

kind of sense in the soul, whereby she takes alarm at the approach of evil : and, if through any neglect she suffers herself to be sullied by it, she in some sort expiates the offence by a wholesome anguish. To have this kind of shame is *the glory and grace*, the defence and ornament of the mind : it is a beauteous guard of innocence, and we ought to have maintained it with a scrupulous exactness, and prompt attention to its dictates. But when by often giving way to vice the mind becomes inured to it, and evil habits have blunted the innate sensibility of remorse, then *shame*, which was before an outwork for the defence of virtue, falls into the hands of the enemy, and is turned against it. Then it becomes that *shame which bringeth sin*, and is in reality the most ignominious species of cowardice that disgraces the human nature.

The true courage, which men pretend to value so much, and for want of which, they have substituted so many kinds of false bravery in its stead : the true courage, I say, consists in *daring* for the cause of truth ; in defending what is right against the usurpation of custom, and clamours of the crowd ; and firmly practicing it in the face of scorn and obloquy.

He who would *cleave to what is good*, i. e. adhere to his duty, will have frequent occasions for this species of courage, and that especially

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at the beginning of a religious life, for, as things now stand, to be contented to pass for a fool is one necessary step towards becoming reasonable.

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DISCOURSE XVII.

*The Christian* SACRIFICE.

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R O M. xii. 1.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

**W**HEN we see persons, whom we are fond of, neglecting some considerable advantage, or running into some great danger through ignorance or indiscretion; the interest which we take in their welfare, makes us not content merely with advising them, but to our counsel we add intreaties, and, as if the case were our own, we *beseech* them to follow the advice



advice we give : we ask it of them as a favour that they would serve themselves : in pain for their ignorance or neglect, we suffer for them ; we feel, what they should feel ; and by a generous sympathy we are as solicitous to persuade them to their own good, as if we were to be the gainers.

Such is the disposition of a true minister of Christ. He is aware of what infinite importance it is that we should serve God : he knows the unspeakable danger of neglecting him : and justly alarmed for our safety, he puts his soul as it were in our soul's stead ; he desires for us, what we ought to desire for ourselves : he fears, what we ought to fear : and therefore intreats, and conjures, as if his own soul were at stake, that we would flee from the wrath to come, that we would turn to the living God ; in a word, that we would become truly religious.

Such were the sentiments with which St. Paul addressed the Romans, in the words I have read to you. *I beseech you therefore, brethren : I beseech you by the mercies of God.* He adds the *mercies* of God as a consideration, that should give force to his request ; it being natural for persons who are solicitous, in the manner I have represented, to back their own intreaties with the mention of some argument, which they judge of greatest efficacy with us ; and by that they conjure us.

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The argument used by the apostle for that purpose is *the mercies of God*. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God*. As this is an inference from what went before, we must take in the verse preceding, which is the last of the 11th chapter: *of him, and through him, and to him are all things*. All things were created by God; all things are preserved by him; and he could have no motive in creating and preserving them, but his goodness, his *mercy*. Our existence flows from God, as light from the sun: from him originally, from him perpetually. Both the beginning and the continuance of life and its enjoyments are unmerited favours, mere *mercies*: which consideration should excite our gratitude to the universal benefactor. So the apostle argues: “From God all things proceeded; by God  
“ all things subsist: to God all things belong.  
“ I beseech you therefore by these mercies of  
“ God, that you present your bodies a sacrifice  
“ to him, from whom you received them,  
“ which is your reasonable service.”

To feel the force of this argument, we should contemplate those *mercies* by which St. Paul conjures us. All that we have, and all that we are, are the *mercies* of God. Compute then yourselves and your possessions, that you may make a true estimate of your obligations to him. It is common for men to contemplate  
themselves



themselves out of pride ; and then they set a high value upon themselves : then their endowments and abilities all appear admirable, and of great merit : but when piety requires us to consider these in their true light, as the *gifts* of God, as his mercies to us ; then how little are we affected, how cold and lifeless are our sentiments ?

The reason is, because pride forestals gratitude. By pride men forget God, and assuming to themselves the glory of what they are and possess, lose all sense of obligation to their Creator. They consider not, that *from him and by him are all things*, and consequently that *all* should be referred *to him*. This is the deplorable corruption of our nature, the source of guilt and misery.

As this point is of great importance, I beg leave farther to insist on it ; and again remind you, that when pride takes its survey of our talents and possessions, they then appear to us very admirable. It may be remembered with what complacence and self-applause we have contemplated them ; how very estimable, how extraordinary they appeared. Even things the most trivial and in all senses superficial, things too mean or ludicrous to be mentioned here, (as the colour of the skin, and the shape of the limbs and body) with what secret gladness have these filled the heart of many, and made them  
set

set a high value upon themselves, as possessed of things very meritorious.

Thus it is when vanity makes the review : but when men are called upon to consider themselves as the work of God, and consequently belonging to him ; many are quite insensible. Though *pride* found materials in their most frivolous qualities, yet the greatest do not move their *gratitude*. The reason of this absurd and impious procedure is, because they do not effectually, *i. e.* practically believe that capital article of all religion, *that God made us* ; they are not thankful to God for his gifts, because they do not consider them as his gifts : and their pride springs from a wilful stubborn ignorance, which is founded in a latent atheism. This may sound harsh, but my meaning is, that they *live without God*, which is a state of sin and condemnation.

But what (may it be said) what is a more obvious, more notorious truth, than that God created all things, that he made us, and not we ourselves ?——Who does not believe this ? Yet *all I want, all that is required, all I wish for you and myself*, is, that we should behave, as if we did believe it. But such is our wretchedness, that notion and practice often stand in a strange opposition. Many who profess in words, and in theory believe, that all they have is owing to the mercy of God, and that they  
are



are accountable for it to his justice, do yet flight his mercy. and provoke his justice, and deny him in their works, which are the surest interpreters of their hearts.

In the text the apostle very properly calls *all we have* the *mercies* of God. But when men glory in their abilities (and what, alas! is more common?) when men, I say, glory in their abilities, they in effect deny them to be *mercies*<sup>1</sup>. The *mercies* of God are his *alms*; for *alms*<sup>2</sup> and *mercies* are the same in the original: now can a beggar be proud of the *alms* he receives? He must first forget they are *alms*, and accounting them a tribute due to his merit, look upon them as his natural right and property. It is therefore a mortifying question to pride, which our apostle puts, *What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received*<sup>3</sup>? No man can boast of what belongs to another, while he remembers that *it belongs to another*: he must first appropriate it, he must imagine it his own, before he can assume to himself the merit of it, *i. e.* glory in it.

What is said here of pride, may be applied to every other inordinate affection, all which contradict the rightful dominion of God, and

<sup>1</sup> Hæc est veritas, quâ fugatur gloriæ vanitas. *Tho. à Kemp.* l. 3. c. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Eleemosyna.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 7.

set up the human will in opposition to the divine : whereas there is not in the world (as was said before) a more notorious truth, than that we are *not our own*, but God's, who made us : that as we are God's work, we belong to him; and consequently must not dispose of ourselves according to our own devices : in a word, that as we receive all from his mercy, so we are accountable for all to his justice.

This, I repeat it once again, is a notorious truth : and, in most cases, the truth once known is always known : it enters the mind like light, and remains there with a lasting conviction : but this capital truth, that we receive all things from God ; that all we have, and are, are mercies ; this important truth, I say, meets such malignant opposition in the heart of man, that it is retained with great difficulty ; and a man must do himself some violence, before he can work in himself an effectual, habitual conviction of it.

I speak improperly, when I say *work in himself* an habitual conviction ; for God only can effect this : and all that man can do, is, while he finds himself for the present, under an immediate conviction by the transient lights of grace, to take that opportunity of *offering himself* up to God, that *he* may write the truth indelibly in his heart, notwithstanding the repugnances of corrupt nature, which is very averse to such truth,



truth, 'because it will *cast down all vain imaginations*, on which our pride subsists: it will mortify all covetous and sensual desires, by which we seek only our own will, as independent beings. And therefore in order to prepare our hearts for the truth; we must on our part be *willing* to relinquish those evil inclinations, we must *wish* to be delivered from them, we must *desire* to make a sacrifice of them: in a word, we must practise the advice, which we have heard so pathetically recommended in the text, *I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

When we have duly considered all the mercies of God, if there be any ingenuity, any spark of gratitude in our breast, it must break forth in that inquiry of the psalmist. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all the benefits that he hath done unto me* <sup>4</sup>? You have heard the proper answer to that question: we must *present our bodies a sacrifice to God.* Body is here used figuratively for the whole man, as if it had been said, we must present ourselves a sacrifice. It is added, that this is *a reasonable service*: *service* here signifies religious worship, the original is *λατρεία*, and the apostle's meaning is, that this is *a rational worship*, a reasonable act of devotion from a creature to its Crea-

<sup>4</sup> Psal. cxvi. 12.

tor. No man, who uses his reason, can doubt of this; for devotion itself takes its name from this act, it is called devotion, because it renders a man devoted to his maker.

We see the men of the world *devoted* to their fellow-creatures—*devoted* to their interests and their appetites: or to keep to the metaphor of the text, we see them *sacrifice* themselves to the objects of their concupiscence, and often one vice to another, as their passions vary. Thus they sacrifice their pleasure to their covetousness: their covetousness to their ambition, or vanity: and their ease to all. This is idolatry: this is robbing God of the service due to him: *for his servants we are, to whom we obey*<sup>s</sup>. All that religion requires of us, is, to choose a worthy object on whom to bestow ourselves. Happy those *who have chose God for their LORD*; who have devoted, who have given themselves up, who have sacrificed themselves to him. I do not wonder that St. Paul besought his beloved Romans with so much earnestness to make this sacrifice: he knew the unspeakable advantages of it: he knew by his own experience, that peace and joy surpassing all understanding, wherewith God replenishes the hearts of his servants.—But no reasonable man can doubt the happiness of a soul united to God by an habitual resignation; all the diffi-

<sup>s</sup> Rom. vi. 16.



culty is, how we may attain that beatific disposition.

The first part of sacrifice is *oblation*. We must begin, as the text directs, with presenting ourselves for a sacrifice. This is an act of religion which requires the most abstracted and ardent devotion, when we appear before God to make a solemn oblation of ourselves to the divine Majesty.

Our minds should be prepared with a lively persuasion of the truths hitherto inculcated, viz. *That God made us, and not we ourselves; that therefore we are not our own, but his, who trusting us with the use of our talents, reserves to himself the property.* We should farther consider how we have hitherto usurped his right, by following our own wills, and disposing of ourselves without regard to his appointment; and being touched with a just regret and compunction for the ill use we have made of our faculties, tired and ashamed of our own mismanagement of ourselves, we should call earnestly upon God to receive our oblation, to deliver us from ourselves, and to take us under his guidance and protection.

