly was he stiled by the prophet, the sun of righteousness. For, as the sun in the natural firmament diffuses his quickening and reviving beams through the universe, so, wherever this sun of righteousness, the blessed Jesus arose, he arose with healing under his wings. He was indeed a prophet like unto *Moses*, and proved that he was the Messiah which was to come into the world, by the miracles which he wrought; though with this material difference, the miracles of *Moses*, agreeable to the Old Testament

dispensation, were miracles of judgment; the miracles of Jesus, who came to bear our sicknesses and heal our infirmities, were miracles of mercy, and were wrought, not only for the cure of people's bodies, but also for the conversion of their precious and immortal souls. Sometimes, one and the same person was the subject of both these mercies. A glorious proof of this, we have in the miraculous cure wrought upon a poor blind beggar, named *Bartimeus*, who is to be the subject of the following discourse, and to whom the words of the text refer. "Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

My design is, *First*, to make some observations on the matter of fact, as recorded by the evangelists. And then,

Secondly, To point out the improvement that may be made thereof. May Jesus so bless this following discourse, that every spiritually blind hearer may receive his sight, and, after the example of *Bartimeus*, "follow Jesus in the way!"

If we would take a view of the whole story, we must go back to the 46th verse of this chapter. "And they (our Lord and his disciples, who, we find by the context, had been conversing together) came to *Jericho*," a place devoted by *Joshua* to the curse of God; and yet, even this place yields converts to Jesus; *Zaccheus* had been called there formerly; and *Bartimeus*, as we shall hear by-and-by, in all probability, was called now. For some good may come even out of *Nazareth*. Christ himself was born there, and his sovereign grace can reach and overcome the worst of people, in the very worst of places. Jesus came to *Jericho*. Let not his ministers, if providence points out their way, shun going to seemingly the most unlikely places to do good, some chosen vessels may be therein. Jesus and his disciples came to

Jericho. They were *itinerants*; and, as I have frequently observed, seldom stayed long in a place; not that this is any argument against the stated settlement of particular pastors over particular parishes. But however, our Lord's practice, in this respect, gives a kind of a sanction to itinerant preaching, when persons are properly called to, and qualified for, such an employ. And I believe we may venture to affirm (though we would by no means prescribe or dictate to the Holy One of *Israel*) that, whenever there shall be a general revival of religion in any country, itinerant preaching will be more in vogue. And it is to be feared, that those who condemn it now, merely on account of the meanness of its appearances, would have joined with the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees, in condemning even the Son of God himself, for such a practice.

"And as he went out of *Jericho* with his disciples, and a great number of people;" ὄχλου ἱκανοῦ a great number of mob, or rabble, as the High-priests of that generation termed them: for these were the constant followers of Jesus of *Nazareth*; it was the poor that received his gospel, the common people heard him gladly, and followed him from place to place. Not that all who followed him, were his true disciples. No, some followed him only for his loaves, others out of curiosity; though some undoubtedly followed to hear, and be edified by the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. Jesus knew this, and was also sensible how displeasing this crowding after him was to some of the rulers of the *Jewish* church, who, upon every occasion, were ready to say, "Have any of the Scribes and Pharisees believed on him?" But, notwithstanding, I do not hear of our blessed Lord's sending them home but once; and that was, after they had been with him three days, and had nothing left to eat, he saw they were as sheep having no shepherd, and therefore had compassion on them, and taught them. A

sufficient warrant this for gospel-ministers to preach to poor souls that follow to hear the word, whatever principle their coming may proceed from. At the same time, they should caution people against thinking themselves Christians, because they follow Christ's ministers. This our Lord frequently did. For there are many that followed Jesus, and now follow his ministers, and hear them gladly; nay, perhaps do many things, as *Herod* did, who, it is to be feared, will never follow them into the kingdom of heaven. Much people followed Jesus out of *Jericho*, but how many of them were offended in him; and afterwards, it may be, cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him." Who would depend on popularity? It is like the morning cloud, or early dew, that passeth away. But what a press, and seemingly continued hurry of business did the blessed Jesus live in! he could not be hid; go where he would, much people followed him. He had scarce time to eat bread. Happy is it for such who are called to act in a public station in the church, and to be more abundant in labours, that their Jesus has trodden in this dangerous path before them. Popularity is a fiery furnace, and no one, but he who kept the three children amidst *Nebuchadnezzar*'s flames, can preserve popular ministers from being hurt by it. But we can do all things through Christ strengthening us. And I have often thought, that there is one consideration sufficient to extinguish, or moderate at least, any excess of joy and self-complacence, which the most popular preacher may feel, when followed even by the greatest multitudes; and that is this, "How many of these hearers will go away, without receiving any saving benefit by my preaching; nay, how many, it may be, will only have their damnation increased by it!" As we find many will say at the great day, "hast thou not taught in our streets;" to whom Jesus shall answer, "Verily, I know you not."

But to proceed, “As our Lord went out of *Jericho* with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind *Bartimeus*, (the son of *Timeus*) sat by the highway-side begging.” It should seem that he was a noted, though by no means what we commonly call, a sturdy beggar; having no other way, as he had lost his sight, to get his bread; his case was still the more pitiable, if he was, as some think the name imports, the blind son of a blind father. It may be, he begged for his father and himself too; and if so, then this may give us light into that passage of *Matthew* xx. 22. where we are told, that “two men spake to Jesus.” It might be father and son, though only one is mentioned here, because he only followed Jesus in the way. Thus that holy, judicious, and practical expositor of holy writ, Mr. *Henry*. But however this be, he is not blamed for begging, neither should we discommend others for so doing, when providence calls to it. It was the unjust steward that said, “To beg I am ashamed.” It is our pride that often makes us unwilling to be beholden; Jesus was not thus minded, he lived, as it were, upon alms; the women that followed him, ministred to him of their substance. *Bartimeus*, not being able to dig, begs for his living; and, in order to make a better trade of it, sat by the highway-side, in all probability, without, or near the gate of the city, where people must necessarily pass in and out. But though he had lost his sight, he had his hearing perfect; and it should comfort us, if we have lost one sense, that we have the use of another, and that we are not deprived of the benefit of all. Happy was it for *Bartimeus* that he could hear, though not see. For in all probability, upon hearing the noise and clamour of the much people that followed after our Lord, his curiosity set him upon enquiring into the cause of it, and some one or another told him, “that Jesus of *Nazareth* was passing by;” Jesus of *Nazareth*, called so, because he was bred there, or out of contempt; *Nazareth* being either a very mean, or very

wicked place, or both, which made guileless *Nathaniel* say, “Can any good come out of *Nazareth*?” And what does *Bartimeus* do when he hears of Jesus? We are told, verse 47; “And when he heard that it was Jesus of *Nazareth*, he began to cry out.” This plainly denotes, that though the eyes of his body were shut, yet the eyes of his mind were, in some degree, opened, so that he saw, perhaps, more than most of the multitude that followed after Jesus; for, as soon as he heard of him, he began to cry out; which he would not have done, had he not heard of him before, and believed also, that he was both able and willing to restore sight to the blind. “He began to cry out.” This implies, that he had a deep sense of his own misery, and the need which he had of a cure; his prayers did not freeze as they went out of his lips; he began to cry out, that Jesus might hear him, notwithstanding the noise of the throng; and he began to cry out, as soon as he heard he was passing by, not knowing whether he might ever enjoy such an opportunity any more. “He began to cry out, Jesus, thou Son of *David*, have mercy upon me.” The people called him Jesus of *Nazareth*. *Bartimeus* stiles him, “Jesus, thou Son of *David*.” Thereby evidencing, that he believed him to be the Messiah who was to come into the world, unto whom the Lord God was to give the throne of his father *David*, and of whose kingdom there was to be no end. “Jesus, thou Son of *David*;” or, as it is in the parallel place of St. *Matthew* xx. 30. “O Lord, thou son of *David*;” of whom it had been long foretold, *Isaiah* xxxv. that when he should come, “the eyes of the blind should be opened.” “Have mercy upon me,” the natural language of a soul brought to lie down at the feet of a sovereign God. Here is no laying claim to a cure by way of merit; no proud, self-righteous, God I thank thee that I am not as other men are: no bringing in a reckoning of performances, nor any doubting of Jesus’s power or willingness to heal him, but out of the

abundance of the heart, his mouth speaketh, and, in the language of the poor, broken-hearted publican, he cries out, “Jesus, thou Son of *David*, have mercy on me.” Jesus, thou friend of sinners, thou Saviour, who, though thou be the true God, wast pleased to become the Son of *David*, and to be made man, that thou mightest seek and save those that were lost, have mercy upon me; let thy bowels yearn towards a poor, miserable, blind beggar!

One would have thought that such a moving petition as this would have melted the whole multitude, that heard his piteous cry, into compassion, and induced some at least to turn suitors in his behalf, or help to carry him to the blessed Jesus. But instead of that, we are told, verse 48, that “many charged him.” The word in the original seems to imply a charge, attended with threatning, and spoken in an angry manner. They charged him “to hold his peace;” and it may be, threatned to beat him if he did not. They looked upon him beneath the notice of Jesus of *Nazareth*, and were ready enough to ask, whether he thought Jesus Christ had nothing else to do but to wait upon him. This was, no doubt, very discouraging to blind *Bartimeus*. For opposition comes closest when it proceeds from those who are esteemed followers of the Lamb. The spouse complains as of something peculiarly afflicting, that her own mother’s children were angry with her. But opposition only serves to whet the edge of true devotion, and therefore *Bartimeus*, instead of being silenced by their charges and threatnings, “cried out the more a great deal, thou Son of *David*, have mercy on me.” Still he breaks out into the same humble language, and, if Jesus, the Son of *David*, will have mercy on him, he cares not much what some of his peevish followers said of, or did unto him. This was not a vain repetition, but a devout reiteration of his request. We may sometimes repeat the same words, and yet not be guilty of that Βαττολογια, or vain speaking, which our Lord

condemns. For our Lord himself prayed in his agony, and said twice the same words; “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Thus *Bartimeus*, “Jesus, thou Son of *David*, have mercy upon me.” And how does the Son of *David* treat him? does he join issue with the multitude, and charge him to hold his peace? or does he go on, thinking him beneath his notice? no; for, says St. *Mark*, verse 49. “And Jesus stood still,” though he was on a journey, and it may be in haste (for it is not losing time to stop now and then on a journey to do a good office by the way) “and commanded him to be called:” why so? to teach us to be condescending and kind even to poor, if real beggars, and tacitly to reprove the blind, misguided zeal of those who had charged him to hold his peace. By this also our Lord prepares the multitude the better to take the more notice of the blind man’s faith, and of his own mercy and power exerted in the healing of him. For there are times and seasons when we are called to perform acts of charity in the most public manner, and that too very consistently with the injunction of our Saviour, “not to let our right hand know what our left hand doth.” For there is a great deal of difference between giving alms, and exercising acts of charity, that are seen of men, and doing them, that they may be seen; the one is always sinful, the other often becomes our duty. Jesus commanded *Bartimeus* to be called, “and they called him.” Who called him? it may be, those who a little before charged him to hold his peace. For it often happens, that our opposers and discouragers, afterwards become our friends. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes his enemies be at peace with him.” And it is to be wished, that all who have charged poor souls, that are crying after Jesus, to hold their peace, and to spare themselves, and not be righteous over-much, would imitate the people here, and encourage those they once persecuted

and maligned. “They call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee.” The words, and manner of speaking them, implies haste, and a kind of solicitude for the blind man’s relief. O! that we might hereby learn to be patient, and long-suffering, towards opposers. For it may be, that many may oppose awakened souls, not out of enmity, but through prejudice and misinformation, through ignorance and unbelief, and a real, though perhaps false, persuasion, that their relations are going in a wrong way. By and by they may be convinced, that Christ is indeed calling them, and then they may become real and open friends to the cause and work of God; if not, it is our duty to behave with meekness towards all, and not to render railing for railing, but contrarywise blessing, knowing that we are thereunto called, that we may inherit a blessing; Jesus did not break out into harsh language against these opposers, neither did *Bartimeus*. “Our Lord stood still, and commanded him to be called; and they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee; and he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.” Had *Bartimeus* not been in earnest when he cried, “Jesus, thou Son of *David*, have mercy upon me,” he might have said, why do you mock me? why bid ye me arise; rise indeed I can, but after I am risen, how can I, being blind, find my way unto him? If he will come to me, it is well; if not, all your calling availeth nothing, it being impossible for me to find my way. Thus thousands now-a-days object to evangelical preachers, saying, Why do you bid us come to, and believe on Jesus Christ, when you tell us it is impossible of ourselves to turn to God, or to do good works; and that no one can come unto him, unless the Father draw him. Is not this like the people’s calling upon *Bartimeus*, to arise and come to Jesus, when he could not possibly see his way before him? true, it is so; and would to God that all who make this objection,

would imitate *Bartimeus*, and put forth the strength they have! What if we do call you to come, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved? does this imply, that you have a power in yourselves to do so? no, in no wise, no more than Jesus saying unto *Lazarus*'s dead and stinking carcase, "Come forth," implied, that *Lazarus* had a power to raise himself from the grave. We call to you, being commanded to preach the gospel to every creature, hoping and praying, that Christ's power may accompany the word, and make it effectual to the quickening and raising of your dead souls. We also call to you to believe, upon the same account as Jesus said unto the lawyer, "do this, and thou shalt live;" that you seeing your utter inability to come, might thereby be convinced of your unbelief, and be led to ask for faith of him, whose gift it is, and who is therefore in scripture emphatically stiled the *Author*, as well as *Finisher*, of our faith. Add to this, that it is your duty to wait at the pool, or to make use of the strength you have, in the earnest and steady performance of all commanded duty. For though you cannot do what is spiritually good, because you want spiritual principles of action, yet ye may do what is morally and materially good, inasmuch as ye are reasonable creatures; and though doing your duty as you can, no ways deserves mercy, or entitles you to it, yet it is the way in which you are required to walk, and the way in which God is usually found. While you are attempting to stretch out your withered arm, peradventure it may be restored; and who knows but Jesus may work faith in you, by his almighty power?