This is the fittest method that can be prescribed for beginning a religious life, and effectually combating that hereditary depravation of our nature, by which we are, if I may so speak, broke off from God, and have lost that  
dependence

dependence upon the supreme BEING, wherein the duty and the happiness of every moral agent must consist.

As it is difficult, so it is needless to have distinct and precise notions of what we call *Original Sin*: but to judge of it by the effects, we must conclude that Adam endowed with free-will, and master of himself, fatally abused his liberty by withdrawing himself from the submission due to God, and doing his own will, as if he were an independent being. On the other hand, Jesus Christ the second Adam, sent to repair the disorders induced by the first, from the moment of his incarnation, gave himself up to God without reserve, determined never to have other will than his. So the Psalmist describes him at his entrance into human life. *When he cometh into the world, he saith, Lo I come, that I may do thy will, O God.* And he fully accomplished the end he came for: his whole life was one continued act of resignation, which preserved his immaculate innocence; for where self-will is sacrificed, there can be no possibility of sin.

*As we have been partakers of the earthly Adam, so we must be also of the heavenly<sup>1</sup>: as in our natural state we follow the devices and desires of our own hearts, so, to enter effectually into the spiritual State, we must resign ourselves, i. e.*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 49.



give ourselves up to God, that we may be governed by his spirit, which will lead us into all truth and righteousness. We ought to make this donation of ourselves with the most sincere devotion we are capable of; the instant of receiving the communion may be a proper time to perform it in; then, while we commemorate the sacrifice of Christ, we should join to it the sacrifice of ourselves: we should offer up ourselves in union with him to the Almighty Father: and beseech him by the merits of his death, to work in us the spiritual death to sin; to destroy in us self-love, self-will the root of all sin, that we may pass the rest of life wholly in his service.

After such solemn donation of ourselves, we must continue to repeat and ratify it very frequently, till it becomes habitual, and we find our resignation established with an inviolable fidelity; and accordingly we must consider ourselves as no longer *our own*, or at our own disposal, but as persons devoted to God, devoted to *do* as he commands, and *suffer* all he appoints.

It is of great consequence, especially in the beginning of our spiritual course, that we often repeat the act of self-oblation; sometimes to exclude any reserve of corrupt nature; being zealous that all, all without exception, should be sacrificed to God: at other times to re-  
nounce

nounce some short infidelities, in which we had began to take ourselves back again; and at other times merely to vent and exercise our devotion: in a word, we must endeavour to *live* in this sentiment, upon which account our apostle calls this a *living sacrifice*, in opposition to the *Jewish* sacrifices, which were short transient ceremonies; *for* the life of the victim flowed out with its blood, and the service came to a conclusion soon after the death of the animal: but in this spiritual sacrifice the willing victim long persists and perseveres in its state of immolation, till our great high-priest, *Jesus Christ*, consummates it by uniting it to himself with a total, unvariable, eternal subjection. *Amen.*

We see now, why this is called *a living sacrifice*. St. Paul adds *holy*, and *acceptable to God*, two weighty epithets, containing the most engaging motives to this duty.

First, of the *holiness* of this sacrifice. The oblation indeed in its natural state is far from holy: but things become *holy* by being dedicated to God.—If we thus dedicate ourselves to him, he will make us *holy*; we shall belong to him, and he will take care of his own. He will gradually sanctify us, and finally render us worthy himself.

Let us approach then with an humble confidence to the throne of grace, and say, “The heart, which I desire to present unto thee,



“ O Lord, is corrupt indeed, but such as it is,  
 “ I give it. Make it such, as thou wouldst  
 “ have it. I bring it to thee, as its physician.  
 “ Thou only canst heal its infirmities. I bring  
 “ it to thee, as its creator. Thou only canst  
 “ repair thy own work. *Thou only canst make*  
 “ *me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit*  
 “ *within me.*”

After the *holiness* of this sacrifice, the apostle adds, that it will be *acceptable to God*.

All acts of religion require *faith*, and therefore to beget that *faith* in us (for the sense of our unworthiness might make us diffident) therefore, as I said, to beget that *faith* in us, we are assured that our sacrifice will be *acceptable* to God, that he will receive the oblation we make of ourselves.

*He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a REWARDER of them that diligently seek him.* What reward of our devotion should we ask of God, if all the treasures of his grace were open to our choice? What reward, O Christian soul, wouldst thou ask? Is there any option comparable to this compendious blessing, that God would accept us, that God would take us for his own, that God would make us his?—We may safely leave the rest to him. He will take care of his own. He will deliver us from all our follies: His wisdom will govern us: his strength will protect us:

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us : his holiness will sanctify us to himself his peculiar possession. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves a sacrifice, living, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

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[The three following Sermons have before been printed singly.]

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*The Rich Man and LAZARUS.*

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LUKE xvi. 19, 20.

*There was a certain rich Man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores.*

**T**HIS story of the rich man and Lazarus continues from the 19th verse to the end of the chapter. It represents two remarkable instances of the extremes of human fortune,



riches and poverty, in such a manner, that their opposite characters serve well to illustrate each other.

The first mentioned is the rich man. *There was a certain RICH man.* He therefore had friends, he had honour, he had authority; these things follow riches: he had all the comforts, all the pleasures, all the ornaments of life: *he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.* He was, in a word, ALL that great part of mankind wish to be; he was RICH.

*At his gate there lay a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came, and licked his sores.* See here the contrary extreme of fortune, a wretch ready to perish with hunger, and with disease: one that would have been miserable, even amidst all the alleviations, which the rich man's plenty could have supplied: but destitute as he was of the necessaries of life, wanting both food and physic, his case seems most deplorable.

Now compare these two men together, the rich man and the beggar; the former clothed in purple and fine linen, the latter, covered with rags and with ulcers: the one feasting every day, the other pining for the scraps of his table: the one served with numerous attendance, and  
having

having all things at will ; the other abandoned by all, and a companion only for the dogs.

And yet they were both of the same nature, equal in all the privileges of humanity. They had the same appetites, the same affections, the same reason. They had been born, and were to die alike. They had the same father in Adam, the same Redeemer in Jesus Christ, the same Creator in God Almighty. So like they were in their capacities for happiness; so unlike in their enjoyments of it. Nor did this happen by chance, but by the immediate appointment of Providence. It was the hand of God that dispensed to the rich man *his good things*, and *evil things* to Lazarus. This appearance of a difficulty would vanish, if Lazarus were as wicked, as he was miserable : if his disease had been the effect of debauchery, and his poverty of laziness or extravagance. And if, on the contrary, the rich man's treasures were the fruit of a long course of virtuous industry, the blessings of heaven upon wisdom and diligence. But the case here was quite contrary: the poor man was the good man, and the rich a great sinner. And the same case happens very frequently: the prosperity of bad men, and the afflictions of good, have been often observed, and complained of, as a reproach to the wisdom and goodness of the great Governor of the world. But in the story our Lord has effectually removed that difficulty;



difficulty: he has shewed us the END of these men, and thereby justified the ways of Providence beyond exception.

At first we read (verse 22d) they *both* DIED. This goes a great way in clearing the difficulty. Though the difference betwixt the rich man and Lazarus was very great, and, as it might seem, unreasonable; yet it lasted not long. Death brought them both again upon the level. The bodies of both were laid in the dust, and quickly turned into it. The worm, corruption, and all the dishonours of the grave, were common to both: but in the passage thither, Lazarus seemed to have the advantage. Tired perhaps, and weary of life, he placidly resigned it; and willingly took refuge in the grave, as a shelter from all his sorrows.

To DIE, was a much harder task to the rich man. For, (as the Preacher speaks) the bare *remembrance of death is bitter to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions*<sup>1</sup>: but actually to suffer it, is great, is unspeakable distress. Men are then fully convinced of the vanity of riches, when they cannot purchase one moment's reprieve, nor be of any farther service. So this rich man found on his death-bed, where, forlorn and abandoned, without one glimpse of comfort, one thought that could speak peace to his troubled soul, despairing in his last agonies, he fell

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus xli. 1.

a prey to the *King of Terrors*, and left the world, as naked as he entered it.

Some of the riches, which he left behind, furnished the silly pomp of a funeral: for it is said *he was buried*; (which is not mentioned of Lazarus) his corpse, probably, was attended by a numerous train; and some hired declaimer, perhaps, flattered him for the last time, in a funeral panegyric.

But where was HE the while? Alas! he was in torments, begging for a drop of water to cool his tongue. So we read at the 23d verse, *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

How great a change was here! Lazarus shone in glory, while HE, once the rich man, was reduced to the last extremities of want and misery. The poverty of Lazarus had been confessedly great; but that reached no farther than the body: he possessed his soul in patience, he was rich towards God; and his outward wants, though unrelieved, were yet supported by his inward



inward virtues. But the other, torn from his large possessions, was become destitute of every kind of good. In this life, he had set a value only upon *worldly goods*: virtue and religion were no part of his care. This Abraham upbraids him with: *Remember, that thou in thy life-time receivedst THY good things*, i. e. the things which he preferred to all others, and placed his happiness in enjoying them; these he had left behind, and was sunk into a state of universal want: he wanted even a drop of water; he sought it, but was refused, with that bitter reproach: *Remember, that thou in thy life-time receivedst Thy good things*. Remember your pompous vanities, your sumptuous feasting, your wanton waste of God's creatures in expensive luxuries, while Lazarus lay starving at your gate. O severe remembrance, the just aggravation of his torment!

Sadly wretched must have been his state, when thus reduced to beg for so small a favour, and that too from the hand of one, to whom he had refused the crumbs of his table, the scraps of his voider. How was his pride humbled! Time was, when Lazarus begged, but begged in vain, at his gate: it was now his turn to beg, and to receive the hard measure himself had dealt. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by *Solomon*, saying, *Whoso stoppeth his ears*

*ears*

*ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*

But there is no need to enlarge farther upon the misery of the rich man. It will be more to our purpose, to enquire the reason of it, by what enormous guilt he had deserved to be so severely treated. This certainly is noted in the story, which is related only for our instruction: yet according to the notions men generally have of the christian religion, it is difficult to say what this rich man was damned for. His riches were great indeed, but not said to be unlawfully gotten: probably they descended to him by inheritance. He was clothed magnificently, and fared deliciously. But where is the harm of that! (will worldly men say) he did but live up to his quality, and enjoy the estate which Providence had given him. He is no where accused of an ambition ruinous to his country; of fomenting sedition, or masking faction or private malice with pretences of public zeal; of treacherous supplanting others, that he might succeed them in their places; of insolence, arrogance, oppression; of not paying his debts; or other the like crying sins, so common among the rich. The plenty of his table, his numerous equipage, and sumptuous manner of living, must have employed and subsisted many poor, and rendered him a public benefit to society. Alas, how many now-a-days think themselves  
men



men of virtue, who have not half so much to say for themselves. The ordinary consequences of a voluptuous life are scandalously criminal: yet none of these are laid to the charge of *this* rich man; but he would have passed among us for a good MORAL *man*, as we call it.

What the world, by a fatal abuse of the word, calls a *moral man*, was indeed his character, and implies all the guilt for which he was condemned. A *moral man*, as the word is commonly used, signifies one, who with vanity and ostentation fulfilling some of the social duties, neglects *those* of religion: one who lives without devotion, without *faith, hope, and charity*, or indeed any effectual persuasion of a future state: yet abstains from the more scandalous kind of crimes, to which the plenty of his fortune, and somewhat generous in his complexion, prevent all temptation. Such an one, destitute as he is of all the lights of religion, sets his heart upon the enjoyments of the present life, accounts them his only good, and aspires to nothing beyond them. He forgets his Maker; he lives *without GOD in the world*; as if there were no such Being, or he had no obligations to him, no dependence upon him.

Such are the world's *moral men*. Such was he mentioned in the text: and for being such, he was justly condemned to the torments of hell. There (as we read at the 23d verse) *he lift up his*

*his eyes*, perhaps for the first time, to heaven: for before he had not *believed* that there were such states as heaven and hell, as appears from his desire that Lazarus might be sent to inform his surviving brethren of the certainty of those states, *lest they also should come into that place of torments*: from whence I conclude, that he did not himself believe it in his life-time; because he was so positive, as the story shews, that his brethren wanted only the full assurance of a hell, to deter them from the wicked courses that lead thither.

This rich man was indeed an Israelite by profession, as appears from his calling Abraham, *Father*, and being acknowledged by him for his *Son*, as at the 25th verse. But though he professed the true religion, yet, as is very common with professors, he did not really and effectually believe it: he did not think about it; he forgot it, or put it out of his mind. He was so intent upon his feasting and his finery; the enjoyments or the amusements of the present life, that he did not allow himself any leisure to consider that which was to come. Hence, careless and indifferent about spiritual things, he accounted the pleasures of sense his *chief*, his *only* good; which, as I observed before, Abraham upbraids him with. *Thou in thy life-time receivedst THY good things*, i. e. such as he accounted *good*: as for virtue, devotion, holiness, the knowledge  
and



and the love of God; those were *goods*, which he had no notion of, and consequently no desire to attain.

But to sum up all the guilt of his character in one word. He was so intent upon his worldly enjoyments, that *he forgot* GOD; and for that reason he was most justly condemned, according to the righteous sentence passed by the Psalmist; *The wicked shall be cast into hell, and all the people that forget GOD*<sup>1</sup>. Nothing is more equitable than this sentence: yet those, who are most obnoxious, do not apprehend it as such. They are not aware of the great guilt of forgetting God, nor how much that surpasses most of those crimes, for which the world has the utmost abhorrence. One reason is, because having little or no zeal for God's glory, and a great concern for their own interests, they are much less sensible of offences committed against God only, than of those against men: these latter may happen to themselves, and they resent them accordingly. If you speak of an ungrateful man, who, after numberless favours received, forgets his benefactor; who, hardened against reiterated obligations, continues to forget, even while he continues to receive the greatest benefits: our indignation is presently raised against such a wretch, and all are forward to express their abhorrence of him. But when we speak of mens

<sup>1</sup> Psal. ix. 9.

*forgetting* God; God, the source of all their enjoyments; no abhorrence is felt, no indignation raised. Yet that is a sin, which surpasses by infinite degrees all kinds of ingratitude that can happen between man and man. For men, who are God's creatures, to neglect and forget their Creator: for men, who daily use and enjoy the other creatures of God, to forget their benefactor; to render him no homage, no thanks, no obedience; is, I say, beyond all comparison a greater act of ingratitude, or to speak more properly, of injustice towards God, than one man can possibly commit against another. Nothing is more hateful among men than ingratitude; nothing more penal than injustice, for we punish the more flagrant acts of it with death. Now he, who, in the constant tenour of his practice, forgets God, lives in one continued act of such *ingratitude*, and *injustice*, as is the most heinous and abominable that can be committed.

First of *ingratitude*, which in our rich man was the greater, inasmuch as he had greater obligations to the bounty of heaven: and *to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*. He had received a large measure of temporal goods, and in proportion to his fortune, his heart too should have been enlarged in a grateful sense of God's goodness to him. But he thought of nothing less. He was so



intent upon the gifts, that he absolutely forgot the giver: and in this appears his *ingratitude*.

Nor is his *injustice* less notorious. To view it in a proper light: Suppose a steward, who should use the estate intrusted to him absolutely as his own, as if he were no way accountable for it: who should deny he had a master; or, which is much the same, live as if he had none; spending the revenue upon his pleasures, as his lust or fancy led him, without any kind of regard to his master's appointment: such, so unjust a steward was this epicure: and when his master called him to give an account of his stewardship, what could he answer? what excuse could he make for his mismanagement? Nothing could be pleaded in his defence, for his own conscience ratified the sentence by which he was condemned.

That *he* did not in this life, and that others like him, do not *yet* condemn themselves, is owing to their wilful stubborn ignorance of God, wherein for the present they harden themselves, stifling the checks of conscience, by perpetually applying their minds to worldly cares or pleasures. They forget God in this season of his mercy; but being in torments, they will lift up their eyes, and remember their Creator, when the heavy hand of his justice inflicts the sore punishment they have deserved. *O consider this,*

*ye*

*ye that forget God; lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you*<sup>2</sup>.

And thus I have shewed in general the reason why this rich man was so severely treated: it was because he lived, as so many others do, *without God in the world*, regardless of all his obligations to him; by which means his whole life was one continued course of disobedience: for although the greater part of his actions might not in themselves be contrary to the laws of God; yet because they were not done in obedience to those laws, they were sinful. For obedience does not barely consist in doing *what* we are commanded, but in doing it *because* we are commanded, so that the authority of God be the motive and reason of our actions; without which, our whole life becomes one perpetual error, and must end, as it deserves, in certain misery.

Such, in general, was the reason of this rich man's condemnation. We learn too from the gospel one particular circumstance, (a natural consequence of an irreligious life) that much aggravated his guilt, and seemed to fill up the measure of his iniquities; I mean, his neglect of the poor: for amidst all the superfluities and waste of his table, Lazarus lay unrelieved at his gate<sup>3</sup>. And therefore, before I dismiss this

<sup>2</sup> Psal. l. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Luke* xvi. 21. *Nemo illi dabat*, Vulgar Latin; with which many Greek copies agree.



subject, I must take occasion from it, in obedience to the express orders of St. Paul, to *charge them who are rich in this world, that they be ready to give, and glad to distribute, laying up in store for themselves a good fund against the time to come, that they may attain everlasting life* <sup>4</sup>. Let them revolve in their minds this story, and take care that it do not one day become their own case. Jesus Christ has for their conviction opened, as it were, a prospect into the other world; and among the variety of reprobate spirits that suffer there, he has singled out one character for your sakes, O ye rich. One once a rich man like yourselves: he dressed, and revelled, and spent his life in pleasure and diversion, quite neglecting the poor, and giving them no part of his superfluity. You have seen the sad event.—I shall insist no farther, but leave it to yourselves to make the proper application, and also to choose proper objects, on whom to practise it. A great variety is presented to you. Well-disposed persons have formed themselves into different societies, according to the different wants of the poor; and making some one branch of alms-giving their peculiar care, they prosecute it more effectually with their united force, than it were possible to do by single endeavours. These societies, by the blessing of Providence, have of late been increased among us; and cha-

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 17.

city, without deserting its former channels, has opened new ones, in which it flows plenteously, to the glory of God, and the seasonable relief of our fellow-christians.

I esteem, and heartily recommend all these different methods of christian beneficence. As<sup>s</sup> This, wherein the present assembly is engaged, was, if I am not misinformed, one of the first among these laudable institutions; so it still holds its rank in success, as in merit. What a spectacle have we now before us?—Some objects of charity strike us with a secret horror; and extort our alms, because in relieving them, we relieve ourselves, and discharge as it were our share in their misery: while other objects are of so amiable an aspect, that by contributing to their happiness, we partake of it. Although christian charity does not spring from such motives, yet it does not exclude them: and a pleasing object is not therefore less a proper object because it pleases. A prison or an hospital are mortifying sights, that raise a painful compassion. *This* affects the heart in a very different manner.—You, that behold it, feel more than I am able to express. It speaks for itself, with far greater efficacy than any arguments I can offer to persuade it: and even in these I am

<sup>s</sup> This Sermon was preached at the yearly meeting of the children educated in the charity-schools of London and Westminster, A. D. 1734.



so prevented by the many eloquent discourses already published, that I think all farther recommendation superfluous.

What I have most at heart is, that the pious intention of contributors may be faithfully executed: and that this good work may be preserved pure from abuses, to which all human institutions are more or less liable.

We who are public teachers, must often mention faults by way of precaution: and it would be great perverseness to interpret our advice as an accusation, when it is meant only as a seasonable premonition. I shall not therefore scruple to admonish the trustees of these CHARITY-SCHOOLS, that they are under the strictest obligations to discharge their trust, not only with exact justice, but with frugality. Alms are a *sacred thing*: they belong to God immediately: and to divert them from the end intended, is no less a crime than sacrilege. Not to *give* alms is a sin that merits damnation: but to *steal* them (and they steal them who misapply them) is a monstrous iniquity. This was the crime of Judas: he *had the bag*<sup>6</sup> (saith the evangelist) and he robbed the poor. All approaches to his guilt are dreadfully dangerous: and there can be no pardon for sins of this nature, but by the sincerest contrition, and ample restitution.

<sup>6</sup> John xii. 6.

In the next place, I apply myself to the *masters* and *mistresses*, exhorting them to discharge their office conscientiously in all its branches; but especially in that, which is the main design of pious benefactors, I mean the infusing and cultivating the principles and practice of Christianity in the hearts of their scholars, and above all, in *teaching them to pray*. For prayer is the life, the spirit of Christianity: and without it our religion becomes a useless formality, and a senseless superstition.

I know that prayers are daily read in your schools, and that the children are brought regularly to the public prayers of our church. But, alas! prayers may be heard and read too, without *praying*: and forms, that are mere forms, destitute of inward piety, are the bane of religion. A christian professor, who should never pray at all, must be *sensible* that he is in a reprobate state: and a sense of danger naturally puts men upon avoiding it: but those who use forms of prayer without devotion, go on blindfold to destruction.

It is strange to see how they will grow hardened by this method. Many of them dispatch what they call their *devotions*, as the most insipid work of the day. They can read over a chapter in the Bible with much less attention, than will serve to understand a common history: and in their prayers they make the most solemn



declarations of all religious affections, of humiliation, of contrition for sin, of seeking, desiring, and loving God with all their souls—and all a lie. They neither mean, nor endeavour to mean one word they utter. Thus abusing the means of grace, they gradually extinguish the light of conscience, and all sense of real Christianity: so that after twenty or thirty years perseverance in such abuse of religious offices, an habitual self-approbation spreads such darkness over their minds, that they lose all consciousness of sin, although they live in the daily practice of it.