Bartimeus has set before such objectors an example; O that they would once submit to be taught by a poor blind beggar! For he, casting away his garment, rose, and blind as he was, came to Jesus; "casting away his garment." This seems to be a large coat or cloak, that he wore to screen

himself from the rain and cold; undoubtedly, it was the most necessary and valuable vestment he had, and one would have thought, that he should have taken this along with him; but he knew very well, that if he did so, it might hang about his heels, and thereby his reaching Jesus be retarded at least, if not prevented entirely. Valuable therefore as it was to him, he cast it away. The word implies, that he threw it from off his shoulders, with great precipitancy and resolution, knowing that if he got a cure, which he now hoped for, by Christ's calling him, he should never want his garment again. And thus will all do that are in earnest about coming to Jesus here, or seeing and enjoying him in his kingdom eternally hereafter. They will cut off a right-hand, they will pluck out a right-eye, they will leave father and mother, husband and wife, yea, and their own lives also, rather than not be his disciples. The apostle *Paul*, therefore, exhorts Christians, to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset them," or hang about their heels, as the word in the original imports; alluding to the custom of the *Romans*, who wore long garments. Such a one was this, which *Bartimeus* had wrapped round him. But he, to shew that he sincerely desired to recover his sight, casting it away, arose and came to Jesus. And what treatment did Jesus give him? did he say, come not nigh me, thou impudent noisy beggar? No, "he answered and said unto him, What wilt thou, that I should do unto thee?" an odd question this, seemingly. For did not our Lord know what he wanted? yes, he did; but the Lord Jesus dealt with him, as he deals with us. He will make us acknowledge our wants ourselves, that we thereby may confess our dependance upon him, and be made more sensible of the need we stand in, of his divine assistance. The blind man immediately replies, "Lord, (thereby intimating his belief of Christ's divinity) that I might receive my sight." Methinks, I see the poor creature listening to the voice of

our Saviour, and with looks and gestures bespeaking the inward earnestness of his soul, he cries out, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” As though he had said, I believe thou art that Messiah who was to come into the world. I have heard of thy fame, O Jesus! and hearing the long-wished-for glad-tidings of thy coming this way, I cry unto thee, asking not for silver and gold, but what thou, thou alone canst give me, Lord, that I might receive my sight. No sooner does he ask, but he receives. For, verse 52, “Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole; and immediately he received his sight.” With the word there went a power; and he that spake light out of darkness, saying, “Let there be light, and there was light,” commanded light into this poor blind beggar’s eyes, and behold there was light. The miracle was instantaneous; *immediately* he received his sight. And next to a miracle it was, that by breaking into open light all at once, he was not struck blind again: but he that gave the sight, preserved it when given. O! happy *Bartimeus*! thy eyes are now opened, and the very first object thou dost behold, is the ever-loving, altogether-lovely Jesus. Methinks I see thee transported with wonder and admiration, and all the disciples, and the multitude, gazing around thee! And now, having received thy sight, why dost thou not obey the Lord’s command, and go thy way? why dost thou not haste to fetch thy garment, that thou just now in a hurry didst cast away? No, no! with his bodily eyes, I believe he received also a fresh addition of spiritual sight, and though others saw no form or comeliness in the blessed Jesus, that they should desire him; yet he by an eye of faith discovered such transcendent excellencies in his royal person, and felt at the same time such a divine attraction towards his all-bountiful benefactor, that instead of going his way to fetch his garment, “he followed Jesus in the way;” and by his actions, says with faithful, honest-hearted

Ruth, “entreat me not to leave thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people; and thy God, my God.” He followed Jesus in the way; the narrow way, the way of the cross; and I doubt not but long since he has followed him to his crown, and is at this time sitting with him at the right hand of his Father.

And now, my dear hearers, how find you your hearts affected at the relation of this notable miracle which Jesus wrought? are you not ready to break out into the language of the song of *Moses*, and to say, “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, continually doing wonders!” Marvellous are thy works, O Jesus, and that our souls know right well! But we must not stop here, in admiring what the Lord did for *Bartimeus*; this, no doubt, as well as other parts of Scripture, was written for our learning, upon whom the ends of the world are come; consequently, as was proposed in the

Second place, we should see what spiritual improvement can be made of this history, upon which we have already been making some remarks.

A natural man, indeed, goes no further than the outward court of the Scripture, and reads this, and the other miracles of our blessed Saviour, just in the same manner as he reads *Homer*’s battles, or the exploits of *Alexander*. But God forbid, that we should rest in only hearing this matter of fact. For I tell thee, O man, I tell thee, O woman, whoever thou art, that sittest this day under a preached gospel, that if thou art in a natural state, thou art as blind in thy soul, as *Bartimeus* was in his body; a blind child of a blind father, even of thy father *Adam*, who lost his sight when he lost his innocence, and entailed his blindness, justly inflicted, upon thee, and me, and his whole posterity. Some think indeed, that they see; but alas! such talk only like men in their sleep, like persons beside themselves; the scriptures

every where represent fallen man, not only as spiritually blind, but dead also; and we no more know, by nature, savingly the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, than *Bartimeus*, when he was blind, knew the colours of the rainbow. This, I trust, some of you begin to feel, I see you concerned, I see you weeping, and, was I to ask some of you, what you want to have done unto you? I know your answer would be, that we may receive our sight. And God forbid, that I should charge you to hold your peace, as though Jesus would not regard you! no, your being made sensible of your natural blindness, and crying thus earnestly after Jesus, is a sign at least, that you are awakened by his holy Spirit (though it is possible, that you may cry with an exceeding bitter cry, as *Esau* did, and be lost at last); however, Christian charity induces me to believe and hope the best; I will therefore, in the language of those who afterwards encouraged *Bartimeus*, say unto you, Arise, take comfort; for, I trust, Jesus is calling you; follow therefore the example of *Bartimeus*, cast away your garment; lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset you, arise, and come to Jesus. He commands me, by his written word, to call to you, and say, "Come unto him, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and he will refresh you, he will give you rest." Be not afraid, ye seek Jesus of *Nazareth*, behold, he comes forth to meet you; ye are now on the highway side, and Jesus, I trust, is passing by; I feel his presence, I hope many of you feel it too; O then, cry mightily to him, who is mighty and willing to save you; lay yourselves at the feet of sovereign grace, say unto him, "Jesus, thou Son of *David*, have mercy on me," in the same frame as *Bartimeus* did, and Jesus will answer you, he will not cast out your prayer; according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you. Blind as you are, you shall, notwithstanding, receive your sight; Satan, indeed, and unbelief, will suggest many objections to you,

your carnal relations will also join issue with them, and charge you to hold your peace; one will tell you, that your blindness is too inveterate to be cured; another, that it is too late; a third, that though Jesus can, yet he will not have mercy upon such poor, blind, despicable beggars, as ye are; but, the more they charge you to hold your peace, do you cry out so much the more a great deal, "Jesus, thou Son of *David*, have mercy on us." Jesus, thou Saviour, thou friend of sinners, thou Son of *David*, and therefore a Son of man! gracious words! endearing appellations! be encouraged by them, to draw nigh unto him. Though *David*'s Lord, yet he is become *David*'s Son, after the flesh, that ye through him may be made the sons of God: no matter what thou art, O woman, what thou art, O man; though thou art literally a poor beggar, think not thy condition too mean for Jesus to take notice of; he came into the highways and hedges, to call such poor beggars in; or, if you are rich, think not yourselves too high to stoop to Jesus; for he is the King of kings; and you never will be truly rich, until you are made rich in Jesus; fear not being despised, or losing a little worldly honour: one sight of Jesus will make amends for all: you will find something so inviting, so attracting, so satisfying, in the altogether-lovely Lamb of God, that every sublunary enjoyment will sicken, and die, and vanish before you; and you will no more desire your former vain and trifling amusements, than *Bartimeus*, after he had received his sight, desired to go back again and fetch his garment. O that there may be many such blind beggars among you this day!

Here is a great multitude of people following me, a poor worm, this day. I rejoice to see the fields thus white, ready unto harvest, and to spread the gospel-net amidst so many; but alas! I shall return home with a heavy heart, unless some of you will arise and come to my Jesus; I desire to preach Him, and not myself; rest not in hearing and following me. Behold, believe on,

and follow the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world. Indeed, I do not despair of any of you, neither am I discouraged, on account of my preaching in the highways and hedges; Jesus called *Zaccheus*; Jesus called *Bartimeus*, as he passed through *Jericho*; that cursed, that devoted place; and why may he not call some of you, out of these despised fields? is his arm shortened, that he cannot save? is he not as mighty now, and as willing to save, even to the uttermost, all that come to the Father through him, as he was seventeen hundred years ago? assuredly he is; he hath said, and he also will do it, "Whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." In no wise, or by no means. O encouraging words! sinners, believe ye this? arise then, be of good comfort, for Jesus is indeed calling you. Some of you, I trust, have obeyed this invitation, and have had a sight of him long ago; I know then, you will bless and love him; and if he should say unto you, as he did unto *Bartimeus*, go you your way; your answer would be, we love our master, and will not go from him. But suffer ye the word of exhortation:

Suffer me to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, shew that you have indeed seen him, and that you do indeed love him, by following him in the way; I mean, in the way of the cross, the way of his ordinances, and in the way of his holy commandments; for alas! the love of many waxeth cold, and few there are that follow Jesus rightly in the way; few there are that cast away their garments so heartily as they should; some idol or another hangs about us, and hinders us in running the race that is set before us. Awake therefore, ye sleepy, though, it may be, wise virgins. Awake, awake, put on strength; shake yourselves from the dust; arise and follow Jesus more closely in the way, than ever you did yet. Lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. Provide right paths

for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but rather be ye healed. For though the way be narrow, yet it is not long; “though the gate be straight, (to use the words of pious bishop *Beveridge*) yet it opens into everlasting life.” O that ye may get a fresh sight of him again this day! That would be like oil to the wheels of your graces, and make your souls like the chariots of *Aminadab*. It is only owing to your losing sight of him, that you go so heavily from day to day. A sight of Jesus, like the sun rising in the morning, dispels the darkness and gloominess that lies upon the soul. Take therefore a fresh view of him, O believers, and never rest until you are translated to see him as he is, and to live with him for evermore, in the kingdom of heaven. Even so, Lord Jesus, *Amen* and *Amen*!

SERMON XXVIII.

Directions how to hear Sermons.

Luke viii. 18.

Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.

THE occasion of our Lord's giving this caution, was this: Perceiving that much people were gathered together to hear him out of every city, and knowing (for he is God, and knoweth all things) that many, if not most of them, would be hearers only, and not doers of the word; he spake to them by a parable, wherein, under the similitude of a sower that went out to sow his seed, he plainly intimated, how few there were amongst them, who would receive any saving benefit from his doctrine, or bring forth fruit unto perfection.

The application one would imagine should have been plain and obvious; but the disciples, as yet unenlightened in any great degree by the Holy Spirit, and therefore unable to see into the hidden mysteries of the kingdom of God, dealt with our Saviour, as people ought to deal with their ministers; they discoursed with him privately about the meaning of what he had taught

them in public; and with a sincere desire of doing their duty, asked for an interpretation of the parable.

Our blessed Lord, as he always was willing to instruct those that were teachable, (herein setting his ministers an example to be courteous and easy of access) freely told them the signification. And withal, to make them more cautious and more attentive to his doctrine for the future, he tells them, that they were in an especial manner to be the light of the world, and were to proclaim on the house-top whatsoever he told them in secret; and as their improving the knowledge already imparted, was the only condition upon which more was to be given them, it therefore highly concerned them to "take heed how they heard."

From the context then it appears, that the words were primarily spoken to the Apostles themselves. But as it is to be feared, out of those many thousands that flock to hear sermons, but few, comparatively speaking, are effectually influenced by them, I cannot but think it very necessary to remind you of the caution given by our Lord to his disciples, and to exhort you with the utmost earnestness, to "take heed how you hear."

In prosecution of which design I shall,

First, Prove that every one ought to take all opportunities of hearing sermons. And,

Secondly, I shall lay down some cautions and directions, in order to your hearing with profit and advantage.

First, I am to prove, that every one ought to take all opportunities of hearing sermons.

That there have always been particular persons set apart by God, to instruct and exhort his people to practise what he should require of them, is evident from many passages of scripture. St. *Jude* tells us, that "*Enoch*, the

seventh from *Adam*, prophesied (or preached) concerning the Lord's coming with ten thousand of his saints to judgment." And *Noah*, who lived not long after, is stiled by St. *Peter*, "a preacher of righteousness." And though in all the intermediate space between the flood and giving of the law, we hear but of few preachers, yet we may reasonably conclude, that God never left himself without witness, but at sundry times, and after divers manners, spoke to our fathers by the patriarchs and prophets.

But however it was before, we are assured that after the delivery of the law, God constantly separated to himself a certain order of men to preach to, as well as pray for his people; and commanded them to enquire their duty at the priests mouths. And though the *Jews* were frequently led into captivity, and for their sins scattered abroad on the face of the earth, yet he never utterly forsook his church, but still kept up a remnant of prophets and preachers, as *Ezekiel*, *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, and others, to reprove, instruct, and call them to repentance.

Thus was it under the law. Nor has the church been worse, but infinitely better provided for under the gospel. For when Jesus Christ, that great High-priest, had through the eternal Spirit offered himself, as a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and after his resurrection had all power committed to him, both in heaven and earth, he gave commission to his Apostles, and in them to all succeeding ministers, to "go and preach his gospel to every creature;" promising to "to be with them, to guide, assist, strengthen, and comfort them always, even to the end of the world."

But if it be the duty of ministers to preach, (and woe be to them if they do not preach the gospel, for a necessity is laid upon them) no doubt, the

people are obliged to attend to them; for otherwise, wherefore are ministers sent?

And how can we here avoid admiring the love and tender care which our dear Redeemer has expressed for his spouse the church? Who, because he could not be always with us in person, on account it was expedient he should go away, and as our forerunner take possession of that glory he had purchased by his precious blood, yet would not leave us comfortless, but first settled a sufficient number of pastors and teachers; and afterwards, according to his promise, actually did and will continue to send down the Holy Ghost, to furnish them and their successors with proper gifts and graces "for the work of the ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of his body in love, till we all come in the unity of the spirit, to the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ."

O how insensible are those persons of this unspeakable gift, who do despite to the Spirit of grace, who crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, by wilfully refusing to attend on so great a means of their salvation? How dreadful will the end of such men be? How aggravating, that light should come into the world, that the glad tidings of salvation should be so very frequently proclaimed in this populous city, and that so many should loath this spiritual manna, this angels food, and call it light bread? How much more tolerable will it be for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, for *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, than for such sinners? Better, that men had never heard of a Saviour being born, than after they have heard, not to give heed to the ministry of those, who are employed as his ambassadors, to transact affairs between God and their souls.