You must therefore make it your principal care to engage these children to pray, not with their lips only, but with their understanding and their will; that they may be brought to *mean* and really *desire*, what their prayers express; and no longer incur that reproach of our Lord; *This people draweth near to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me* <sup>7</sup>.

For this end, you should labour much to convince them of the omnipresence of the Divinity: I mean, That God is always present in every place: and that an intimate and feeling conviction of this great truth, is a necessary disposition for prayer; which sentiments duly impressed upon their minds, will excite in them an awful sense of God, and consequently a serious and earnest devotion accompanying the words

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xv. 8.

they utter. This, and only this can curb the roavings of their imagination, and fix their attention to the offices of religion.

You should often repeat to them that God is their father, who loves them as his children; and requires that they should give their hearts up to him, that he may guide and rule them by his Holy Spirit; which will dwell in them, if they faithfully resign themselves to his direction, by obeying his commands revealed in the scriptures. This they ought to mean and desire, when they say, *Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

But I must not enter into any farther detail of this subject, which is so clearly and copiously taught in those scriptures, that are daily sounded in your ears: yet you will never teach them effectually, unless you practise them yourselves. I must conjure you therefore to make that your principal care: for example has a strange power. And if your own hearts are raised in devotion, they will easily communicate devotion to the tender hearts of these little ones. The Spirit of God will be with you, and prosper your endeavours: it will enlighten your minds to instruct them aright, and it will enforce your instruction with a divine efficacy. In a word, you will *train them up in the right way*, if you go before them in it yourselves.



*The Obligation of RICH MEN to ALMS-  
GIVING.*

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1 TIM. vi. 17, 18, 19.

*Charge them that are rich in this world——  
that they do good, that they be rich in good  
works, ready to distribute, willing to commu-  
nicate; laying up in store for themselves a good  
foundation against the time to come, that they  
may lay hold on eternal life.*

**W**HAT is here translated a *good founda-  
tion*, should rather be rendered a *good  
fund*: *laying up in store for themselves a good  
fund*, which metaphor is more natural, and  
now so well understood, that it needs no ex-  
planation.

The words are a part of St. Paul's advice to Timothy for the execution of his ministerial office; wherein, among other directions proper for the different ranks under his care, he bids him charge the rich to give alms largely, and with alacrity. *Charge, i. e.* command with all authority, intreat and conjure with all earnestness: and to move them more effectually, he

he was to shew how much it was, not only their *duty*, but their *interest* so to do; since thereby they would lay up *a good fund*, a most profitable and inexhaustible fund for eternity.

*Duty* and *interest* are the two great springs of human action. *Duty* stands enforced by reason, as *interest* by self-love: and where these concur, it should seem that nothing can withstand them. Both are proposed in the text, which commands alms-giving as our *duty*, and recommends it as our *interest*. I shall follow the method which St. Paul here prescribes, and shew the rich,

I. That alms-giving is our indispensable duty:

II. That it is our greatest interest.

As to the first, there can be no doubt, when we consider from whom, and to what end we have received our riches. But it is too common to look upon riches as the gifts of a blind fortune, which shifts them from hand to hand; and bestows them, or takes them away with a capricious, but irresistible power. Many who have succeeded to their wealth by inheritance look no farther, but intent only upon enjoying it, regard not whence, or to what end they receive it. They do not consider, that all an *hereditary right* implies, is, that God gave their ancestors the goods which they now possess, and provided for them, perhaps before they  
were



were born. Others who have got an estate by their labour, or care, or skill, think it sufficiently earned by the pains they have taken: they make no grateful return for the blessings of providence upon their endeavours; but keep or spend their riches, as what they have an absolute right to use at pleasure, without any reflection upon the account they are to give of them. To such the admonition of Moses is very seasonable, *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God—and say in thine heart: my power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth*<sup>1</sup>. So David acknowledged, when he made the costly oblations recorded in the first book of Chronicles. *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power—for all that is in the heaven and the earth is thine. Both riches and honour come of thee—all things come of thee: and of thine OWN have we given unto thee.*

As therefore riches are the gift of God, we should consider wherefore he bestows them. Are they given to maintain sloth; to equip vanity, or to pamper luxury? Are they given for covetousness to hoard, or for prodigality to squander? No, for they are the gifts of God, and as his gifts intended for our good, for the exercise of virtue, to furnish liberality, to make

<sup>1</sup> Deut. viii.

us the *instruments* of his mercy, the channels through which his provision for the poor should pass, and enrich us with good works in its way to the relief of their indigence.

The different ranks of rich and poor are, in the intention of providence, an occasion of uniting men together; the superfluity on one part *suits* the wants on the other, and should be a provision for it: they fit like indentures, where the redundancy fills the vacancy. *They meet together*, as Solomon expresseth it. *The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all*<sup>2</sup>. He made them thus answering to each other, that excess might supply defect, and reduce things to an equality; no where an useless abundance, or a helpless indigence. The superfluities therefore of the rich are the provision appointed for the poor, they are their just due, and we *defraud*<sup>3</sup> them in refusing it. Such is our obligation to this duty; it is a part of justice, which requires it as an indispensable debt: and eternal prisons are prepared for those who refuse payment.

To the motive of duty we now add that of *interest*, for self-love is so predominant a principle, that to engage men to what is their interest, it may seem sufficient to shew that it is their interest. But the mischief is, their self-love, though most excessive, is also most ab-

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Eccles iv. 1, 3.



furd: it is blind and ignorant of their real interests; and while it pursues some trivial advantage with a strange and ridiculous impetuosity, it is quite insensible to such advantages as are of the highest importance and nearest concern.

Our interest may be considered with regard to the present life, or the future. I shall speak first of our interest in this life; and by *interest* I here mean that which contributes most to our present happiness. This one would think should be sufficiently understood, and yet nothing is more mistaken; for the greater part of mankind, who are in *mean* circumstances, think that a good estate would gratify all their desires, and that if *fortune*, as they call it, would but make them *rich*, they would make themselves *happy*. But those who are rich, know the contrary: they know that the mind of man may continue restless and wretched in the most splendid circumstances of wealth and power; that wants may multiply faster than the means to gratify them, and, as poverty has its hardships and inconveniencies, so riches too bring with them their troubles, anxieties, and temptations, which sorely afflict their possessors, and often render them more miserable, than those whom poverty and day-labour have ranked in the lowest stations.

Where there is not a principle of religion to keep the mind erect amid the incumbrances of  
riches,

riches, and to direct the distribution of them according to the appointment of the donor; the proprietor, as he is called, suffers much more than he enjoys by them. The single article of being exempted from the necessity of labour, is excessively prejudicial to many whose circumstances place them above it. Both mind and body grow distempered in a lazy opulence and wanton plenty. The mind contracts a false delicacy, and an exquisitely painful sensibility about trifles, which to common sense are quite contemptible: and every one must have observed, “ that the most humoured and indulgent state is aptest to receive the most disturbance from every disappointment or smallest ail.” And hence it comes to pass that the rich, who have most indulged themselves, and, if I may so speak, taken a *surfeit* of having had their own wills, thereby break the native vigour of the soul, and become a prey to imaginary woes, which imbitter their lives, and make them a burden to themselves. To many of them their *tables* are a continual *snare* <sup>4</sup>, where luxury feeds disease, and life is oppressed, shortened, and even extinguished by the means appointed to cherish and prolong it.

But are they not sensible of this? Are they not aware that they abuse their riches *to their own hurt*? Does not their reason represent to them that they are themselves the authors of

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xi. 9.



their misery? Yes certainly, for they have lucid intervals in which reason remonstrates the mischiefs they do themselves, and convinces them that their present interest, their happiness in this life, sometimes even the preservation of life, always the true enjoyment of it, depends upon their moral conduct, upon a sober, discreet and regular behaviour. I say their reason must often convince them of this; why then do they not follow its dictates? It is because men, who have not a principle of religion, have not the strength to follow their reason. They are slaves to their appetites and passions: they are tied and bound with the chain of their sins: they have forsaken God, and are forsaken by him. They will not be governed by God, and therefore he gives them up to their own mismanagement, on purpose to reclaim them by that misery which they bring on themselves.

I say that men void of religion often have not sufficient power over themselves to follow the dictates of reason. Both riches and the power to follow reason, are the gifts of God; but gifts of a different order: and he does not give the latter, *viz.* power over themselves, to those who abuse the former, *viz.* power over the worldly goods which he has allotted them. So our Lord teaches us in a beautiful passage most worthy your attention, which I shall lay before you, after premising the fundamental principle whereon his reasonings are grounded, which

which is that *our life here on earth is a state of trial and probation*, a principal part of which trial or probation is made by means of the different measure of worldly goods now allotted us. Thus the poor have their *trial*, proper to their low station, which more immediately binds them to parsimony, industry, and humble submission to their superiors; while the rich have their *trial*, where they would *choose* to have it, *viz.* in the abundance of worldly goods: and their devout thankfulness should rise in proportion to the greatness of their obligations. For by these temporal benefits God puts their gratitude to the test: he proves and tries their fidelity by committing so large a trust to their disposal. Their duty certainly is to dispose of it according to his appointment, and shew their gratitude for his bounty, by a liberal distribution of their wealth: for *liberality* is the proper virtue of a rich man; like *courage* in a soldier, it is essential to his character; it is the duty to which he is especially called by providence, and if he faithfully discharges it, God rewards his fidelity in the use of his temporal gifts, by crowning them with his spiritual favours, which are the blessings of his right-hand, and reserved for those who are disposed to profit by them. These may all be summed up under the two heads of virtue and wisdom: by *wisdom*, I here mean the knowledge of our true interest; and



by *virtue*, the power to promote it, even that power over ourselves, without which, as was said before, we cannot follow the dictates of reason. These are the *heavenly riches*, concerning which I shall now lay before you the words of Christ himself, who has the distribution of them.