We may, though at a distance, without a spirit of prophesy, foretel the deplorable condition of such men; behold them cast into hell, lifting up their

eyes, being in torment, and crying out, How often would our ministers have gathered us, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings? But we would not. O that we had known in that our day, the things that belonged to our everlasting peace! But now they are for ever hid from our eyes.

Thus wretched, thus inconceiveably miserable, will such be as slight and make a mock at the public preaching of the gospel. But taking it for granted, there are but few, if any, of this unhappy stamp, who think it worth their while to tread the courts of the Lord's house, I pass on now to the

Second general thing proposed, to lay down some cautions and directions, in order to your hearing sermons with profit and advantage.

And here, if we reflect on what has been already delivered, and consider that preaching is an ordinance of God, a means appointed by Jesus Christ himself for promoting his kingdom amongst men, you cannot reasonably be offended, if, in order that you may hear sermons with profit and advantage, I

1. Direct or entreat you to come to hear them, not out of curiosity, but from a sincere desire to know and do your duty.

Formality and hypocrisy in any religious exercise, is an abomination unto the Lord. And to enter his house merely to have our ears entertained, and not our hearts reformed, must certainly be highly displeasing to the Most High God, as well as unprofitable to ourselves.

Hence it is, that so many remain unconverted, yea, unaffected with the most evangelical preaching; so that like St. *Paul*'s companions, before his conversion, they only hear the preacher's voice with their outward ears, but do not experience the power of it inwardly in their hearts: Or, like the ground near *Gideon*'s fleece, they remain untouched; whilst others, who

came to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, like the fleece itself, are watered by the dew of God's heavenly blessing, and grow thereby.

Flee therefore, my brethren, flee curiosity, and prepare your hearts by a humble disposition, to receive with meekness the engrafted word, and then it will be a means, under God, to quicken, build up, purify, and save your souls.

2. A second direction I shall lay down for the same purpose, is, not only to prepare your hearts before you hear, but also to give diligent heed to the things that are spoken from the word of God.

If an earthly king was to issue out a royal proclamation, on performing or not performing the conditions therein contained, the life or death of his subjects entirely depended, how solicitous would they be to hear what those conditions were? And shall not we pay the same respect to the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and lend an attentive ear to his ministers, when they are declaring, in his name, how our pardon, peace, and happiness may be secured?

When God descended on mount *Sinai* in terrible majesty, to give unto his people the law, how attentive were they to his servant *Moses*? And if they were so earnest to hear the thunderings or threatenings of the law, shall not we be as solicitous to hear from the ministers of Christ, the glad tidings of the gospel?

Whilst Christ was himself on earth, it is said, that the people hung upon him to hear the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. And if we looked on ministers as we ought, as the sent of Jesus Christ, we should hang upon them to hear their words also.

Besides, the sacred truths that gospel ministers deliver, are not dry insipid lectures on moral philosophy, intended only to amuse us for a while; but the

great mysteries of godliness, which, therefore, we are bound studiously to listen to, lest through our negligence we should either not understand them, or by any other means let them slip.

But how regardless are those of this direction, who, instead of hanging on the preacher to hear him, doze or sleep whilst he is speaking to them from God? Unhappy men! Can they not watch with our blessed Lord one hour? What! have they never read how *Eutychus* fell down as he was sleeping, when St. *Paul* continued his discourse till midnight, and was taken up dead?

But to return. Though you may prepare your hearts, as you may think, by a teachable disposition, and be attentive whilst discourses are delivering, yet this will profit you little, unless you observe,

3. A third direction, Not to entertain any the least prejudice against the minister.

For could a preacher speak with the tongue of men and angels, if his audience was prejudiced against him, he would be but as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal.

That was the reason why Jesus Christ himself, the Eternal Word, could not do many mighty works, nor preach to any great effect among those of his own country; for they were offended at him: And was this same Jesus, this God incarnate, again to bow the heavens, and to come down speaking as never man spake, yet, if we were prejudiced against him, as the *Jews* were, we should harden our hearts as the *Jews* did theirs.

Take heed therefore, my brethren, and beware of entertaining any dislike against those whom the Holy Ghost has made overseers over you. Consider that the clergy are men of like passions with yourselves: and though we should even hear a person teaching others to do, what he has not learned himself; yet, that is no sufficient reason for rejecting his doctrine: for

ministers speak not in their own, but Christ's name. And we know who commanded the people to do whatsoever the Scribes and Pharisees should say unto them, though they said but did not. But

4. *Fourthly*, As you ought not to be prejudiced against, so you should be careful not to depend too much on a preacher, or think more highly of him than you ought to think. For though this be an extream that people seldom run into, yet preferring one teacher in opposition to another, has often been of ill consequence to the church of God. It was a fault which the great Apostle of the *Gentiles* condemned in the *Corinthians*: For whereas one said, "I am of *Paul*; another, I am of *Apollos*: are ye not carnal," says he? "For who is *Paul*, and who is *Apollos*, but instruments in God's hands by whom you believed?" And are not all ministers sent forth to be ministring ambassadors to those who shall be heirs of salvation? And are they not all therefore greatly to be esteemed for their work's sake.

The Apostle, it is true, commands us to pay double honour to those who labour in the word and doctrine: but then to prefer one minister at the expence of another, (perhaps, to such a degree, as when you have actually entered a church, to come out again because he does not preach) is earthly, sensual, devilish.

Not to mention that popularity and applause cannot but be exceedingly dangerous, even to a rightly informed mind; and must necessarily fill any thinking man with a holy jealousy, lest he should take that honour to himself, which is due only to God, who alone qualifies him for his ministerial labours, and from whom alone every good and perfect gift cometh.

5. A *Fifth* direction I would recommend is, to make a particular application of every thing that is delivered to your own hearts.

When our Saviour was discoursing at the last supper with his beloved disciples, and foretold that one of them should betray him, each of them immediately applied it to his own heart, and said, “Lord, is it I?” And would persons, in like manner, when preachers are dissuading from any sin, or persuading to any duty, instead of crying, this was designed against such and such a one, turn their thoughts inwardly, and say, Lord, is it I? how far more beneficial should we find discourses to be, than now they generally are?

But we are apt to wander too much abroad; always looking at the mote which is in our neighbour’s eye, rather than at the beam which is in our own. Haste we now to the

6. *Sixth* and last direction: If you would receive a blessing from the Lord, when you hear his word preached, pray to him, both before, in, and after every sermon, to endue the minister with power to speak, and to grant you a will and ability to put in practice, what he shall shew from the book of God to be your duty.

This would be an excellent means to render the word preached effectual to the enlightening and enflaming your hearts; and without this, all the other means before prescribed will be in vain.

No doubt it was this consideration that made St. *Paul* so earnestly entreat his beloved *Ephesians* to intercede with God for him: “Praying always, with all manner of prayer and supplication in the spirit, and for me also, that I may open my mouth with boldness, to make known the mysteries of the gospel.” And if so great an Apostle as St. *Paul*, needed the prayers of his people, much more do those ministers, who have only the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Besides, this would be a good proof that you sincerely desired to do, as well as to know the will of God. And it must highly profit both ministers and people; because God, through your prayers, will give them a double portion of his Holy Spirit, whereby they will be enabled to instruct you more fully in the things which pertain to the kingdom of God.

And O that all who hear me this day, would seriously apply their hearts to practise what has now been told them! How would ministers see Satan, like lightning, fall from heaven, and people find the word preached sharper than a two-edged sword, and mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the devil's strong holds!

The Holy Ghost would then fall on all them that hear the word, as when St. *Peter* preached; the gospel of Christ would have free course, run very swiftly, and thousands again be converted by a sermon.

For "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He has promised to be with his ministers always, even unto the end of the world. And the reason why we do not receive larger effusions of the blessed Spirit of God, is not because our all-powerful Redeemer's hand is shortened, but because we do not expect them, and confine them to the primitive times.

It does indeed sometimes happen, that God, to magnify his free grace in Christ Jesus, is found of them that sought him not; a notorious sinner is forcibly worked upon by a public sermon, and plucked as a firebrand out of the fire. But this is not God's ordinary way of acting: No, for the generality, he only visits those with the power of his word, who humbly wait to know what he would have them to do; and sends unqualified hearers not only empty, but hardened away.

Take heed, therefore, ye careless, curious professors, if any such be here present, how you hear. Remember, that whether we think of it or not, "we

must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ;" where ministers must give a strict account of the doctrine they have delivered, and you as strict a one, how you have improved under it. And, good God! how will you be able to stand at the bar of an angry, sin-avenging judge, and see so many discourses you have despised, so many ministers, who once longed and laboured for the salvation of your precious and immortal souls, brought out as so many swift witnesses against you? Will it be sufficient then, think you, to alledge, that you went to hear them only out of curiosity, to pass away an idle hour, to admire the oratory, or ridicule the simplicity of the preacher? No; God will then let you know, that you ought to have come out of better principles; that every sermon has been put down to your account, and that you must then be justly punished for not improving by them.

But fear not, you little flock, who with meekness receive the ingrafted word, and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness; for it shall not be so with you. No, you will be your minister's joy, and their crown of rejoicing in the day of our Lord Jesus: And they will present you in a holy triumph, faultless and unblameable, to our common Redeemer, saying, "Behold us, O Lord, and the children which thou hast given us."

But still take heed how you hear: for upon your improving the grace you have, more shall be given, and you shall have abundance. "He is faithful that has promised, who also will do it." Nay, God from out of *Sion*, shall so bless you, that every sermon you hear shall communicate to you a fresh supply of spiritual knowledge. The word of God shall dwell in you richly; you shall go on from strength to strength, from one degree of grace unto another, till being grown up to be perfect men in Christ Jesus, and filled with all the fulness of God, you shall be translated by death to see him as he is, and to sing praises before his throne with angels and archangels,

cherubim and seraphim, and the general assembly of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, for ever and ever.

Which God, &c.

SERMON XXIX.

The Extent and Reasonableness of Self-Denial.

Luke ix. 23.

And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.

WHOEVER reads the gospel with a single eye, and sincere intention, will find, that our blessed Lord took all opportunities of reminding his disciples that his kingdom was not of this world; that his doctrine was a doctrine of the cross; and that their professing themselves to be his followers, would call them to a constant state of voluntary suffering and self-denial.

The words of the text afford us one instance, among many, of our Saviour's behaviour in this matter: for having in the preceding verses revealed himself to *Peter*, and the other apostles, to be "The Christ of God;" lest they should be too much elated with such a peculiar discovery of his deity, or think that their relation to so great a personage would be attended with nothing but pomp and grandeur, he tells them, in the 22d verse, that "the son of man was to suffer many things," in this world, though he was to

be crowned with eternal glory and honour in the next: and that if any of them or their posterity would share in the same honour, they must bear a part with him in his self-denial and sufferings. For “He said unto them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself.”

From which words I shall consider these three things:

I. *First*, The nature of the self-denial recommended in the text; and in how many respects we must deny ourselves, in order to come after Jesus Christ.

II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to prove the universality and reasonableness of this duty of self-denial.

III. *Thirdly*, I shall offer some considerations, which may serve as so many motives to reconcile us to, and quicken us in, the practice of this self-denial.

I. *First*, I am to shew you the nature of the self-denial recommended in the text; or in how many respects we must deny ourselves in order to follow Jesus Christ.

Now as the faculties of the soul are distinguished by the understanding, will and affections; so in all these must each of us deny himself. We must not lean to our own understanding, being wise in our own eyes, and prudent in our own sight; but we must submit our short-sighted reason to the light of divine revelation. There are mysteries in religion, which are above, though not contrary to our natural reason: and therefore we shall never become Christians unless we cast down imaginations, “and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” It is in this respect, as well as others, that we must become fools for Christ’s sake, and acknowledge we know nothing without revelation, as we ought to know. We must, with all humility and reverence, embrace the truths revealed to us in the holy scriptures; for

thus only can we become truly wise, even “Wise unto salvation.” It was matter of our blessed Lord’s thanksgiving to his heavenly father, that he had “hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes.” And in this respect also we must “be converted and become as little children,” teachable, and willing to follow the Lamb into whatsoever mysteries he shall be pleased to lead us; and believe and practise all divine truths, not because we can demonstrate them, but because God, “who cannot lye,” has revealed them to us.

Hence then we may trace infidelity to its fountain head: for it is nothing else, but a pride of the understanding, an unwillingness to submit to the truths of God, that makes so many, professing themselves wise, to become such fools as to deny the Lord, who has so dearly bought them; and dispute the divinity of that eternal Word, “in whom they live, and move, and have their being:” Whereby it is justly to be feared, they will bring upon themselves sure, if not swift destruction.

But, as we must deny ourselves in our understandings, so must we deny, or, as it might be more properly rendered, renounce our wills: that is, we must make our own wills no principle of action, but “whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all, (not merely to please ourselves, but) to the glory of God.” Not that we are therefore to imagine we are to have no pleasure in any thing we do: “Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness;” but pleasing ourselves must not be the principal, but only the subordinate end of our actions.

And I cannot but particularly press this doctrine upon you, because it is the grand secret of our holy religion. It is this, my brethren, that distinguishes the true Christian from the mere moralist and formal professor; and without which none of our actions are acceptable in God’s

sight: For “if thine eye be single,” says our blessed Lord, *Matthew* vi. 22. that is, if thou aimest simply to please God, without any regard to thy own will, “thy whole body, (or all thy actions) will be full of light;” agreeable to the gospel, which is called light: “But if thine eye be evil, (if thine intention be diverted any other way) thy whole body, (all thy actions) will be full of darkness,” sinful and unprofitable, we must not only do the will of God, but do it because it is his will; since we pray that “God’s will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.” And no doubt, the blessed angels not only do every thing that God willeth, but do it chearfully, out of this principle, because God willeth it: And if we would live as we pray, we must go and do likewise.

But farther; as we must renounce our wills in doing, so likewise must we renounce them in suffering the will of God. Whatsoever befals us, we must say with good old *Eli*, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;” or with one that was infinitely greater than *Eli*, “Father, not my will, but thine be done.” O Jesus, thine was an innocent will, and yet thou renouncedst it: Teach us, even us also, O our Saviour! to submit our wills to thine, in all the evils which shall be brought upon us; and in every thing enable us to give thanks, since it is thy blessed will concerning us!