He treats of the use and abuse of riches through the whole 15th chapter of St. Luke, and in his application of the parable of the *Steward* he says: *he who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much*. Here you see the distinction which I made between the temporal and the spiritual gifts; the first (though accumulated in great abundance, as *riches* imply) he calls the least species of God's gifts; *he who is faithful in that which is least*, and as a just *steward* of temporal goods, dispenses the stock intrusted to him according to God's appointment; *he is faithful also in much*, i. e. matters of great moment, meaning the far nobler gifts of divine grace, which enrich the mind with wisdom and virtue. Our Lord proceeds, *he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much*. *If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous Mammon, who will commit to your trust the true? Riches* is here added by our translators instead of Mammon, though that is the term our Lord intended; for Mammon, according to its derivation, imports, *whatever*

*men are apt to confide in*: the original term for *faith* is of the same derivation as Mammon, and for the same reason; it implying such a reliance on God, as worldly-minded men have on *riches*. And hence Mammon is transferred to signify riches, because men so commonly put their trust in them. Our translation too has *unrighteous*; but the word in the original often means *false and deceitful*, and should be so rendered here, as appears by the sequel: *if ye have been unfaithful in the false Mammon, who will trust you with the true? If ye have been unfaithful in the false Mammon, i. e. riches, called Mammon as was said, because men have faith in them; but by our Lord named the false Mammon, because they deceive and elude our confidence.—If ye have been unfaithful in the false Mammon, who will trust you with the true? i. e. the divine graces, which may truly be called Mammon, because they may be securely confided in: for they enlighten and strengthen the mind to discern, and attain its true good: they also gradually confer a self-dominion, whereby we may follow our better judgment, and resist the temptations which would otherwise ensnare and enslave us. Our Lord goes on: and if ye have not been faithful in that which is anothers, who will give you that which is your own?* Here, as indeed very frequently in the discourses of our Lord, the expression is



so simple, and the sense so profound, that we should not wonder if it is sometimes mistaken. Our translators say, *if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's*; but *man* is not in the original, and it is not *man* but *God* that is here meant: *if ye have not been faithful in that which is anothers*, meaning *God's*; for our riches are his property, and he does not so give them, as to alienate his right in them: our possession of them is precarious and dependent, the title we hold them by is only that of *stewards*, and if ye are unjust stewards of these external transient goods *which are anothers*, which are not your own; *who* (says our Lord) *will give you that which is your own?* That *which is your own*, is your mind, your spiritual faculties, in a word yourselves. Without virtue no man is master of himself, he has not the disposal of himself, so as to direct his course of life in the manner he himself approves. He is justly displeas'd with himself for his own mismanagement; yet he cannot help it, for, as I said before, *he has not the strength to follow his own reason, and control those inordinate desires which he himself condemns, and would resist, if it were in his power*; but the power over ourselves is a gift of God, reserved for those who have been duly grateful for the lesser favours by which he makes previous trials of our fidelity.

And

And thus the rich have *their* trial in their worldly possessions, *which are not their own*, but lent them for a time, that by the liberal distribution of them they may be qualified for those divine favours which would restore them to themselves, and put them *in possession of their own soul*. And hence appear the beauty and force of those words of our Lord, *if ye have not been faithful in that which is anothers, who will give you that which is your own?* Intimating, that those who are unfaithful in the administration of his temporal gifts, which are but a trust; forfeit his spiritual graces, whereby he would give us that *which is our own*, by restoring us to the possession, and consequently *the enjoyment of ourselves*, which is our proper bliss, and contains the whole of our interest with regard to the present life.

As to our interest in the future life, our Lord has in that respect declared *the danger of riches*, with the difficulties of a rich man's being saved, so positively, and with such emphasis, as should justly alarm us who find ourselves in plentiful circumstances, and make us heedfully examine where this danger lies, that we may escape it. Riches may be considered with relation to the *acquisition, possession, and use*, in which three respects they are too often *dangerous*. In the *acquisition* they are dangerous, when obtained, not only by fraud or oppression, but also by too

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vehement



vehement care and sollicitude, such as withdraws our affections from God. They are dangerous in the *possession*, when hoarded by covetousness; and dangerous in the *use*, when they are spent in vanity and luxury. Every rich man must incur one at least of these dangers, if he does not expend a due proportion of his wealth in alms-giving.

For as to the first of them which attends the *acquisition* of wealth: it is notorious that the ordinary ways of getting an estate are too often indirect, or in plain terms, unjust. Now if that injustice be not repented of, it is impossible for such a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven; and if it be repented of, then restitution is a necessary consequence. For, to repent of an action implies to wish it not done, undone, and consequently to undo it to the utmost of our power, *i. e.* to restore the unjust gains we are possessed of: but oftentimes we cannot find the proper owners, and in that case the only remedy is to refund, what has hitherto been wrongfully detained, in some work of charity.

As for those whose hands are clear, and their hearts only defiled with worldly solicitous cares to raise an estate, which cares have stunted, if not stopped their growth in virtue; I must exhort them to relinquish a part of their wealth for the relief of the poor, and testify to God  
their

their regret for having neglected their duty to him, by retaining no fruit of those wicked cares which occasioned it. And if this were duly performed; if these two kinds of restitution were made by the unjust and the worldly-minded, it would yield an ample fund for works of charity. But indeed that is not my principal intention in this discourse. God will provide for his poor: and it is chiefly for the sake of the rich that I lay these things before you: and I may say, as our apostle, *not because I desire a gift for them: but I desire fruit, which may abound to your account*<sup>s</sup>, and open a way to your salvation, which is not attainable without such restitution.

The second abuse of riches which renders them so dangerous is in the *possession* by *covetousness*. Covetousness is a vice which no man owns, and few have the sense or ingenuity to discover in themselves: but there is a sure mark to know it by, and such as may serve to undeceive those who most deceive themselves. The rich man who is not *rich in good works*, who is *not ready to give and glad to distribute* upon proper occasions, is certainly covetous, and his conscience will convince him that he is so, if he will consult it sincerely and in the presence of God.

<sup>s</sup> Phil. iv. 7.



The third mischief of riches is, when they minister to pride and luxury. Every uncharitable rich man comes under this head or the former; he either spends, or lays up the portion which belongs to the poor, and is equally guilty of defrauding them, whether it be by avarice or prodigality. Many reconcile these vices, making the one provide for the other, making covetousness the steward for luxury. He was of this character whose foolish soliloquy is recorded in the gospel, where it is said that he thus bespoke his soul: *soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease; eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God; so are all uncharitable rich men, and such shall be their punishment.*

A few verses before the text, St. Paul thus warns us of the danger of riches. *They who will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil, and the possession of it is a general supply for, and incitement to all the vices: it nourishes pride, ambition, and revenge; it maintains vanity, sloth, luxury: in a word, it is the general support of every wicked lust and passion;*

passion; so that the rich are exposed to great temptations, and we see to our grief that they frequently fall into them: but when to their other vices they add hardheartedness to the poor, this fills up the measure of their iniquities, and as it were sets the seal to their reprobation. Let it not be thought here that I aggravate matters, and with declamatory art magnify my subject beyond its natural importance, for I follow herein the infallible guidance of holy writ. So the prophet Ezekiel, *behold this was the iniquity of Sodom; pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters* <sup>6</sup>; these are the ordinary vices of the rich both men and women: it is added, as the completion of the crimes of Sodom, *neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy; behold this was the iniquity of Sodom!*

In the 25th chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, we have from our Lord himself his most express declaration upon this subject. He there makes the damnation of uncharitable rich men an article of faith, and specifies the very words of the sentence which shall be passed upon them. In that sentence he names not their other vices, but mentions only their uncharitableness as the consummation of the rest, and as what finally excludes *them* from all preten-

<sup>6</sup> Ezek. xvi. 49.



sions to the mercy of God, *who* have shewed none to their brethren.

And thus it has been shewn that alms-giving is our duty, and our interest: you yourselves are to judge who are the proper objects for it. Those now proposed are notoriously such—but they have been already so often recommended to you, and their circumstances speak so loudly on their behalf, that it is needless, and might be tedious, to add any thing farther on that head. I conclude therefore in the words of our Lord, *make yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*

*A SERMON preached in the Chapel at Lambeth, December 3, 1738 At the Consecration of the Right Reverend Father in GOD, JOSEPH, Lord Bishop of BRISTOL.*

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2 TIM. ii. 15, 16.

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings.*

**T**HE epistles to Timothy and Titus are the last St. Paul wrote. His former epistles are rich with all kinds of advice proper to edify the body of the faithful: to complete his apostolic function, it remained only, that he should instruct the instructors; and, consummate as he now was in the arts of *teaching* and *governing* the church, communicate to its ministers the rules which he judged most necessary for the discharge of their sacred office. Although these have been in our hands almost from our infancy, and have been often considered, yet the repetition of them will not be tedious



tedious to those who practise them. Good precepts are to virtue as a glass, wherein she may with delight behold herself, and by which she may be animated with fresh zeal to perseverance, and, perhaps, improvement.

I shall pass over his rules for *governing* the church, as a subject too extensive, and lying out of my province: and confine myself to his directions for *teaching*, which are briefly comprehended in these two precepts of the text, viz. *rightly to divide the word of truth*; and to *avoid profane and vain babblings*.

The last is a repetition of what had been said in the conclusion of the former epistle to Timothy; where for *κενοφωνίας*, *verborum inanitates*, which we find in the printed editions, the Vulgate read *καινοφωνίας*, *verborum novitates*, which is authorized by most of the fathers who have quoted this passage. Both readings are good: both are consonant with, and authorized by other equivalent precepts here enjoined: and therefore, without attempting to decide in favour of either, I shall take occasion from both to remark all those abuses of the pulpit, which the apostle censures in these epistles.

Under the first sense of *empty discourses*, called in our translation *vain babblings*, he represents those, who without any serious purpose of edification, rambling in loose generals, seek only to acquit themselves; and have so low a notion  
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of their duty, that they think it discharged, by filling up the usual space of time with a trivial lifeless speech, which passes through the ears of an audience without profit or pleasure; without making any the least impression on their conscience, and scarce so much as a trace in their memory or imagination. This is sowing chaff instead of good seed, and may well challenge the first place among the several species of *vain babbling*, which the text prohibits.

Next to preaching nothing, is preaching what is nothing to the purpose: as some men of spirit and parts, whose talents put them above the insipid frivolous manner before-mentioned, yet choose subjects quite improper for their audience. Of this kind there is an endless variety, as the ways of missing the mark are innumerable. We can specify only some of the principal and most in vogue. As when preachers move disputes unseasonably, or upon frivolous subjects; or, as it often happens, upon subjects which they themselves are not fully instructed in. These are censured by the apostle, as *setting up for teachers, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*<sup>1</sup>, i. e. decide about, *as men who dote about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, contention, railings, evil surmises, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds*<sup>2</sup>, who strive

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 7.<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 4.



*about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers* <sup>3</sup>.

We have deplorable instances of this in some preachers of controversy, or, as they are called, *polemic divines*, who not only use an unchristian bitterness of style, but also heighten satire with fiction; and, overcharging their opponents, calumniate, that they may confute.

Such is the *κένωφωνία*, or *vain babbling*, as we read in the present editions of the Greek. The various lections before-mentioned was *καινοφωνία*, *novitas verborum*, which comprehends all other faults of public teachers reprehended by the apostle.

In the beginning of the former epistle to Timothy, he tells him, that he *therefore left him at Ephesus*, that he might restrain some preachers from venting novel doctrines. *That thou mightest charge them* (saith he) *that they teach no other doctrine* <sup>4</sup>, viz. than that already established. And again, *if any man teach otherwise, and does not adhere to the wholesome words, i. e. salutary instructions, of our Lord Jesus Christ; he is proud, knowing nothing* <sup>5</sup>: he is presumptuous and ignorant. And in this epistle he thus warns Timothy himself, *hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me* <sup>6</sup>. This he calls the *good depositum*, or *trust*

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 14.  
3, 4.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. i. 3.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. vi.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. i. 13.

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which was committed to him, which he was to defend with a godly zeal, and severely rebuke all who departed from it.

And thus far we have the apostle's directions what not to preach. To this negative precept, he adds the positive. The former is the proper preparation for the latter. For when things trivial, useless, and hurtful, are rejected, the important doctrines will present themselves: we shall happily be confined to the *word of truth*, and all our care and skill will be employed in what the apostle calls *rightly dividing it*: which is the phrase used in the text to express the right method of preaching, as that before explained prohibits the abuses of it.

The *word of truth* is the compleat system of christian doctrines, and the *division* here spoken of relates to the *doctrines* themselves, or to the *auditors*. We are, as the apostle speaks, *stewards of the mysteries of God*<sup>7</sup>. Now the office of a steward is to be thoroughly acquainted with all the stores committed to his charge: to survey them with a judicious discernment, so as to understand their nature, their use, and how they may be best employed. By this he is qualified to dispense them properly, seasonably, and in due proportions to his fellow-servants.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.



The office of a steward then relates to the *stores* under his care, and the *persons* to whom they are to be distributed. And thus also in the spiritual stewardship there are two things to be considered; the *doctrines* wherewith we are intrusted, and the *persons* to whom they are to be dispensed: and in a due regard to these must consist what the apostle intends by this peculiar expression of *rightly dividing the word of truth*.

As to the *persons* to whom the word of truth is to be dispensed, respect is to be had to their various characters and capacities. The general truths, wherein all are concerned, rarely make great impressions: men easily admit them in the gross, without deducing the proper consequences for their own use and instruction. The preacher therefore in obedience to his Lord's command, must do that for them, *and give to every one his portion of meat in due season* \*. He must endeavour to select from the universal doctrines each man's peculiar duty; and, specifying what belongs to the various characters or classes of his hearers, inculcate separately their respective obligations, by deducing from the general truths, what suits their particular circumstances.

The epistles of St. Paul abound with such practical deductions. All the different ranks

\* Luke xii. 42.

and orders of men are peculiarly applied to : husbands, wives, widows, parents, masters, children, servants, the rich, the poor, the old, the young, every condition, every relation, every age, have their distinct lesson ; they have each, as it were, their separate portion in the *division* which he makes for them *of the word of truth*. He enters into a detail of the lowest duties of domestic life, without hazard of his ministerial dignity, because he enforces them by the proper motive of *piety* ; a motive which ennobles the meanest offices, and gives them a merit far superior to the highest, if destitute of that principle.

That noble principle equally belongs to all persons in all stations : and accordingly we find the apostle applying it to all in such manner as best suits their circumstances : for he enforces all the various duties of life with one and the same motive, that of *piety* or *godliness*, only differently accommodated to the different circumstances of those he addresses. Thus, he presses the duty of *masters*, by the consideration, that *they have a Master in heaven* : and he commands *servants to be obedient as unto Christ ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but with goodwill doing service as to the Lord, and not to men*<sup>1</sup>. After the same manner he teaches all the social duties, as part of our duty to God, and animates

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi.



his moral instructions with the spirit of piety. Mere morality had been already taught, not contemptibly, by the heathen philosophers. The peculiar glory of revelation is, that it supports and perfects the moral duties by the most exalted principle; and hence Christianity itself is called by our apostle (to distinguish it, I suppose, from the various religions of the heathen, which were termed their *mysteries*) *Μυστήριον εὐσεβείας* <sup>2</sup>, the mystery of godliness; and again, *Διδασκαλία ἡ κατ' εὐσέβειαν*, the doctrine which instructs in godliness; and again, *Ἀληθεία ἡ κατ' εὐσέβειαν* <sup>3</sup>, the truth so taught as to promote godliness. When a devout regard to God is the motive of our actions, morality so practised becomes the most improving exercise of piety: we grow more and more in the *knowledge of God*, and consequently advance in his *love*, which is the consummation of all duties, and ought to be the end and aim of all instruction; for so the apostle says expressly, *The end of preaching is charity*. In our translation it is said, *The end of the commandment is charity* <sup>4</sup>; for *commandment* the original has *παράγγελία*, which our translators themselves twice in the same chapter render *charge*, meaning thereby the *episcopal charge*, or other public instruction. And the context requires the same sense here; for the apostle

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 3. Tit. i. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. i. 5.

was speaking of bad preachers, and directing Timothy to give them in charge not to preach novel doctrines, not to mind fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying; for (says he) the end of preaching is charity <sup>5</sup>.

This leads to the other part of our office before-mentioned, which regards the *doctrines* wherewith we are entrusted. And here it is of great importance to distinguish the *means* from the *end*; because the *end* solely is to be fought for its own sake, and the *means* are only so far to be insisted on, as they conduce to it. And therefore among the *means*, we are further to distinguish the *nearer* from the *more remote*; those which are *indispensibly necessary*, for those which are only *expedient* for the sake of higher duties, to which they relate, and without which they are of no moment; for, (as was observed by a great writer of the last age <sup>6</sup>) there is “a certain scale of duties, a certain hierarchy of upper and lower commands, which for want of studying in right order, all the world is in confusion.” There are *weightier* <sup>7</sup>, and consequently *less weighty* parts of the law: and it is necessary to distinguish them aright, that, when they interfere, we may know which ought

<sup>5</sup> The noun *παράγγελίας*, in this fifth verse, answers to the verb *παράγγειλεις* in the third.

<sup>6</sup> Milton.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxiii. 23.



to have the preference. There is not room here further to unfold this important truth concerning the *means*, with their respective *subordinations*; yet it well deserves to be deliberately considered and digested by those, whose office it is to instruct in public.

But what is still of greater consequence, is to keep the *end* steadily in view, which will be our best direction in choosing, among the various *means*, those which are most conducive to it. *Whatsoever thou takest in hand* (saith the Son of Sirach) *consider the end, and thou shalt never do amiss*<sup>8</sup>. Now, the *end* of all religion is *charity*, i. e. the love of God, with its inseparable concomitant, the love of men for his sake. As charity is the end of all religion, the end of all preaching is to inculcate it; for *love* is the predominant passion, to which the other passions or affections of the mind conform so punctually, that they may be considered only as love diversified according to the different situation of the object. Like gravitation in the material world, it is the great cause of motion, according to that of Augustine<sup>9</sup>: *Ponderibus suis aguntur omnia, & locum suum petunt. Amor meus est pondus meum, eo feror quocunque feror*. Love is the master-spring in the human frame; and as charity is *love rightly directed*, where that takes place, all other affections are regulated by it:

<sup>8</sup> Eccles vii. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Conf. Lib. xiii.

the heart is set right; and thence the whole man will go true, as it were, mechanically, and by a happy necessity.

If we were to propose the notion of charity, as the idea of perfection, to a philosopher, who had never heard of Christianity: if we should represent to him, that man ought to love God with all his heart, and all his soul, the utmost stretch of all his faculties, and his neighbour as himself: he must presently assent to the rectitude and immense felicity of such a disposition; all his doubts would be about its possibility; and, indeed, with too much appearance of reason. For, in the present state of human nature, before some change is wrought in it, this *end* of religion is so very remote, that however desirable, yet it will appear scarce attainable. Great part of mankind are so far from loving God, that they know him not: they scarce believe his existence. Their belief is rather a blind deference to the authority of public opinion, than any distinct and lively conviction of a Deity. An object so little known can raise no desires; and therefore men must be practised in the knowledge of God, before they are capable of loving him. To this end, the *faithful instructor* strives continually to inculcate vivid and efficacious sentiments of the Deity: he lays the good foundation of natural religion, and teaches men to revere God as the *Creator*, depend on him as



the *Governor*, and stand in awe of him as the *Judge* of the world. He endeavours to excite their gratitude, engage their obedience, and work upon their hopes and fears, by strong representations of their future everlasting interests. This will dispose them to receive the doctrines of Christianity: for, if we can effectually persuade them to set about the practice of moral justice, they will easily be convinced of the corruption of their nature, and thence joyfully embrace the glad tidings of our redemption by Christ. They will gradually relish his precepts; and reflecting, how by indulging themselves, they have been authors of their own misery, they will see the necessity of following his directions, by *denying themselves*, and walking in the *narrow way*, as the only way to happiness.

It will then be seasonable to display the many various stages, wherein the man, co-operating with divine grace, gradually wears out of his heart the love of this world, sacrifices all inordinate self-love, and thereby advancing in the knowledge of God, becomes more and more susceptible of his love. This road is too long to be here distinctly traced out. But the appointed guides will remind themselves to have a steady regard to the *end* of it, in all their instructions; since without that, they will be in danger of misleading those they conduct. When an architect gives directions for digging a foundation,

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dation, he has in his mind the plan of the future edifice, and suits his directions to it: so, while we are teaching the previous lessons, we should keep this in view, as the point to which all should tend.

Charity itself is the great gift of God, *into which he directs the hearts of such as are duly prepared for it*<sup>1</sup>: and I am aware, that men, who have not their hearts so prepared, by a progress in moral virtue, are apt to form wrong notions of it. They may think it consists in fond, passionate, or rapturous sentiments: and striving to excite these in themselves by the efforts of a heated imagination, grow rank enthusiasts. St. Paul's meaning therefore is not that charity should be always the subject of our sermons; but the rule by which to judge, whether they are to the purpose. *The end of preaching is charity.*

All the *means* of religion have such a dependence upon this *end*, that there will be frequent occasion to have recourse to it, for explaining the other duties, which are so connected with it, that they will appear inexplicable and absurd without it. For instance: the first article in the baptismal covenant, and consequently a momentous one, is, *That we renounce the world*: which if we should teach, without shewing the reason of it, which is to qualify the mind

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 4, 5.



for infinitely higher pursuits, it must be liable to great objections. It may be said, “Why  
 “ may not I indulge the desire of riches, or  
 “ honours, or sensual enjoyments, in any degree  
 “ whatever, as long as I refrain from injuring  
 “ myself in my health, or other men in their  
 “ property?” To answer this, it must be shew-  
 ed, that we are commanded to renounce the  
 desires of temporal goods, because, capable as  
 we are of knowing and loving the supreme Good,  
 those desires themselves, though they should not  
 carry us into overt acts of intemperance or in-  
 justice, may yet be in degrees utterly incon-  
 sistent with such knowledge and love. The  
 Israelites were not bid to go out of Egypt into  
 a desert, merely for the sake of so doing; but,  
 because Canaan lay beyond that desert, and there  
 was no other passage to it: nor were they qua-  
 lified to get possession of the land of promise,  
 till they had worn away the servile abject tem-  
 per they brought with them from the *house of*  
*bondage*: well typifying the indulgence of  
 worldly desires, which is a certain obstacle to  
 that knowledge and love of God which consti-  
 tute the heavenly Canaan. That worldly de-  
 sires are such obstacles will be obvious, if we  
 consider the word *God* as a relative term, de-  
 noting, *Whatsoever a man sets his heart upon,*  
*and places his happiness in possessing.* The scrip-  
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tures often use the word in this sense<sup>2</sup>, because, as our love was made for God, so whatsoever we love becomes as a God to us: it becomes what God ought to be to us; it governs us, and is in us the reason of action. Now if That be any temporal good, the Creator is thereby excluded, and such person lives in actual idolatry; which certainly imports nothing less than a negative of charity, or that love of God, which is to take up all our heart, and all our mind, and all our strength. So St. John declares, with his majestic simplicity, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*<sup>3</sup>. Of such importance is the doctrine of charity to the first rudiments of true Christianity, that the initiating baptismal covenant cannot be explained without it. As therefore our Master, treating of charity in its two branches of the love of God and our neighbour, says, that *upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*; so must all our sermons too; for *the end of preaching is charity: which end* (so the apostle subjoins) *some having swerved from,* (or, as it is rightly rendered in the margin) *not aiming at, have turned aside unto vain jangling*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 19. Eph. v. 5. Col. iii. 5, &c.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. i. 5.