Thirdly, we must deny ourselves, as in our understandings and wills, so likewise in our affections. More particularly, we must deny ourselves the pleasurable indulgence and self-enjoyment of riches: “If any man will come after me, he must forsake all and follow me.” And again (to shew the utter inconsistency of the love of the things of this world with the love of the Father) he tells us, “unless a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

Far be it from me to think that these texts are to be taken in a literal sense; as though they obliged rich persons to go sell all that they have and give to the poor, (for that would put it out of their power to be serviceable to the poor for the future) but however, they certainly imply thus much, that we are to sit loose to, sell and forsake all in affection, and be willing to part with every thing, when God shall require it at our hands: that is, as the apostle observes, we must "use the world as though we used it not;" and though we are in the world, we must not be of it. We must look upon ourselves as stewards, and not proprietors, of the manifold gifts of God; provide first what is necessary for ourselves and for our housholds, and expend the rest, not in indulgencies and superfluous ornaments, forbidden by the apostle, but in cloathing, feeding, and relieving the naked, hungry, distressed disciples of Jesus Christ. This is what our blessed Lord would have us understand by forsaking all, and in this sense must each of us deny himself.

I am sensible that this will seem an hard saying to many, who will be offended because they are covetous, and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God:" but if I yet pleased such men, I should not be the servant of Christ. No, we must not, like *Ahab*'s false prophets, have a lying spirit in our mouths, but declare faithfully the whole will of God; and like honest *Micajah*, out of pity and compassion, tell men the truth, though they may falsely think we prophecy not good but evil concerning them.

But to proceed: As we must renounce our affection for riches, so likewise our affections for relations, when they stand in opposition to our love of, and duty to God: For thus saith the Saviour of the world: "If any man will come after me, and hateth not his father and mother, his children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Strange doctrine this! What, hate our own flesh! What, hate the father that begat us, the mother that bare us! How can these things be? Can God contradict himself? Has he not bid us to honour our father and mother? and yet we are here commanded to hate them. How can these truths be reconciled? By interpreting the word hate, not in a rigorous and absolute sense, but comparatively: not as implying a total alienation, but a less degree of affection. For thus our blessed Saviour himself (the best and surest expositor of his own meaning) explains it in a parallel text, *Matthew* x. 37. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." So that when the persuasions of our friends (as for our trial they may be permitted to be) are contrary to the will of God, we must say with *Levi*, "we have not known them;" or, agreeably to our blessed Lord's rebuke to *Peter*, "Get you behind me, my adversaries; for you savour not the things that be of God, but the things that be of man."

Farther, we must deny ourselves in things indifferent: for it might easily be shewn, that as many, if not more, perish by an immoderate use of things in themselves indifferent, as by any gross sin whatever. A prudent Christian therefore, will consider not only what is lawful, but what is expedient also: not so much what degrees of self-denial best suit his inclinations here, as what will most effectually break his will, and fit him for greater degrees of glory hereafter.

Lastly, To conclude this head, we must renounce our own righteousness: For, though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burned, yet, if we in the least depend on that, and do not wholly rely on the perfect all-sufficient righteousness of Jesus Christ, it will profit us nothing. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that

believeth." We are compleat in him, and him only. Our own righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. We must count all things but dung and dross, so that we may be found in him, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And is this the doctrine of Christianity? is not the Christian world then asleep? If not, whence so much self-righteousness, whence the self-indulgence, whence the reigning love of riches which we every where meet with? Above all, whence that predominant greediness after sensual pleasure, that has so over-run this sinful nation, that was a pious stranger to come amongst us, he would be tempted to think some heathen Venus was worshipped here, and that temples were dedicated to her service. But we have the authority of an inspired apostle to affirm, that they who live in a round of pleasure, "are dead while they live." Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But the power of raising the spiritually dead belongeth only unto God. Do thou therefore, O Holy Jesus, who by thy almighty word commandest *Lazarus* to come forth, though he had lain in the grave some days, speak also as effectually to these spiritually dead souls, whom Satan for many years hath so fast bound by sensual pleasures, that they are not so much as able to lift up their eyes or hearts to heaven.

II. But I pass on to the second general thing proposed, to consider the universal obligation and reasonableness of this doctrine of self-denial.

When our blessed master had been discoursing publicly concerning the watchfulness of the faithful and wise steward, his disciples asked him, "Speakest thou this parable to all, or only to us?" The same question I am aware has been, and will be put concerning the foregoing doctrine: for too many, unwilling to take Christ's easy yoke upon them, in order to evade the

force of the gospel precepts, would pretend that all those commands concerning self-denial, and renouncing ourselves and the world, belonged to our Lord's first and immediate followers, and not to us or to our children. But such persons greatly err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of godliness in their hearts. For the doctrine of Jesus Christ, like his blessed self, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." What he said unto one, he said unto all, even unto the ends of the world; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself:" and in the text it is particularly mentioned that he said it unto them ALL. And lest we should still absurdly imagine that this word ALL was to be confined to his apostles, with whom he was then discoursing, it is said in another place, that Jesus turned unto the multitude and said, "If any man will come after me, and hateth not his father and mother, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." When our blessed Lord had spoken a certain parable, it is said, "the scribes and Pharisees were offended, for they knew the parable was spoken against them:" And if Christians can now read these plain and positive texts of scripture, and at the same time not think they are spoken of them, they are more hardened than *Jews*, and more insincere than Pharisees [1].

In the former part of this discourse I observed, that the precepts concerning forsaking and selling all, did not oblige us in a literal sense, because the state of the church does not demand it of us, as it did of the primitive Christians; but still the same deadness to the world, the same abstemious use of, and readiness to part with our goods for Christ's sake, is as absolutely necessary for, and as obligatory on us, as it was on them. For though the church may differ as to the outward state of it, in different ages, yet as to the purity of its inward state, it was, is, and always will be invariably the same. And all the commands which we meet with in the

epistles, about "mortifying our members which are upon the earth, of setting our affections on things above, and of not being conformed to this world;" are but so many incontestible proofs that the same holiness, heavenly-mindedness, and deadness to the world, is as necessary for us, as for our Lord's immediate followers.

But farther, as such an objection argues an ignorance of the scriptures, so it is a manifest proof, that such as make it are strangers to the power of godliness in their hearts. For since the sum and substance of religion consists in recovery from our fallen estate in *Adam*, by a new-birth in Christ Jesus, there is an absolute necessity for us to embrace and practice the self-denial before spoken of. If we are alive unto God, we shall be dead to ourselves and the world. If all things belonging to the spirit live and grow in us, all things belonging to the old man must die in us. We must mourn before we are comforted, and receive the spirit of bondage before we are blessed with the unspeakable privilege of the spirit of adoption, and with a full assurance of faith can say, "Abba, Father."

Were we indeed in a state of innocence, and had we, like *Adam* before his fall, the divine image fully stamped upon our souls, we then should have no need of self-denial; but since we are fallen, sickly, disordered, self-righteous creatures, we must necessarily deny ourselves (and count it our privilege to do so) ere we can follow Jesus Christ to glory. To reject such a salutary practice on account of the difficulty attending it at first, is but too like the obstinacy of a perverse sick child, who nauseates and refuses the potion reached out to it by a skilful physician or a tender parent, because it is a little ungrateful to the taste.

Had any of us seen *Lazarus* when he lay full of sores at the rich man's gate; or *Job* when he was smitten with ulcers, from the crown of his head to

the sole of his foot: And had we at the same time prescribed to them some healing medicines, which, because they might put them to pain, they would not apply to their wounds, should we not most justly think, that they were either fond of a distempered body, or were not sensible of their distempers? But our souls, by nature, are in an infinitely more deplorable condition than the bodies of *Job* or *Lazarus*, when full of ulcers and boils: for, alas! "our whole head is sick, and our whole heart faint, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, we are full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores, and there is no health in us." And if we are unwilling to deny ourselves, and come after Jesus Christ in order to be cured, it is a sign we are not sensible of the wretchedness of our state, and that we are not truly made whole.

Even *Naaman*'s servants could say, when he refused (pursuant to *Elisha*'s orders) to wash in the river *Jordan*, that he might cure his leprosy, "Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash and be clean?" And may not I very properly address myself to you in the same manner, my brethren? If Jesus Christ, our great prophet, had bid you to do some far more difficult thing, would you not have done it? Much more then should you do it, when he only bids you deny yourselves what would certainly hurt you if indulged in, and he will give you a crown of life.

But to illustrate this by another comparison: In the 12th chapter of the *Acts*, we read, that "St. *Peter* was kept in prison, and was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: And behold an angel of the Lord came upon him, and smote *Peter* on the side, saying, arise up quickly: And his chains fell off from his hands." But had this great apostle, instead of rising up quickly, and doing as the blessed angel commanded him, hugged his chains and begged that they might not be let fall from his hands, would not

any one think that he was in love with slavery, and deserved to be executed next morning? And does not the person who refuses to deny himself, act as inconsistently, as this apostle would have done if he had neglected the means of his deliverance? For our souls, by nature, are in a spiritual dungeon, sleeping and fast bound between the world, the flesh, and the devil, not with two but ten thousand chains of lusts and corruptions. Now Jesus Christ, like St. *Peter*'s good angel, by the power of his gospel comes and opens the prison door, and bids us "deny ourselves and follow him." But if we do not arise, gird up the loins of our mind and follow him, are we not in love with bondage, and do we not deserve never to be delivered from it?

Indeed, I will not affirm that this doctrine of self-denial appears in this just light to every one. No, I am sensible that to the natural man it is foolishness, and to the young convert an hard saying. But what says our Saviour? "If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." This, my dear friends, is the best, the only way of conviction: Let us up and be doing; let us arise quickly, and deny ourselves, and the Lord Jesus will remove those scales from the eyes of our minds, which now, like so many veils, hinder us from seeing clearly the reasonableness, necessity, and inexpressible advantage of the doctrine that has been delivered. Let us but once thus shew ourselves men, and then the spirit of God will move on the face of our souls, as he did once upon the face of the great deep; and cause them to emerge out of that confused chaos, in which they are most certainly now involved, if we are strangers and enemies to self-denial and the cross of Christ.

III. Proceed we therefore now to the third and last general thing proposed, to offer some considerations, which may serve as so many motives to

reconcile us to, and quicken us in, the practise of this duty of self-denial.

1. And the first means I shall recommend to you, in order to reconcile you to this doctrine, is, to meditate frequently on the life of our blessed Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Follow him from his cradle to the cross, and see what a self-denying life he led! And shall not we drink of the cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with? Or think we, that Jesus Christ did and suffered every thing in order to have us excused and exempted from sufferings? No, far be it from any sincere Christian to judge after this manner: for St. *Peter* tells us, "He suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." Had Christ, indeed, like those that sat in *Moses*' chair, laid heavy burthens of self-denial upon us, (supposing they were heavy, which they are not) and refused to touch them himself with one of his fingers; we might have had some pretence to complain: But since he has enjoined us nothing, but what he first put in practise himself, thou art inexcusable, O disciple, whoever thou art, who wouldst be above thy persecuted self-denying master: And thou art no good and faithful servant, who art unwilling to suffer and sympathize with thy mortified, heavenly-minded Lord.

2. Next to the pattern of our blessed master, think often on the lives of the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs; who by a constant looking to the author and finisher of our faith, have fought the good fight, and are gone before us to inherit the promises. View again and again, how holily, how self-denyingly, how unblameably they lived: And if self-denial was necessary for them, why not for us also? Are we not men of like passions with them? Do we not live in the same wicked world as they did? Have we not the same good spirit to assist, support, and purify us, as they had? and is not the same

eternal inheritance reached out to us, as was to them? And if we have the same nature to change, the same wicked world to withstand, the same good spirit to help, and the same eternal crown at the end; why should not we lead the same lives as they did? Do we think they did works of supererogation? if not, why do not we do as they did? or why does your own church set apart festivals to commemorate the deaths and sufferings of the saints, but in order to excite you to follow them as they did Christ.

3. *Thirdly*, Think often on the pains of hell; consider, whether it is not better to cut off a right-hand or foot, and pull out a right-eye, if they offend us (or cause us to sin) "rather than to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Think how many thousands there are now reserved with damned spirits in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. And think withal, that this, this must be our case shortly, unless we are wise in time, deny ourselves, and follow Jesus Christ. Think you, they now imagine Jesus Christ to be an hard master; or rather think you not, they would give ten thousand times ten thousand worlds, could they but return to life again, and take Christ's easy yoke upon them? And can we dwell with everlasting burnings more than they? No, if we cannot bear this precept, deny yourselves, take up your crosses; how shall we bear the irrevocable sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" But I hope those, amongst whom I am now preaching the kingdom of God, are not so disingenuous as to need to be driven to their duty by the terrors of the Lord, but rather desire to be drawn by the cords of love.

Lastly, Therefore, often meditate on the joys of heaven: think, think with what unspeakable glory those happy souls are now incircled, who when on earth were called to deny themselves as well as we, and were not

disobedient to that call: Lift up your hearts frequently towards the mansions of eternal bliss, and with an eye of faith, like *Stephen*, see the heavens opened, and the Son of man with his glorious retinue of departed saints, sitting and solacing themselves in eternal joys. Hark! methinks I hear them chanting forth their everlasting *Hallelujahs*, and echoing triumphant songs of joy. And do you not long, my brethren, to join this heavenly choir? do not your hearts burn within you? As the hart panteth after the water brooks, do not your souls so long after the blessed company of these sons of God? Behold then a heavenly ladder reached down to you, by which you may climb to this holy hill. Let us believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and deny ourselves! By this alone, every saint that ever lived ascended into the joy of their Lord: And then, we, even we also shall ere long be lifted up into the same most blissful regions, there to enjoy an eternal rest with the people of God, and join with them in singing doxologies and songs of praise, to the everlasting, blessed, all-glorious, most adorable Trinity, for ever and ever.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, *&c.*

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1. Law’s Christian Perfection.

SERMON XXX.

Christ's Transfiguration.
Luke ix. 28–36.