To conclude ; When the minister of Christ is preparing himself to instruct in public, he should consider well the characters of his audience ; and what is, at least ought to be, the disposition in which they will attend to him. He may imagine them to address him in the words of Cornelius to St. Peter : *Now are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*<sup>5</sup>. He should consider, that he too *is before God, appointed to speak on God's behalf*. This will dispose him to answer their just expectations ; and not (as the manner of some has been) to amuse them with dry and barren speculations, or provoke their evil passions with unchristian disputes and calumnies, or pervert their faith with novel and unsound opinions : but he will fully and practically instruct them in the moral duties ; and will add to these the Christian doctrines of *renouncing the world, and denying themselves*<sup>6</sup>, without which they cannot attain to the knowledge, much less to the love of God ; seeing God cannot be known, but as what he is, *viz.* our Supreme Good : and no man can apprehend him as such, as his Supreme Good, so long as any temporal good has the preference in his esteem.

<sup>5</sup> Acts x. 33.<sup>6</sup> 1 John ii. 15. · Matt. xvi. 24.

These observations, it is evident, are applicable to private instruction in more familiar conversation (which very particularly belongs to the christian ministry) as well as to public. The directions of the text comprehend both, and both are liable to the like abuses, and require the like care.

By attending to these things, the good stewards over the household of God rightly dispense the word of truth, both in public and private; and from the sacred stores of scripture, distribute wholesome instructions, and such as are well suited to the wants, the capacities, and the present disposition of those committed to their trust. And thus *they watch for their souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.*



## DISCOURSE XXI.

*On CONVERSION.*

ZECH. I. 3.

*Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and  
I will turn unto you.*

**T**HE operations of the mind are usually expressed by metaphors taken from bodily action. We conceive of thought as of local motion: whatsoever the mind principally tends to, we call its *end*; and our habitual endeavours to attain it, are, as so many steps, by which we advance towards it.

This end or main design of life is various in various men; and also in the same man at different times. The younger sort commonly make bodily pleasure their chief pursuit. Their senses are lively, and their passions strong, so that the enjoyments they propose to themselves, seem to them a sufficient fund for happiness. Experience soon discovers this error, and many (now grown wiser as they fancy) convert their minds

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to the goods of fortune, and are intent to establish themselves in the world. Others, or perhaps the same in another season of life, seek only to be at ease, and pass their time thoughtlessly, with no farther design than to render it the least burdensome they can. But whatever way men busy, or amuse themselves; it is not possible for them ever to attain solid peace of mind, till they turn from these mistaken ends of life to follow the exhortation which you heard: *Turn unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn unto you.*

Which are the words of God related by his prophet, and actually spoke by God himself within the conscience of every sinner. I believe there are few, who have not, some time in their lives, endeavoured to close with this gracious invitation; and accordingly made some steps towards repentance and reformation: and the rather, because the motions of grace are often seconded by those of nature: and while conscience represents the *guilt* of sin, reason and experience shew the *inconveniences* of it. Some degrees of misery ever attend vice, as its shadow, even in this life. To indulge the appetites and passions is so grievous a servitude, and attended with so many bitter consequences, that men smarting under the ill effects of sin, cannot but sometimes wish to be delivered from its bondage.

Hence



Hence it comes to pass, that the voice of conscience soliciting men to repent, is (as I said) often seconded by natural inclinations: and as conscience in such persons is usually a feeble principle, and the natural inclinations are more sensible and operative; it too frequently happens, that conscience, which begun the work, is dropt in the prosecution of it. The man strives against the *misery*, not the *guilt* of sin. He renounces his vices, not because they offend his Maker; but because they prejudice his health or reputation; because they are chargeable, perhaps ruinous; or, in short, from motives merely human. As the man departs from the motives of grace, so he certainly forfeits its assistances, and consequently must miscarry in the arduous work of conversion. He turns, like a weather-cock, to return with the next blast of temptation; or, in the phrase of Solomon, *he turns like a door upon its hinges*, still in the same place, still centered in selfishness.

The only way to prevent such deplorable miscarriages is to hearken to God speaking in the text. *Turn unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, turn unto me.* Seek not merely your own ease and convenience in the practice of moral virtue, as a more commodious method of life, but *Turn unto God* in devotion, which devotion is the only path that leads to innocence; as the neglect of it is a certain source of guilt and misery. For  
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the vices, which you desire to be delivered from, took root in you, while you were turned away from God: and they can never be extirpated, but by returning to him in the habitual practice of religion. Want of *piety* is ever the first, the capital crime; and our other faults are all derived from it; they are natural, or judicial consequences of neglecting the worship of God: and by the *worship of God*, I do not mean barely the coming to church, or the reading over forms of prayer in private; for some, alas! do these without worshipping God; they approach him with their lips, while their heart is far from him. But by the *worship of God* I mean an internal, solid devotion, by which the Creator is adored in *spirit, and in truth*. In *spirit*, i. e. with a mind abstracted from, and raised above all worldly concerns; and in *truth*, i. e. meaning what we say, earnestly desiring what we ask, and using no expressions but what really suit our present temper and frame of mind. Nothing is more apparently reasonable than what I here insist on: yet it is notorious that many say over prayers by rote, without any lively sense of God in their hearts; and the necessary consequence is, that being void of the grace of God, which can be obtained only by prayer, they fall in the time of temptation, and become a prey to evil passions and inclinations. Our reformation therefore must begin, where our depravation began: for *as the beginning*



*ning of sin is, when one departeth from God, and his heart is turned away from his Maker*<sup>1</sup>: so the beginning of virtue is, when one cometh to God, and his heart is turned unto him, who made it.

With a heart thus disposed we should consider our *obligations* to God—our *offences* against him—and the great *danger* we are in from the evil habits we have contracted. These are three subjects of meditation, the *names* of which are familiar sounds in our ears, and as such perhaps make no great impression on us: but the *things* themselves are the most important, and most interesting that ever moved concern in the breast of man; and therefore I repeat them: they are our *obligations* to God, our *offences* against him, and the great danger we are in from the evil habits we have contracted. Let us survey these severally, and first consider what your obligations to God are—how great is the sum of them?—All that you are, or have, or are capable of having in the course of eternity, is the gift of God. And if single benefits excite gratitude, where can we find sentiments that may answer to such infinite obligations? On the other hand to consider our offences against this

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus x. ver. 12, 13. the text is, that *Pride is the beginning of sin, and the beginning of pride is when one departeth from God, &c.* so that the reasoning amounts to what is here asserted.

universal Benefactor (if there be any ingenuity, any just sense of shame) must cause great regret and remorse within us. And lastly, to reflect how exceedingly prone we are to repeat these odious follies, and that by the force of evil habits wilfully contracted, we are actually sliding down a precipice, where nothing but the hand of God can stop our ruin.—If there be in us any rational apprehension of danger, any remaining care for our real interests: this must alarm our *fear*, which co-operating with the just *grief* and *love* excited by the considerations before-mentioned, must make us call earnestly upon God, and cry to him, as the children of Israel: *We have sinned, O Lord, we have sinned against thee. Do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee: deliver us only we pray thee*<sup>2</sup>. Or as St. Paul at his conversion: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* “ I renounce all worldly  
 “ projects: I put a stop to my former pursuits,  
 “ and designs: I deny my own will; I seek  
 “ only to do thy will: receive me into thy ser-  
 “ vice, accept me for thy subject, employ me  
 “ as thy servant; *Lord, what wilt thou have me*  
 “ *to do?* There is nothing that I am not ready  
 “ to do, and to suffer, that I may obtain thy  
 “ favour. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to*  
 “ *do?*”

<sup>2</sup> Judges x. 15.



Such an address to God will doubtless appear highly reasonable. But some perhaps may say, “Whither must we *turn to find him*? Where is God, that we may turn unto him?” To these we may answer with another question. Where is he not? He filleth heaven and earth. He containeth all things, and penetrateth all things. We are *in* him, and he is *in* us. We should therefore seek him, where he is nearest to be found, within ourselves, I mean; in our hearts, which are his destined temple, and wherein he will manifest himself to those who devoutly turn to him.

That God created man to be his temple, and has chosen the heart for his sanctuary, is a truth that has been discovered by the mere light of nature, and has been inculcated in many illustrious passages of heathen authors, which are often quoted and admired: but a truth of such infinite concern to mankind ought not to be treated only as a sublime speculation, or fortunately fall of some great genius: but it ought to be practically applied, as all the experimental writers continually apply it, by teaching that devout recollection wherewith the mind turns inwards to seek God: by this we *approach* to him; as on the contrary, when the mind turns outwards, intent only upon sensible objects, we depart from God, we forsake him: and continuing to do so, we are forsaken by him.

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It is the observation of Seneca, that “ *Mali* “ *ubique sunt, præterquam secum.*” The sinner ever lives abroad, if I may so speak; he is conversant only about outward things, and is a stranger to himself. But religion calls our thoughts home to ourselves: it carries our attention inward, recollecting the mind from transitory goods in which it was dissipated, and pointing its force upon the heart, where, as it was said, God resides.

In strict reasoning perhaps we ought not to ascribe locality to the Deity. Human language cannot treat of God but with great improprieties. Yet to say that we must seek God within ourselves, in our hearts, is in some respect a proper way of speaking, because it is a proper way of conceiving about God. God is in the heavens, and above all heavens: he is also in every tree, and plant, and stone, as verily as he is in the heart of man: he is in every other man’s heart as well as in ours. But seeing he is *within* us, we ought not to seek him *without* us. *He is a God near at hand, and not afar off*<sup>3</sup>. He is indeed both *near* and *afar off* by his ubiquity or omnipresence: but in as much as concerns us, in as much as he is our God, he is near us, he is *in* us.

And thus much may suffice concerning this gracious exhortation, *Turn unto me, saith the*

<sup>3</sup> Jer. xxiii.