And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his rayment was white and glistering. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found

alone; and they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

WHEN the angel was sent to the Redeemer's beloved disciple *John*, we are told that the angel said unto him, "Come up hither:" He was to be exalted, to be brought nearer heaven, that his mind might be better prepared for those great manifestations, which an infinitely great and condescending God intended to vouchsafe him. And on reading the verses that you have just now heard, when I also see such a great and serious assembly convened in the presence of God, I think I must address you, as the angel addressed *John*, and say unto you, "Come up hither;" leave your worldly thoughts, for a time forget the earth. And as it is the Lord's-day, a time in which we ought more particularly to think of heaven, I must desire you to pray to God, that ye may get up on *Pisgah*'s mount, and take a view of the promised land. It is true, indeed, eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of any man to conceive the great and good things, which God hath prepared for his people here; much less, those infinitely greater and more glorious things, that he hath laid up for them that fear him, in the eternal world: but, blessed be God! though we are not yet in heaven, unless to be in Christ may properly be termed heaven, and then all real Christians are there already; yet, the blessed Jesus has been pleased to leave upon record some account of himself, of what happened to him in the days of his flesh, and of some manifestations he was pleased to grant to a few of his disciples; that from what happened to them here below, we may form some faint, though but a faint idea of that happiness that awaits his people in his kingdom above. If any of you enquire, in what part of our Lord's life those instances are recorded, I have an answer ready: One of these instances, and that a

very remarkable one, is recorded in the verses that I have now chosen for the subject of your meditation.

The verses give us an account of what is generally called our Lord's *Transfiguration*; his being wonderfully changed, and his being wonderfully owned by his Father upon the mount. Some think that this was done upon a sabbath-day; and the particular occasion of our blessed Lord's condescending to let his servants have such a sight as this, we may gather from the 27th verse. It seems our blessed Lord had been promising a great reward to those who should not be ashamed of him: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and of his Father, and of the holy angels." In this threatening is implied, a reward to those who should not be ashamed of him: "But, (adds he) I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, who shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God:" As much as to say, There will be a day, when I will come in the glory of my Father and of his holy angels; but I tell you there are some of my favourites; I tell you of a truth, though you may think it too good news, there are some of you that shall not taste of death, till ye shall see the kingdom of God. Some divines think, that this promise has reference to our Lord's erecting a gospel church; and if we take it in this sense, it means that the Apostles, who were then present, some of them at least, should not die, till they saw Satan's kingdom in a great measure pulled down, and the Redeemer's gospel-kingdom erected. Some think it has a peculiar reference to *John*, who it seems survived all the other Apostles, and lived till Christ came; that is, till he came to destroy *Jerusalem*. But it is the opinion of Mr. *Henry*, of Bishop *Hall*, of *Burkit*, and others, who have written upon this passage, that our blessed Lord has a peculiar reference to the transfiguration upon the

mount: “There be some of you here, that shall not taste of death, till ye see my transfiguration upon the mount; till ye see some glorified saint come down from heaven and pay me a visit, and consequently see a little of that kingdom of God, which ye shall have a full sight of, when ye come to glory.” This seems to be the right interpretation. If you will look to the margin of your Bibles, you will see the parallel place in *Matthew*, where the account of our Lord’s transfiguration is given, and there you will find it immediately follows upon this promise of our Lord.

Well, as Christ had told them, that they should not taste of death, till they had seen the kingdom of God, why the Evangelist, at the 28th verse, tells us, “It came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took *Peter*, and *John*, and *James*, and went up into a mountain to pray.” About an eight days; that is, as Bishop *Hall* thinks, upon the sabbath-day; or, according to some, the first day of the week, which was hereafter to be the Christian sabbath; our blessed Lord takes *Peter*, *John*, and *James*: Why did not the Lord Jesus Christ take more of his disciples? Why three, and these three? And why three only? Our blessed Lord was pleased to take three and no more, to show us that he is a sovereign agent; to show us, that though he loved all his disciples, yet there are some to whom he is pleased to allow peculiar visits. He loved *Peter*, and all the other disciples; yet *John* was the disciple that he peculiarly loved. And he took three rather than one, because three were sufficient to testify the truth of his being transfigured: “Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” And he took no more than three, because these three were enough. And he took these three, *Peter*, *John*, and *James*, in particular, because these very persons that were now to see Christ transfigured, were hereafter to see him agonizing in the garden, sweating great drops of blood falling unto the

ground. And had not these three disciples seen Christ upon the mount, the seeing him afterwards in the garden, might have staggered them exceedingly: they might have doubted whether it was possible for the Son of God to be in such doleful circumstances. Well, our Lord takes these three "up into a mountain." Why so? Because Christ Jesus was to be like *Moses*, who was taken up into a mountain, when God intended to deliver unto him the moral law: And our blessed Lord went up into a mountain, because a mountain befriended devotion. When he had a mind to retire to pray to his Father, he went to such places where he could be most secret, and give the greatest vent to his heart. Thus we are told, that once when *Peter* prayed, it was upon the house-top. And if we have a mind to be near God, we should choose such places as are freest from ostentation, and that most befriend our communion with God. And what doth Christ, when he got up into a mountain? We are told, he went up into a mountain "to pray." Christ had no corruption to confess, and he had but few wants of his own to be relieved; yet we hear of Christ being much in prayer; we hear of his going up to a mountain to pray; of his rising up a great while before it was day to pray; and of his spending a whole night in prayer to God.

In the 29th verse, you have an account of the effect of our Lord's praying; "As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering." I would have you take notice, that our Lord was not changed in respect of his body, while he was going up to the mount, but when he got upon the mount, and while engaged in prayer. It is sufficient that way for our souls to be transformed: the time we are more particularly to expect the influences of God's Spirit, is, when we are engaged in prayer. There seems to be a very great propriety in our Lord's being transfigured or changed upon the mount. I hope I need inform none of you, that when

Moses went up to the mount of God, God was pleased to speak to him face to face; and when he came down from the mount, the people of *Israel* observed that *Moses*'s face shone so, that he was obliged to have a veil put upon his face. Now the shining of *Moses*'s face, was a proof to the people, that *Moses* had been conversing with God. And *Moses* told the people, "That the Lord would raise up unto them a prophet like unto him, whom the people were to hear." God the Father, in order to give his Son (considering him as man) a testimony that he was a prophet, was pleased not only to let his face glitter or shine; but to show that he was a prophet far superior to *Moses*, he was pleased to let his garment be white and glistering, and "his countenance (as we are told by another Evangelist) did shine as the sun." What a change was here! What a sight! Methinks I see *Peter*, *James*, and *John* surprized: and, indeed, well might the Evangelist, considering what happened, usher in the following part of the story with the word *Behold*; "Behold, there talked with him two men, *Moses* and *Elias*:" And in the 31st verse, you have an account of their dress, "They appeared in glory;" and of their discourse, "They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at *Jerusalem*."

"Behold, two men, which were *Moses* and *Elias*;" these were two very proper persons to come upon this embassy to the Son of God. *Moses* was the great lawgiver, *Elias* was the great restorer of the law: The body of *Moses* was hidden and never found, *Elias*'s body was translated immediately, and carried up in a fiery chariot to heaven: And it may be that this was done particularly, because these two were hereafter to have the honour of waiting upon the Son of God. "They appeared in glory;" that is, their bodies were now in that glorious habit, in which the bodies of believers are to be at the morning of the resurrection. Christ was, as it were,

now sitting in his royal robes; and as it is usual for ambassadors, when they are to be admitted into the king's presence, on bringing a message from one king to another, to appear in all their grandeur, to make the message more solemn; so here, these heavenly messengers being to wait upon the Lord Jesus Christ, are invested as with royal dignity, they appeared in glory, and "they spake of his decease which he should accomplish at *Jerusalem*," they came to tell the Redeemer of his sufferings, and of the place of his sufferings, and to acquaint him, that his sufferings, however great, however bitter, were to be *accomplished*; that there was to be an end put to them, as our Lord himself speaks, "The things concerning me are to have an end." What other particulars they spoke to our Lord, we are not told. But what effect this had upon the disciples, you may learn from the 32d verse, "*Peter*, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep."

We are not to suppose, that *Peter*, *James* and *John*, were now asleep in a literal sense; no, if we compare this, with another passage of holy writ, I mean the account given us of *Daniel*'s being impressed and overcome, when he saw the angel of the Lord, you will find that this sleep implies what we call a swoon. They were overcome with the sight of the glory of Christ's garments, the glistering of his body, and the glory in *Moses* and *Elias* appeared: these quite overcame them, sunk them down, and, like the Queen of *Sheba*, when she saw *Solomon*'s glory, they had no life in them. But they recovered themselves: "when they were awake," that is, when they had recovered their strength, when God had put strength into them, as the angel put strength into *Daniel*, "they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." And how do you think they gazed upon Christ? how may we suppose they fixed their eyes upon *Moses* and *Elias*? *Peter*, who was always the first speaker, out of the abundance of his heart, spoke upon this

occasion. Verse 33. “And it came to pass as they departed from him, *Peter* said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias*, not knowing what he said.” *Peter*, when he had drank a little of Christ’s new wine, speaks like a person intoxicated; he was overpowered with the brightness of the manifestation. “Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias*.” It is well added, “not knowing what he said.” That he should cry out, “Master, it is good for us to be here,” in such good company, and in so glorious a condition, is no wonder; which of us all would not have been apt to have done the same? But to talk of building tabernacles, and one for Christ, and one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias*, was saying something for which *Peter* himself must stand reproved. Surely, *Peter*, thou wast not quite awake! thou talkest like one in a dream: If thy Lord had taken thee at thy word, what a poor tabernacle wouldst thou have had, in comparison of that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, in which thou hast long since dwelt, now the earthly house of the tabernacle of thy body is dissolved? What! build tabernacles below, and have the crown, before thou hast borne the cross? O *Peter, Peter*! “Master, spare thyself,” sticks too too closely to thee: And why so selfish, *Peter*? Carest thou not for thy fellow disciples that are below, who came not up with thee to the mount? carest thou not for the precious souls, that are as sheep having no shepherd, and must perish for ever, unless thy Master descends from the mount to teach, and to die for them? wouldst thou thus eat thy spiritual morsels alone? Besides, if thou art for building tabernacles, why must there be three of them, one for Christ, and one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias*? are Christ and the prophets divided? do they not sweetly harmonize and agree in one? did they not prophesy concerning the

sufferings of thy Lord, as well as of the glory that should follow? Alas, how unlike is their conversation to thine? *Moses* and *Elias* came down to talk of suffering, and thou art dreaming of building I know not what tabernacles. Surely, *Peter*, thou art so high upon the mount, that thy head runs giddy.

However, in the midst of these infirmities, there was something that bespoke the honesty and integrity of his heart. Though he knew not very well what he said, yet he was not so stupid as his pretended successor at *Rome*. He does not fall down and worship these two departed saints, neither do I hear him say to either, *Ora pro nobis*; he had not so learnt Christ; no, he applies himself directly to the head, "he said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here." And though he was for building, yet he would not build without his Master's leave. "Master, let us build," or, as St. *Mark* words it, "wilt thou that we build three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias*?" I do not hear him add, and one for *James*, and one for *John*, and one for *Peter*. No, he would willingly stay out with them upon the mount, though it was in the cold and dark night, so that Christ and his heavenly attendants were taken care of. The sweetness of such a heavenly vision, would more than compensate for any bodily suffering that might be the consequence of their longer abode there: nay farther, he does not desire that either Christ, or *Moses*, or *Elias*, should have any trouble in building; neither does he say, let my curates, *James* and *John*, build, whilst I sit idle and lord it over my brethren; but he says, "let us build;" he will work as hard, if not harder than either of them, and desire to be distinguished only by his activity, enduring hardness, and his zeal to promote the welfare of their common Lord and Master.

Doubtless, *Peter* had read how the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, and the temple of old; and now Jesus is transfigured, and *Moses* and *Elias*

appear in glory, he thinks it right that new tabernacles shall be erected for them. Such a mixture of nature and grace, of short-sightedness and infirmity, is there in the most ardent and well-meant zeal of the very best of men, when nearest the throne of grace, or even upon the mount with God. Perfection in any grace must be looked for, or expected, only among the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. Those who talk of any such thing on earth, like *Peter*, they know not what they say.

But how came *Peter* so readily to distinguish which was *Moses*, and which was *Elias*? He seems to speak without the least hesitation, "Let us build three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias*," as though he was very well acquainted with them, whereas they had both been dead, long, long before *Peter* was born. Was there, do you imagine, any thing distinguishing in their apparel? or any thing in their conversation that discovered them? or rather, did he not know them here on the mount, as we may from hence infer, that departed saints do, and will know each other in heaven, even by intuition and immediate revelation? But alas! how transient are our views of heaven, during our sojourning here on earth: Verse 34. "Whilst he thus spake," whilst *Peter* was talking of building tabernacles, whilst he was saying, "it is good for us to be here," whilst he was dreaming that his mountain was so strong that it never could be moved, "there came a cloud and overshadowed them." St. *Matthew* observes, it was a bright cloud, not dark like that on mount *Sinai*, but bright, because the gospel opens to us a far more bright dispensation than that of the law. This overshadowed, and thereby not only filled them with an holy awe, but also screened them, in some measure, from the brightness of that glory with which they were now surrounded, and which otherwise would have been insupportable. This cloud was like the veil thrown on the face of *Moses*, and

prepared them for the voice which they were soon to hear coming out of it. I am not much surprized at being informed by St. *Matthew*, that "they feared as they entered into the cloud," or by St. *Mark*, that "they were sore afraid." For since the fall, there is such a consciousness in us all of deserved wrath, that we cannot help fearing when we enter into a cloud, even though Jesus Christ himself be in the midst of it. Ah *Peter*, where is thy talk of building tabernacles now? is thy strong mountain so quickly removed? what, come down so soon? why do we not now hear thee saying, "It is good for us to be here?" Alas! he and his fellow disciples are quite struck dumb; see how they tremble, and, like *Moses* upon another occasion, exceedingly quake and fear. But how quickly are those fears dispelled, how soon is the tumult of their minds hushed and calmed, with that soul-reviving voice that came from the excellent glory, verse 35, "This is my beloved Son, hear him."

St. *Mark* and St. *Matthew* add "in whom I am well pleased." The same testimony that God the Father gave to the blessed Jesus at his baptism, before he entered upon his temptation, is now repeated, in order to strengthen and prepare him for his impending agony in the garden. Probably, it was a small still though articulate voice, attended neither with thunder nor lightning, nor the sound of a trumpet, but, agreeable to the blessed news which it contained, ushered in with tokens of unspeakable complacency and love. God the Father, hereby gives *Moses* and *Elias* a solemn discharge, as though they were sent from heaven on purpose to give up their commission to their rightful Lord, and like the morning star, disappear when the Sun of Righteousness himself arises to bring in a gospel day. "This is my beloved Son, hear Him." But the emphasis upon the word *this*; this Son of Man, this Jesus, whom you are shortly to see in a bloody

sweat, blindfolded, spit upon, buffeted, scourged, and at length hanging upon a tree, I am not ashamed to own to be my Son, my only begotten Son, who was with me before the heavens were made, or the foundations of the earth were laid; my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom my soul delighteth, and whom I do by these presents, publicly constitute and appoint to be the king, priest, and prophet of the church. "Hear ye Him." No longer look to *Moses* or *Elias*, no longer expect to be saved by the works of the law; but by the preaching and application of the ever-blessed gospel. Hear ye him, so as to believe on, love, serve, obey, and, if needs be, to die and lay down your very lives for him. "Hear him;" hear what he hath to say, for he comes with a commission from above. Hear his doctrine; hear him, so as to obey him; hear him, so as to put in practice his precepts, and copy after his good example.

In the 36th verse, we have the close of this heavenly feast; "When the voice was past, Jesus was found alone; and they kept it close, and told no man in those days, any of those things which they had seen." If we compare this, with the account which the other Evangelists give of our blessed Lord's transfiguration, you will find this was done by Christ's order: *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, would otherwise have gone down and told the whole world, that they had seen the Lord Christ upon the mount of transfiguration; but our Lord ordered them to keep it silent. Why so? If they had gone down from the mount, and told it to the other disciples, it might have raised ill blood in the others; they might have said, Why did our Master single out *Peter*, *James*, and *John*? Why might not we have had the privilege of going up to the mount as well as they? Had they said, that their Lord was transfigured, people would not have believed them; they would have thought, that *Peter*, *James*, and *John* were only enthusiasts; but if they kept

it till after his resurrection, and he had broken the gates of death, for them then to say, that they saw him upon the mount transfigured, would corroborate the evidence.

I have thus paraphrased the words for your better understanding the account the Evangelist gives of our blessed Lord's transfiguration; but I have not yet done; I have been speaking to your heads; the practical part is yet to come. O that God may reach your hearts! And though, according to order, I ought to begin with the practical inferences that might be drawn from the first part; yet, I think it best to show you, who are the people of God, especially you young converts, that have honesty, but not much prudence, what instructions our Lord would here have you to learn.

"When the voice was past, Jesus was found alone, and they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen." There is nothing more common, when God vouchsafes communications to a poor soul, than for the person that enjoys them, to go and tell all that he has seen and felt, and often at improper seasons and to improper persons. I remember that Mr. *Henry* observes, "*Joseph* had more honesty than he had policy, or else he would never have told his brethren of his dreams." Young Christians are too apt to blunder thus: I am sure it is a fault of which I have been exceedingly guilty, speaking of things which, perhaps, had better been concealed; which is a fault God's people are too apt to fall into. Though it is good for those that have seen Christ, and that have felt his love, to tell others what God hath done for their souls; yet, however you may think of it now, when you come down from the mount, and know yourselves a little, ye will find reason often to hold your tongue. Young Christians are like children, to whom if you give a little money in their pocket, they cannot be quiet till they have spent it upon something or other: young Christians,

when they get a little of God, are ready to talk too much of it. They should therefore beware, and know when to speak, and when to be silent.

But, my dear friends, did our Lord Jesus Christ take *Peter*, *James*, and *John* into a mountain to pray? Are any of you fathers, mothers, masters and mistresses of families? Learn then from hence to take your children, your servants, and those that belong to you, from the world, at certain times, and not only pray for them, but pray with them. If Christ did thus, who had few wants of his own to be supplied, and nothing to confess and lament over; if Christ was such a lover of prayer, surely, you and I, who have so many wants to be supplied, so many corruptions to mourn over; you and I should spend much time in prayer. I do not say that you are to lock yourselves up in your closets, and not mind your shops or farms, or worldly business; I only say, that you should take care to husband all your time: and if you are God's children, you will frequently retire from the world, and seek a visit from your God.

Was the Lord Jesus transformed or transfigured, while he was praying? Learn hence, to be much in spiritual prayer. The way to have the soul transformed, changed into, and made like unto God, is frequently to converse with God. We say, a man is as his company. Persons by conversing together, frequently catch each others tempers: and if you have a mind to imbibe the divine temper, pray much. And as Christ's garments became white and glistering, so shall your souls get a little of God's light to shine upon them.

Did *Moses* and *Elias* appear in glory? Are there any old saints here? I doubt not but there are a considerable number. And are any of you afraid of death? Do any of you carry about with you a body that weighs down your immortal soul? I am sure a poor creature is preaching to you, that every day

drags a crazy load along. But come, believers, come, ye children of God, come, ye aged decrepid saints, come and trample upon that monster death. As thou goest over yonder church-yard, do as I know an old excellent Christian in *Maryland* did; go, sit upon the grave, and meditate on thine own dissolution. Thou mayest, perhaps, have a natural fear of dying: the body and the soul do not care to part without a little sympathy and a groan; but O look yonder, look up to heaven, see there thy Jesus, thy Redeemer, and learn, that thy body is to be fashioned hereafter like unto Christ's most glorious body; that poor body which is now subject to gout and gravel, and that thou canst scarce drag along; that poor body, which hinders thee so much in the spiritual life, will ere long hinder thee no more: it shall be put into the grave; but though it be sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption; though it is sown in dishonour, it shall be raised again in glory. This consideration made blessed *Paul* to cry out, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" Thy soul and body shall be united together again, and thou shalt be "for ever with the Lord." Those knees of thine, which perhaps are hard by kneeling in prayer; that tongue of thine, which hath sung hymns to Christ; those hands of thine, which have wrought for God; those feet, which have ran to Christ's ordinances; shall all, in the twinkling of an eye, be changed; and thou shalt be able to stand under an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. Come then, ye believers in Christ, look beyond the grave; come, ye dear children of God, and however weak and sickly ye are now, say, Blessed be God, I shall soon have a body strong, full of vigour and of glory.

But as this speaks comfort to saints, it speaks terror to sinners, to all persons that live and die out of Christ. It is the opinion of Archbishop *Usher*, that as the bodies of the saints shall be glorified, so the bodies of the

damned shall be deformed. And if this be true, alas! what a poor figure will the fine ladies cut, who die without a Christ! What a poor figure will the fine gentleman cut in the morning of the resurrection, that now dresses up his body, and at the same time neglects to secure an interest in Christ and eternal happiness! It is the opinion, likewise, of Archbishop *Usher*, that damned souls will lose all the good tempers they had here; so that though God gave unregenerate people a constitutional meekness, good nature, and courage, for the benefit of the commonwealth; yet, the use of these things being over, and they having died without Christ, and it being impossible there will be an appearance of good in hell, their good tempers will be for ever lost. If this be so, it is an awful consideration; and I think persons who love their bodies, should also hence take care to secure the welfare of their souls.

Did *Peter* know which was *Moses* and which *Elias*? Then I think, and God be praised for it, it is plain from this and other passages of scripture, that we shall know one another when we come to heaven. *Dives* knew *Lazarus*: "Father *Abraham*, send *Lazarus*:" And we are told, "he saw *Lazarus* sitting in *Abraham*'s bosom." *Adam* knew his wife *Eve*; though cast into a deep sleep when God made her out of his rib, yet, by a kind of intuition, he says, "This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." And it is on this account, that the Apostle, speaking to the *Philippians*, says, "Ye are my joy and crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord." What comfort will this be to a spiritual father! Says one, Here is the man, O Lord Jesus, that brought my soul to taste of thy love; says another, This is the man, that at such a time, and with such words, struck my heart: thou, O Lord, knowest it. Then the spiritual father will rejoice over his children. You that have met and have prayed together, sighed and sympathized together, and

told your temptations to one another, shall be for ever with the Lord and with each other. There we shall see *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob* sitting, with all the redeemed company; and we shall know the names of every one mentioned in the book of God. O blessed prospect! O blessed time! Who that thinks of this, of seeing the Lamb sitting upon the throne, with all God's people about him, but must desire to go to heaven, and be for ever, for ever with the Lord. And if there is such comfort for believers to know one another in heaven, with what comfort may any of you, that have lost fathers, mothers, or friends, think of them: we are parted for a little while, but we shall see them again. My father died in Christ, my mother died in the Lord, my husband, my wife, was a follower of Jesus; I shall see them, though not now; I shall go to them, but they shall not return to me! This may keep you from sorrowing as persons without hope; and keep you from being so cruel, as to wish them to come down to this evil world.

But O what a dreadful consideration is this for damned souls! I believe, that as glorified spirits will know one another, so will damned souls know one another too. And as the company of the blessed increases the happiness of heaven, so the company of the damned will increase their torments. What made *Dives* to put up that petition? "I have five brethren; send somebody to my father's house to testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." One would imagine at first reading, that hell had made *Dives* charitable, and that though he was ill natured on earth, yet he had acquired some good nature in hell. No, no, there is not a spark of good nature in the place of torment. But *Dives* knew, if his five brethren came there, they might say, We may thank you, next to an evil heart, for coming hither; you made us drink healths, till we were drunk; you taught us to game, to curse, to swear, &c. He knew very well, that his five brethren being brought to hell

by his example, hell would be heated five times hotter to torment his soul. One will cry out, Cursed be the day that ever I was companion with such an one in sin; cursed be the day that ever we hearkened to one another's advice, and were allured by each others example to sin against God.

But did a cloud overshadow *Peter*, *James*, and *John*? were heavenly and divine visits here but short? Then wonder not, ye people of God, if ye are upon the mount one hour, and down in the valley of the shadow of death the next. There is nothing in the world more common, after you have been in a good frame, than for a cloud to overshadow you. We generally say, "It is good to be here," and often make a Christ of our graces; and therefore the Lord sends a cloud to overshadow us. But never fear; God shall speak to you out of the cloud; God will reveal himself to you; this cloud shall soon be gone; ere long we shall be in heaven, and in that glory where no cloud can possibly reach us.

I can now only mention one thing more, and that is, Did the Father say, "This is my beloved Son, hear him?" then let every one of our hearts echo to this testimony given of Christ, "This is my beloved Saviour." Did God so love the world, as to send his only begotten Son, his well beloved Son to preach to us? then, my dear friends, hear Him. What God said seventeen hundred years ago, immediately by a voice from heaven, concerning his Son upon the mount, that same thing God says to you immediately by his word, "Hear him." If ye never heard him before, hear him now. Hear him so as to take him to be your prophet, priest, and your king; hear him, so as to take him to be your God and your all. Hear him to-day, ye youth, while it is called to-day; hear him now, lest God should cut you off before you have another invitation to hear him; hear him while he cries, "Come unto me;" hear him while he opens his hand and his heart; hear him while he knocks at

the door of your souls, lest you should hear him saying, “Depart, depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Hear him, ye old and grey-headed, hear him, ye that have one foot in the grave; hear him, I say; and if ye are dull of hearing, beg of God to open the ears of your hearts, and your blind eyes; beg of God that you may have an enlarged and a believing heart, and that ye may know what the Lord God saith concerning you. God will resent it, he will avenge himself on his adversaries, if you do not hear a blessed Saviour. He is God’s son, he is God’s beloved son; he came upon a great errand, even to shed his precious blood for sinners; he came to cleanse you from all sin, and to save you with an everlasting salvation. Ye who have heard him, hear him again; still go on, believe in and obey him, and by-and-by you shall hear him saying, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” May God grant it to you all, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake. *Amen*, and *Amen*.

SERMON XXXI.

The Care of the Soul urged as the one thing needful.

Luke x. 42.

But one thing is needful.

IT was the amiable character of our blessed Redeemer, that "he went about doing good," this great motive, which animated all his actions, brought him to the house of his friend *Lazarus*, at *Bethany*, and directed his behaviour there. Though it was a season of recess from public labour, our Lord brought the sentiments and the pious cares of a preacher of righteousness into the parlour of a friend; and there his doctrine dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew, on the little happy circle that were then surrounding him. *Mary*, the sister of *Lazarus*, with great delight made one amongst them; she seated herself at the feet of Jesus, in the posture of an humble disciple; and we have a great deal of reason to believe, that *Martha*, his other sister, would gladly have been with her there; but domestic cares pressed hard upon her, and "she was cumbered with much serving," being, perhaps, too solicitous to prepare a sumptuous entertainment for her

heavenly master and the train that attended him. Happy are they, who in a crowd of business do not lose something of the spirituality of their minds, and of the composure and sweetness of their tempers. This good woman comes to our Lord with too impatient a complaint; insinuating some little reflection, not only on *Mary*, but on himself too. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me." Our Lord, willing to take all opportunities of suggesting useful thoughts, answers her in these words, of which the text is a part, "*Martha, Martha*, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful; and *Mary* has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Alas, *Martha*! the concerns of the soul are of so much greater importance than those of the body, that I cannot blame your sister on this occasion: I rather recommend her to your imitation, and caution you, and all my other friends, to be much on your guard, that in the midst of your worldly cares, you do not lose sight of what much better deserves your attention.

I shall consider these words, "One thing is needful," as a kind of aphorism, or wise and weighty sentence, which dropped from the mouth of our blessed Redeemer, and is evidently worthy of our most serious regard. I shall,

I. Consider what we are to understand by "The one thing" here spoken of.

II. Shew you what is intended, when it is said to be the one thing *needful*.

III. I will shew how justly it may be so represented, or prove that it is, indeed, the one thing needful. And then conclude with some reflections.

My friends, the words which are now before us, are to this day, as true, as they were seventeen hundred years ago. Set your hearts to attend to them. O that you may, by divine grace, be awakened to hear them with a due regard,

and be so impressed with the plain and serious things which are now to be spoken, as you probably would, if I were speaking by your dying beds, and you had the near and lively view of eternity!

First, I am to consider, what we are to understand by the "one thing needful."

Now in a few words, it is the "*Care of the soul*," opposed, as you see in the text, to the care, the excessive care of the body; to which *Martha* was gently admonished by our Lord. This is a general answer, and it comprehends a variety of important particulars, which is the business of our ministry often to open to you at large: The care of the soul, implies a readiness to hear the words of Christ, to seat ourselves with *Mary* at his feet, and to receive both the law and the gospel from his mouth. It supposes, that we learn from this divine teacher the worth of our souls, their danger, and their remedy; and that we become above all things solicitous about their eternal salvation. That, heartily repenting of all our sins, and cordially believing the everlasting gospel, we receive the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and life, resting our souls on the value of his atonement, and the efficacy of his grace. It imports, the sincere dedication of ourselves to the service of God, and a faithful adherence to it, notwithstanding all oppositions arising from inward corruptions, or outward temptations; and a resolute perseverance in the way of gospel dependance, 'till we receive the end of our faith in our compleat salvation. This is the "one thing needful," represented indeed in various scriptures by various names. Sometimes it is called "Regeneration," or "the new creature," because it is the blessed work of God's efficacious grace. Sometimes the "Fear of God," and sometimes "his love, and the keeping his commandments;" and very frequently in the new testament it is called "faith," or "receiving Christ, and believing on

him," which therefore is represented as the "great work of God," *John* vi. 29. the great thing which God in his glorious gospel requires, as well as by his spirit produces in us: each of these, if rightly understood and explained, comprehends all that I have said on this head. On the whole, we may say, that, as the body is one, though it has many members, and the soul is one, though it has many faculties, so in the present case, this real vital religion is "one thing," one sacred principle of divine life, bringing us to attend to the care of our souls, as of our greatest treasure. It is one thing, notwithstanding all the variety of views in which it may be considered, and of characters under which it may be described. I proceed,

Secondly, To consider what may be intended in the representation which is here made of it, as the "one thing *needful*."

Now I think it naturally includes these three particulars: it is a matter of universal concern; of the highest importance; and of so comprehensive a nature, that every thing which is truly worthy of our regard, may be considered as included in, or subservient to it. Let me a little illustrate each of these particulars.

1. The care of the soul may be called the "one thing needful," as it is matter of universal concern.

Our Lord, you see, speaks of it as needful in the general. He says not, for this or that particular person; or for those of such an age, station, or circumstance in life, but needful for all. And indeed, when discoursing on such a subject, one might properly introduce it with those solemn words of the psalmist, "Give ear, all ye people, hear, all ye inhabitants of the earth, both high and low, rich and poor, together," *Psalm* xlix. 1, 2. For it is the concern of all, from the king that sits upon the throne, to the servant that grindeth at the mill, or the beggar that lieth upon the dunghill. It is needful

for us that are *ministers*, for our own salvation is concerned: and woe, insupportable woe will be to our souls, if we think it enough to recommend it to others, and to talk of it in a warm, or an awful manner, in public assemblies, or in our private converse, while it does not penetrate our hearts, as our own greatest care. Our case will then be like that of the *Israelitish* lord in *Samaria*, *2 Kings* vii. 2. who was employed to distribute the corn when the siege was raised; though we see it with our eyes, and dispense it with our hands, we shall ourselves die miserably, without tasting the blessings we impart. It is needful to all you that are our *hearers*, without the exception of one single person. It is needful to you that are *rich*, though it may on some accounts be peculiarly difficult for you; even as difficult, comparatively speaking, as for a "Camel to go through the eye of a needle," *Matthew* xix. 24. yet if it be neglected, you are poor in the midst of all your wealth, and miserable in all your abundance; a wretch starving for hunger, in a magnificent palace and a rich dress, would be less the object of compassion than you. It is needful for you that are *poor*; though you are distressed with so many anxious cares, "what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and wherewithal you shall be cloathed," *Matthew* vi. 31. The nature that makes you capable of such anxieties as these, argues your much greater concern in the "bread which endures to eternal life," *John* vi. 27. than in that by which this mortal body must be supported. It is needful for you that are *advanced in years*; though your strength be impaired so that the "grashopper is a burthen," *Ecclesiastes* xii. 5. and though you have by your long continuance in sin rendered this great work so hard, that were it less important, one would in pity let you alone without reminding you of it: yet, late as it is, it must be done, or your hoary heads will be brought down to the grave with wrath, and sink under a curse aggravated by every year and

by every day of your lives. It is needful to you that are *young*, though solicited by so many gay vanities, to neglect it, though it may be represented as an unseasonable care at present, yet I repeat it, it is needful to you; immediately needful, unless you who walk so frequently over the dust of your brethren and companions, that died in the bloom and vigour of their days, have made some secret covenant with the grave for yourselves, and found out some wonderful method, hitherto unknown, of securing this precarious life, and of answering for days and months to come, while others cannot answer for one single moment.

2. The care of the soul is "a matter of the highest importance;" beyond any thing which can be brought into comparison with it.

As *Solomon* says of wisdom, that "it is more precious than rubies, and that all things which can be desired are not to be compared with her," *Proverbs* iii. 15. So I may properly say of this great and most important branch of wisdom; whatever can be laid in the balance with it, will be found altogether lighter than vanity. This is strongly implied when it is said in the text, "one thing is needful;" one thing, and *one thing alone* is so. Just as the blessed God is said to be "only wise," *1 Timothy* i. 17. and "only holy," *Revelation* xv. 4. because the wisdom and holiness of angels and men is as nothing, when compared with his. What seems most great and most important in life, what kings and senates, what the wisest and greatest of this world are employing their time, their councils, their pens, their labours upon, are trifles, when compared with this one thing. A man may subsist, he may in some considerable measure be happy, without learning, without riches, without titles, without health, without liberty, without friends, nay, though "the life be more than meat, and the body than raiment," *Matthew* vi. 25. yet may he be happy, unspeakably happy, without the body itself.

But he cannot be so, in the neglect of the one thing needful. I must therefore bespeak your regard to it in the words of *Moses*, “it is not a light thing, but it is your life,” *Deuteronomy* xxxii. 47.

3. The care of the soul is of so comprehensive a nature, that “every thing truly worthy of our regard may be considered as included in it, or subservient to it.”

As *David* observes, that “the commandment of God is exceeding broad,” *Psalm* cxix. 96. so we may say of this one thing needful; or as *Solomon* very justly and emphatically expresses it, “to fear God and to keep his commandments is the whole duty of man,” *Ecclesiastes* xii. 13. his whole duty, and his whole interest; and every thing which is wise and rational does in its proper place and connection make a part of it. We should judge very ill concerning the nature of this care, if we imagined, that it consisted merely in acts of devotion, or religious contemplation; it comprehends all the lovely and harmonious band of social and humane virtues. It requires a care of society, a care of our bodies, and of our temporal concerns; but then all is to be regulated, directed, and animated by proper regards to God, Christ, and immortality. Our food and our rest, our trades and our labours, are to be attended to, and all the offices of humanity performed in obedience to the will of God, for the glory of Christ, and in a view to improving the mind in a growing meetness for a state of compleat perfection. Name any thing which has no reference at all to this, and you name a worthless trifle, however it may be gilded to allure the eye, or however it may be sweetened to gratify the taste. Name a thing, which, instead of thus improving the soul, has a tendency to debase and pollute, to enslave and endanger it, and you name what is most unprofitable and mischievous, be the wages of iniquity ever so great; most foul and

deformed, be it in the eyes of men ever so honourable, or in their customs ever so fashionable. Thus I have endeavoured to shew you what we may suppose implied in this expression of "one thing being needful." I am now,

Thirdly, To shew you with how much propriety the care of the soul may be represented under this character, as the one thing needful, or as a matter of universal and most serious concern, to which every thing else is to be considered as subservient, if at all worthy of our care and pursuit.

There let me appeal to the sentiments of those who must be allowed most capable of judging, and to the evident reason of the case itself, as it must appear to every unprejudiced mind.

1. Let me argue "from the opinions of those who must be allowed most capable of judging in such an affair," and we shall quickly see that the care of the soul appears to them, the one thing needful.

Is the judgment of the blessed God "according to truth," how evidently and how solemnly is that judgment declared? I will not say merely in this or the other particular passage of his word, but in the whole series of his revelations to the children of men, and the whole tenor of his addresses to them. Is not this the language of all, from the early days of *Job* and *Moses* to the conclusion of the canon of scripture. *Job* xxviii. 21, 23, 28. "If wisdom be hid from the eyes of all the living, surely God understandeth the way thereof, he knoweth the place thereof;" and if he does, it is plainly pointed out, for "unto man he still saith, behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding." By *Moses* he declared to the *Israelites*, that "to do the commandments of the Lord would be their wisdom and their understanding in the sight of the nations, who should hear his statutes, and say, surely this is a wise and an understanding people," *Deuteronomy* iv. 6. When he had raised up one man on the throne

of *Israel*, with the character of the wisest that ever lived upon the face of the earth, he chose to make him eminently a teacher of this great truth. And though now all that he spoke on the curious and less concerning subjects of natural philosophy is lost, “though he spoke of trees from the cedar to the hyssop, and of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes,” *1 Kings* iv. 33. that saying is preserved in which he testifies, that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” *Proverbs* i. 7, 9, 10. and those *Proverbs*, in almost every line of which, they who neglect God and their own souls, are spoken of as fools, as if that were the most proper signification of the word, while the religious alone are honoured with the title of wise. But in this respect, as attesting this truth in the name of God and in his own, “a greater than *Solomon* is here.”

For if we inquire what it was that our Lord Jesus Christ judged to be the one thing needful, the words of the text contain as full an answer as can be imagined; and the sense of them is repeated in a very lively and emphatical manner, in that remarkable passage wherein our Lord not only declares his own judgment, but seems to appeal to the consciences of all, as obliged by their own secret convictions to subscribe to the truth of it. “What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” *Matthew* xvi. 26. If it were once lost, what would he not be willing to give to redeem it? But it depends not on the words of Christ alone. Let his actions, his sufferings, his blood, his death, speak what a value he set on the souls of men. Is it to be imagined, that he would have relinquished heaven, have dwelt upon earth, have laboured by night and by day, and at last have expired on the cross, for a matter of light importance? Or can we think that he, in whom “dwell all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,”

Colossians ii. 3, 9. was mistaken in judgment so deliberately formed, and so solemnly declared?

If after this, there were room to mention human judgment and testimonies, how easy would it be to produce a cloud of witnesses in such a cause, and to shew that the wisest and best of men in all ages of the world have agreed in this point, that amidst all the diversities of opinion and profession, which succeeding generations have produced, this has been the unanimous judgment, this the common and most solicitous care of those whose characters are most truly valuable, to secure the salvation of their own souls, and to promote the salvation of others.

And let me beseech you seriously to reflect, what are the characters of those who have taken the liberty, most boldly and freely to declare their judgment on the contrary side? The number of such is comparatively few; and when you compare what you have observed of their temper and conduct, I will not say with what you read of holy men of old, but with what you have yourselves seen in the faithful, active, and zealous servants of Christ, in these latter ages, with whom you have conversed; do you on the whole find, that the rejecters and deriders of the gospel, are in other respects so much more prudent and judicious, so much wiser for themselves, and for others, that are influenced by them, as that you can be in reason obliged to pay any great deference to the authority of a few such names as these, in opposition to those to whom they are here opposed?

But you will say, and you will say it too truly, Though but a few may venture in words to declare for the neglect of the soul and its eternal interest, that the greater part of mankind do it in their actions. But are the greater part of mankind so wise, and so good, as implicitly to be followed in matters of the highest importance? And do not multitudes of these, declare

themselves on the other side, in their most serious moments? When the intoxications of worldly business and pleasures are over, and some languishing sickness forces men to solitude and retirement; what have you generally observed to be the effect of such a circumstance? Have they not then declared themselves convinced of the truth we are now labouring to establish? Nay, do we not sometimes see, that a distemper which seizes the mind with violence, yet does not utterly destroy its reasoning faculties, fixes this conviction on the soul in a few hours, nay, sometimes in a few moments? Have you never seen a gay, thoughtless creature, surprized in the giddy round of pleasures and amusements, and presently brought not only to seriousness, but terror and trembling, by the near views of death? Have you never seen the man of business and care interrupted, like the rich fool in the parable, in the midst of his schemes for the present world? And have you not heard one and the other of them owning the vanity of those pleasures and cares, which but a few days ago were every thing to them? Confessing that religion was the one thing needful, and recommending it to others with an earnestness, as if they hoped thereby to atone for their own former neglect? We that are ministers, frequently are witnesses to such things as these, and I believe few of our hearers are intire strangers to them.

Once more, what if to the testimony of the dying, we could add that of the dead? What if God were to turn aside the vail between us and the invisible world, and permit the most careless sinner in the assembly to converse for a few moments with the inhabitants of it? If you were to apply yourself to a happy Spirit, that trod the most thorny road to paradise, or passed through the most fiery trial, and to ask him, “was it worth your while to labour so much, and to endure so much for what you now possess?” Surely if the blessed in heaven were capable of indignation, it would move them to hear

that it should be made a question. And, on the other hand, if you could inquire of one tormented in that flame below, though he might once be "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day," *Luke* xvi. 19. if you could ask him, "whether his former enjoyments were an equivalent for his present sufferings and despair?" What answer do you suppose he would return? Perhaps an answer of so much horror and rage, as you would not be able so much as to indure. Or if the malignity of his nature should prevent him from returning any answer at all, surely there would be a language even in that silence, a language in the darkness, and flames, and groans of that infernal prison, which would speak to your very soul what the word of God is with equal certainty, though less forcible conviction, speaking to your ear, that "one thing is needful." You see it is so in the judgment of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, of the wisest and best of men, of many, who seemed to judge most differently of it, when they come to more deliberate and serious thought, and not only of the dying, but of the dead too, of those who have experimentally known both worlds, and most surely know what is to be preferred. But I will not rest the whole argument here; therefore,

2. I appeal to the evident reason of the case itself, as it must appear to every unprejudiced mind, that the care of the soul is indeed the one thing needful.

I still consider myself as speaking not to atheists, or to deists, but to those who not only believe the existence and providence of God, and a future state of happiness and misery, but likewise who credit the truth of the Christian revelation, as many undoubtedly do, who live in a fatal neglect of God, and their own souls. Now on these principles, a little reflection may be sufficient to convince you, that it is needful to the present repose of your

own mind; needful, if ever you would secure eternal happiness, and avoid eternal misery, which will be aggravated, rather than alleviated by all your present enjoyments.

1. The care of the soul is the one thing needful, because, “without it you cannot secure the peace of your own mind, nor avoid the upbraidings of your conscience.”

That noble faculty is indeed the vicegerent of God in the soul. It is sensible of the dignity and worth of an immortal spirit, and will sometimes cry out of the violence that is offered to it, and cry so loud, as to compel the sinner to hear, whether he will or not. Do you not sometimes find it yourselves? when you labour most to forget the concerns of your soul, do they not sometimes force themselves on your remembrance? You are afraid of the reflections of your own mind, but with all your artifice and all your resolution can you intirely avoid them? Does not conscience follow you to your beds, even if denied the opportunity of meeting you in your closets, and, though with an unwelcome voice, there warn you, “that your soul is neglected, and will quickly be lost:” Does it not follow you to your shops and your fields, when you are busiest there? Nay, I will add, does it not sometimes follow you to the feast, to the club, to the dance, and perhaps, amidst all resistance, to the theatre too? Does it not sometimes mingle your sweetest draughts with wormwood, and your gayest scenes with horror? So that you are like a tradesman, who, suspecting his affairs to be in a bad posture, lays by his books and his papers, yet sometimes they will come accidentally in his way. He hardly dares to look abroad for fear of meeting a creditor or an arrest: and if he labours to forget his cares and his dangers, in a course of luxury at home, the remembrance is sometimes awakened, and the alarm increased, by those very extravagancies in which he is attempting

to lose it. Such probably is the case of your minds, and it is a very painful state; and while things are thus within, external circumstances can no more make you happy, than a fine dress could relieve you under a violent fit of the stone. Whereas, if this great affair were secured, you might delight in reflection, as much as you now dread it; and conscience, of your bitterest enemy, would become a delightful friend, and the testimony of it your greatest rejoicing.

2. The care of the soul is the one thing needful, "because without this your eternal happiness will be lost."

A crown of everlasting glory is not surely such a trifle as to be thrown away on a careless creature, that will not in good earnest pursue it. God doth not ordinarily deal thus, even with the bounties of his common providence, which are comparatively of little value. As to these, the hand of the diligent generally makes rich, and he would be thought distracted, rather than prudent, who should expect to get an estate merely by wishing for it, or without some resolute and continued application to a proper course of action for that purpose. Now, that we may not foolishly dream of obtaining heaven, in the midst of a course of indolence and sloth, we are expresly told in the word of God, that "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force," *Matthew* xi. 12. and are therefore exhorted to "strive," with the greatest intenseness, and eagerness of mind, as the word properly signifies, "to enter in at the strait gate," for this great and important reason, "because many shall another day seek to enter in, and shall not be able," *Luke* xiii. 24. Nay, when our Lord makes the most gracious promises to the humble petitioner, he does it in such a manner as to exclude the hopes of those who are careless and indifferent. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," *Matthew*

vii. 7. If, therefore, you do not ask, seek, and knock, the door of mercy will not be opened, and eternal happiness will be lost. Not that heaven is to be obtained by our own good works: no, no; for having done all, we must account ourselves unprofitable servants.

And surely if I could say no more as to the fatal consequences of your neglect, than this, that eternal happiness will be lost, I should say enough to impress every mind, that considers what ETERNITY means. To fall into a state of everlasting forgetfulness, might indeed appear a refuge to a mind filled with the apprehension of future misery. But O how dreadful a refuge is it! Surely it is such a refuge, as a vast precipice, (from which a man falling would be dashed to pieces in a moment) might appear to a person, pursued by the officers of justice, that he might be brought out to a painful and lingering execution. If an extravagant youth would have reason to look round with anguish, on some fair and ample paternal inheritance, which he had sold or forfeited merely for the riot of a few days: how much more melancholy would it be for a rational mind to think that its eternal happiness is lost for any earthly consideration whatever? Tormenting thought! “Had I attended to that one thing which I have neglected, I might have been, through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, great and happy beyond expression, beyond conception: not merely for the little span of ten thousand thousand ages, but for ever. A line reaching even to the remotest star would not have been able to contain the number of ages, nor would millions of years have been sufficient to figure them down; this is eternity, but I have lost it, and am now on the verge of being. This lamp, which might have outlasted those of the firmament, will presently be extinguished; and I blotted out from amongst the works of God, and cut off from all the bounties of his hand.” Would not this be a very miserable case, if this were

all? And would it not be sufficient to prove this to be the better part, which, as our Lord observes, can "never be taken away?" But God forbid that we should be so unfaithful to him, and to the souls of men, as to rest in such a representation alone. I therefore add once more,

3. The care of the soul is the one thing needful, because "without it, you cannot avoid a state of eternal misery, which will be aggravated, rather than alleviated by all your present enjoyments."

Nothing can be more evident from the word of the God of truth. It there plainly appears to be a determined case, which leaves no room for a more favourable conjecture or hope. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God," *Psalm* ix. 17. "They shall go away into everlasting punishment," *Matthew* xxv. 46. into a state where they shall in vain seek death, and death shall flee from them. Oh! brethren, it is a certain, but an awful truth, that your souls will be thinking and immortal beings, even in spite of themselves. They may indeed torment, but they cannot destroy themselves. They can no more suspend their power of thought and perception, than a mirror its property of reflecting rays that fall on its surface. Do you suspect the contrary? Make the trial immediately. Command your minds to cease from thinking but for one quarter of an hour, or for half that time, and exclude every idea and every reflection. Can you succeed in that attempt? Or rather, does not thought press in with a more sensible violence on that resistance; as an anxious desire to sleep, makes us so much the more wakeful. Thus will thought follow you beyond the grave, thus will it, as an unwelcome guest, force itself upon you, when it can serve only to perplex and distress the mind. It will for ever upbraid you, that notwithstanding all the kind expostulations of God and man, notwithstanding all the keen remonstrances of conscience, and the

pleadings of the blood of Christ, you have gone on in your folly, till heaven is lost, and damnation incurred; and all, for what? for a shadow and a dream.

Oh think not, sinners, that the remembrance of your past pleasures, and of your success in your other cares, whilst that of the one thing needful was forgotten, think not that this will ease your minds. It will rather torment them the more. “Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things.” Bitter remembrance! Well might the heathen poets represent the unhappy spirits in the shades below, as eagerly catching at the water of forgetfulness, yet unable to reach it. Your present comforts will only serve to give you a livelier sense of your misery, as having tasted such degrees of enjoyment; and to inflame the reckoning, as you have misimproved those talents lodged in your hands for better purposes. Surely, if these things were believed, and seriously considered, the sinner would have no more heart to rejoice in his present prosperity, than a man would have to amuse himself with the curiosities of a fine garden, through which he was led to be broken upon the rack.

But I will enlarge no farther on these things. Would to God that the unaccountable stupidity of mens minds, and their fatal attachment to the pleasures and cares of the present life, did not make it necessary to insist on them so frequently and so copiously!

I now proceed to the reflections which naturally arise from hence, and shall only mention two.

1. How much reason have we to lament the folly of mankind in neglecting the one thing needful.

If religion be indeed the truest wisdom, then surely we have the justest reason to say with *Solomon*, “that folly and madness is in mens hearts,”

Ecclesiastes ix. 3. Is it the one thing needful? Look on the conduct of the generality of mankind, and you would imagine they thought it the one thing needless: the vainest dream, and the idlest amusement of the mind. God is admonishing them by ordinances, and providences, sometimes by such as are most awful, to lay it to heart; he speaks once, yea twice, (yea a multitude of times) but man regards not, *Job* xxxiii. 14. They profess perhaps to believe all that I have been saying, but act as if the contrary were self-evident; they will risk their souls and eternity for a thing of nought, for that, for the sake of which they would not risk so much as a hand, or a finger, or a joint, no, nor perhaps a toy that adorns it. Surely this is the wonder of angels, and perhaps of devils too, unless the observation of so many ages may have rendered it familiar to both. And can we, my Christian brethren, behold such a scene with indifference? If some epidemical madness had seized our country, or the places where we live, so that as we went from one place to another, we every where met with lunaticks, and saw amongst the rest, some perhaps of the finest genius, in the most eminent stations in life, amusing themselves with straws and bubbles, or wounding themselves and others; surely were we ever so secure from the danger of infection or assault, the sight would cut us to the heart. A good-natured man would hardly be able to go abroad, or even be desirous to live, if it must be amongst so many sad spectacles. Yet these poor creatures might, notwithstanding this, be the children of God, and the higher their frenzy rose, the nearer might their complete happiness be. But alas! the greater part of mankind are seized with a worse kind of madness, in which they are ruining their souls: and can we behold it with indifference? The Lord awaken our compassion, our prayers, and our endeavours, in

dependence on divine grace, that we may be instrumental in bringing them to their mind, and making them wise indeed, that is, wise to salvation!

2. How necessary is it that we should seriously enquire, how this one thing needful is regarded by us!

Let me entreat you to remember your own concern in it, and enquire—Have I thought seriously of it? Have I seen the importance of it? Has it lain with a due and abiding weight on my mind? Has it brought me to Christ, that I might lay the stress of these great eternal interests on him? And am I acting in the main of my life, as one that has these convictions? Am I willing, in fact, to give up other things, my interests, my pleasures, my passions to this? Am I conversing with God and with man, as one that believes these things; as one that has deliberately chosen the better part, and is determined to abide by that choice?

Observe the answer which conscience returns to these enquiries, and you will know your own part in that more particular application, with which I shall conclude.

1. Let me address those that are entirely unconcerned about the one thing needful.

Brethren, I have been stating the case at large, and now I appeal to your consciences, are these things so, or are they not? God and your own hearts best know for what the care of your soul is neglected; but be it what it will, the difference between one grain of sand and another, is not great, when it comes to be weighed against a talent of gold. Whatever it is, you had need to examine it carefully. You had need to view that commodity on all sides, of which you do in effect say, For this will I sell my soul; for this will I give up heaven, and venture hell, be heaven and hell whatever they may. In the name of God, brethren, is this the part of a man, of a rational creature? To

go on with your eyes open towards a pit of eternal ruin, because there are a few gay flowers in the way: or what if you shut your eyes, will that prevent your fall? It signifies little to say, I will not think of these things, I will not consider them: God has said, “In the last days they shall consider it perfectly,” *Jeremiah* xxiii. 20. The revels of a drunken malefactor will not prevent nor respite his execution. Pardon my plainness; if it were a fable or a tale, I would endeavour to amuse you with words, but I cannot do it where your souls are at stake.

2. I would apply to those who are, in some sense, convinced of the importance of their souls, and yet are inclined to defer that care of them a little longer, which, in the general, they see to be necessary.

I know you that are young, are under peculiar temptations to do this; though it is strange that the death of so many of your companions, should not be an answer to some of the most specious and dangerous of those temptations. Methinks, if there were the least degree of uncertainty, the importance is too weighty to put matters to the venture. But here the uncertainty is great and apparent. You must surely know, that there are critical seasons of life for managing the concerns of it, which are of such a nature, that if once lost, they may never return: here is a critical season: “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,” *2 Corinthians* vi. 2. “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,” *Hebrews* iii. 7, 8. This language may not be spoken to-morrow. Talk not of a more convenient season; none can be more convenient; and that to which you would probably refer it, is least of all so, a dying time. You would not chuse then to have any important business in hand; and will you of choice refer the greatest business of all to that languishing, hurrying, amazing hour? If a friend were then to come to you with the balance of an intricate account, or

a view of a title to an estate, you would shake your fainting head, and lift up your pale trembling hand, and say, perhaps, with a feeble voice, “Alas, is this a time for these things?” And is it a time for so much greater things than these? I wish you knew, and would consider, into what a strait, we that are ministers are sometimes brought, when we are called to the dying beds of those who have spent their lives in the neglect of the one thing needful. On the one hand, we fear, lest if we palliate matters, and speak smooth things, we shall betray and ruin their souls: and on the other, that if we use a becoming plainness and seriousness, in warning them of their danger, we shall quite overwhelm them, and hasten the dying moment, which is advancing by such swift steps. O let me entreat you for our sakes, and much more for your own, that you do not drive us to such sad extremities; but if you are convinced, as I hope some of you may now be, that the care of the soul is that needful thing we have represented, let the conviction work, let it drive you immediately to the throne of grace; from thence you may derive that wisdom and strength, which will direct you in all the intricacies which entangle you, and animate you in the midst of difficulty and discouragement.

3. I would in the last place address myself to those happy souls, who have in good earnest attended to the one thing needful.

I hope, that when you see how commonly it is neglected, neglected indeed, by many, whose natural capacities, improvements, and circumstances in life, appear to you superior to your own; you will humbly acknowledge, that it was distinguishing grace which brought you into this happy state, and formed you to this most necessary care. Bless the Lord, therefore, who hath given you that counsel, in virtue of which you can say, “He is your portion.” Rejoice in the thought, that the great concern is

secured: as it is natural for us to do, when some important affair is dispatched, which has long lain before us, and which we have been inclined to put off from one day to another, but have at length strenuously and successfully attended. Remember still to endeavour to continue acting on these great principles, which at first determined your choice; and seriously consider, that those who desire their life may at last be given them for a prey, must continue on their guard, in all stages of their journey through a wilderness, where daily dangers are still surrounding them. Being enabled to secure the great concern, make yourselves easy as to others of smaller importance: You have chosen the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; other things, therefore, shall be added unto you: and if any which you desire should not be added, comfort yourselves with this thought, that you have the good part, which can never be taken away. And, not to enlarge on these obvious hints, which must so often occur, be very solicitous that others may be brought to a care about the one thing needful. If it be needful for you, it is so for your children, your friends, your servants. Let them, therefore, see your concern in this respect for them, as well as for yourselves. Let parents especially attend to this exhortation, whose care for their offspring often exceeds in other respects, and fails in this. Remember that your children may never live to enjoy the effects of your labour and concern to get them estates and portions: the charges of their funerals may, perhaps, be all their share of what you are so anxiously careful to lay up for them. And O think what a sword would pierce through your very heart, if you should stand by the corpse of a beloved child with this reflection: “This poor creature has done with life, before it learnt its great business in it; and is gone to eternity, which I have seldom been warning it to prepare for, and which, perhaps, it learned of me to forget.”

On the whole, may this grand care be awakened in those by whom it has been hitherto neglected: may it be revived in each of our minds. And that you may be encouraged to pursue it with greater chearfulness, let me conclude with this comfortable thought, that in proportion to the necessity of the case, through the merits of Christ Jesus, is the provision which divine grace has made for our assistance. If you are disposed to sit down at Christ's feet, he will teach you by his word and Spirit. If you commit this precious jewel, which is your eternal all, into his hand, he will preserve it unto that day, and will then produce it richly adorned, and gloriously improved to his own honour, and to your everlasting joy.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

END of the Fifth Volume.