*Lord.* The words following are the motive to it, *And I will turn unto you.*—God will turn unto you; God, I say, will turn unto you. Were you fully persuaded of this, I think so great an encouragement must affect you. But I suspect that many address their prayers to God, as to a dumb idol, in whom there is no correspondence; they have not a lively faith, and thence their devotions prove vain and fruitless. To prevent this God himself vouchsafes to assure us, that upon our sincere conversion *he will turn to us*: and, to cure our stubborn infidelity, he has often repeated such gracious assurances, as by the Preacher, *Return unto the Lord, and forsake thy sins. Make thy prayer before his face.*—*Turn again to the Most High, and turn away from iniquity; for he will lead thee out of darkness into the light of health.* Again, *If thou seek him, he will be found of thee: but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever*<sup>4</sup>. And, *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you*<sup>5</sup>. A little lower in the same chapter it is added, *They sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them*<sup>6</sup>. To the same purpose his prophet Micah, *He will turn again: he will have compassion on us: he will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the depth of the sea*<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Chron. xxxviii. 9.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Chron. xv. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ver. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Mic. vii. 19.

I add but one more from the first chapter of Proverbs : *Turn you at my reproof : behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you*<sup>8</sup>. God poureth forth his *Spirit* upon the converted soul, the same *Almighty Spirit*, which in the beginning brooded over the rude chaos to form the world, and which will infallibly preside in every heart, that is surrendered to him, to produce in it the new creation of virtue ; and then conversion becomes compleat : for it is a complicated act, in which God and man co-operate, and the first prayer of a soul in the state of conversion should be, *Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned*. There is no difficulty on the part of God. His grace solicits us. His arms are ever open to receive us : and we may be secure (to use the figurative expression of St. Austin) we may be secure, that if we cast ourselves into his opened arms, he will not draw them back, and let us fall, but indulgently receive and embrace us. It is impious to imagine that God will fail us, since the arms of Christ were extended upon the cross to merit our reconciliation. Let us take courage then to make the experiment in a full assurance of faith : and the success will shew us how faithful Christ is when he promiseth ; *Him who cometh to me, I will not reject, I will in no wise cast out*<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Prov. i. 15.<sup>9</sup> John vi. 37.



Some indeed are received sooner than others, according to the dispositions wherewith they address him, for conversion is of two kinds; the one as it were instantaneous, the other leisurely and gradual. The first is as a sudden stroke, which pierces the heart of the sinner, and fills him with grief and love inexpressible; changing the spring of all his passions, so that he has in aversion what he loved before, and loves what he was much averse to. The breath of the Holy Spirit drives him with such impetuosity, that in a very short time he makes the way of many years. Happy those who are seized in this manner! but, alas! they are very rare. Such was the conversion of Mary Magdalen, of St. Paul, and others in whom love was the predominant principle, which transported them so that they forgot themselves and personal interests; while their whole heart was filled with the sharpest regret, because they had offended God, and because they could not love him so much as they wished to do. Such converts need no advice, as do the second kind, who are converted leisurely and by degrees, who have long been called, and felt the struggles of resistance to grace, either a wilful resistance, or such as is the natural result of evil habits. These need help, and Christ himself gives them that help, *knocking at the gate of their heart*,

† Rev. iii. 20.

and

and long waiting there for admittance: for as the heart is the seat of desire, no true conversion can be wrought till Christ takes possession of it, to purify and inflame it with his love. To effect this, besides the inward calls of grace, he often makes use of outward circumstances. Dangers and afflictions serve to make us turn inwards, and to excite in us that *fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom*. Here follows remorse of conscience, which is as a perpetual burden upon the mind, causing there continual wishes to change our lives: and if we do not stifle the motions of grace, we at last come to a firm and determined resolution of amendment — But repentance is not an art that can be taught like human sciences. It is a real change, wrought by the power of the Most High. Advice can contribute only to persuade men to detach their minds from the world, to suspend at least their worldly desires, and call earnestly, and with obstinate perseverance upon God, to accept and take possession of their hearts. As sure as they do this with sincerity, so surely will God receive their hearts, and begin to move them by his Spirit, exciting compunction, contrition, and groans unutterable<sup>2</sup>. Grief and love make a mixture of pain and pleasure, which at once afflict and console. Many will find in

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 26, 27.



this case, that to read over elaborate compositions of other men, I mean the wordy forms of prayer prescribed by some writers, will rather quench the spirit of prayer, than improve or nourish it. If our hearts are duly affected, they will produce strong and lasting sentiments: we shall then insist long and intensely upon the same thought, and dwell in it, after such a manner, as ill suits with the reading over a great quantity of set formal speeches. For such thoughts will naturally vent themselves in interjections, and broken sentences, often succeeded by a solemn silence, while the heart feels, what the tongue cannot utter. Let not therefore the penitent scruple to indulge such silence, while he feels his heart affected: the prayer of the heart is most eloquent in the ears of our heavenly Father; they are his own motions, which we feel there; *He prepareth the heart, and his ear hearkeneth thereto*<sup>3</sup>.

Before I conclude, let me add one word of exhortation to those who are discouraged by the sad experience of former miscarriages: “ They  
 “ have perhaps often attempted to return to  
 “ God, but still failed; the weight of sensuality  
 “ has still dragged them down again. They  
 “ are so entangled with evil habits, and their  
 “ iniquities have taken such hold of them, that

<sup>3</sup> Psal. x. 17.

“ they

“ they are not able to disengage themselves.”  
*Let them say this to God in prayer* : let them pour out their complaint before him, and expose all the difficulties wherewith they are perplexed. He is able to solve them, he is willing and desirous to do it. “ We know not what to do.”—But he knows, and he will teach us. “ We are not able.”—But he is able : he is all-sufficient : we know it, we cannot doubt it. Let us then fly to him for succour.

I conclude all in the words of the prophet *Isaiah, Seek the Lord, while he may be found : call upon him, while he is near. Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon* \*.

\* Isa. lv. 6, 7.



## DISCOURSE XXII.

*The* PREVALENT PASSION.

HEB. xii. 1.

*Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*

**B**Y *weight* we may here understand whatever clogs the will, or biases the judgment, so as to slacken, or divert our progress in virtue. And by *the sin which easily besets us*, is meant the bosom sin, as some call it: *i. e.* such particular vice, as the man is most addicted to by complexion, or by force of habit, or by whatever other circumstances of life may lead to it. This in some is covetousness, in others sensuality; in some ambition, in others envy, censoriousness, idleness, or the like: in all it is distinguishable by this specific character, that it is the source and cause of many other sins. St. Paul speaks elsewhere of the *body of sin*: the predominant vice now treated of is the *head* of that body, imparting life and vigour to all the rest. And it is chiefly from this consideration

deration that I shall enforce the advice in the text, *viz.* that if we overcome this our capital enemy, the rest will be easily subdued: whereas if we do not oppose it with all our might, it will, besides its proper guilt, lead us into many other faults to which we are naturally averse; and finally corrupt all our moral faculties.

The proof of this would be needless, if men would but attend to what passes in their own breast, and become well acquainted with themselves: but as that kind of acquaintance is little cultivated; and the knowledge of ourselves, though confessedly the most important, is the least studied of all sciences: I shall endeavour to shew them to themselves under the correspondent characters of other men, and represent the dreadful effects of a favourite vice long indulged in some remarkable histories recorded in the scripture, which I shall enlarge upon with a proper and practical application of each of them.

I begin with that of Saul, who before he was called to the throne had such distinguished merit and virtue, that upon that account he was chosen by God to govern the people of Israel. But, as it should seem, *envy* was the vice he was most inclined to, perhaps his complexional vice, and therefore such *as easily beset him*. He was not sufficiently careful to resist its evil suggestions, when the stripling David  
slew



flew Goliah, and put to flight the armies of the Philistines. He apprehended that such superior merit in a subject would eclipse the regal dignity. The songs of the Israelitish women, that ascribed to him only his thousands slain, but to David his ten thousands, grated in his ears. The trophies of the giant offended him. In a word, he envied David, and not suppressing that envy at first, but giving way to the temptation, he fell into such a train of crimes, as make his name detestable, and may sufficiently warn us how we give way to a vicious affection, which may at first seem of no great moment; but if indulged, may have the most dismal consequences. This Saul, once the elect of God for his singular virtue, from envious became ingrateful, forgetting the service of the valiant youth, who had saved his crown: he became cruel, perfidious, and a murderer; for he sought to kill his benefactor with his own hand: and when that attempt failed, he then treacherously, under pretence of friendship, contrived his death by the hands of the Philistines: and afterwards openly endeavoured it himself at the head of his troops, with which he pursued him through the wildernesses of Zeph and Engedi. To these crimes he added perjury, breaking the oath which he had sworn to Jonathan that David *should not be slain*: and afterwards, in the fury of his disappointed malice, he destroyed  
four-score

four score and five priests, with a whole city that belonged to them, men, women, and children, merely upon a suspicion that they favoured David. Envy was his reigning sin, the tyrant of his breast: and that one vice indulged, led him into all these crimes, which the scripture has recorded as an eternal brand on his memory.

I rather chose to instance in the vice of envy so remarkable in Saul, because I have often observed that envy, though doubtless a very common sin, is yet a sin, which those who fall into it, are seldom sensible of, I mean seldom perceive themselves to be guilty of. The drunkard, and the adulterer, cannot but know their crimes, so that whenever they grow serious, and, as repentance requires, examine themselves; they presently must plead guilty before God, and seek his pardon in an humble confession. But envy is a sin which, I fear, few acknowledge: and yet I am convinced by experience and observation that it is a very common sin, and that most men have reason to put it in the catalogue of their penitential confessions. When men of the same profession live in the same place, where their interests interfere, and what one gets the other misses: is it not very common to see the unsuccessful envy the prosperity of his neighbour; *i. e.* grieve at it, and bear him ill will upon that account?



How apt are men to speak coldly of, and as often as occasion serves, to calumniate a rival? so common is envy; a vice we are very liable to, and therefore it is with great reason that I give this caution against it, after having shewed its pernicious consequences in the story of Saul.

I pass on to a second instance of the power of a bosom sin to betray men into many other crimes, when they freely indulge it, as in the story of Eli, whose predominant vice was what the world scarce thinks a fault; yet it was attended with unspeakable mischief to himself and his family. Eli loved his ease, and hated business: he was a man of a mild, easy, indolent temper; averse to all trouble and difficulty. Hence how many sins of omission was he guilty of; how many neglects of his duty in the various affairs he was charged with, and for which he was answerable to God and his country; being at that time the supreme magistrate of Israel? One notorious fault among the rest was a want of severity and strict discipline in the education of his children. This is a great neglect, and commonly punished in this life, as it was very fatally in the case before us. His two sons Hophni and Phineas proved sons of Belial<sup>1</sup>, atheistical priests, a reproach to their father and their family, a dishonour to their

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 12.

holy office, and an offence to the whole people of Israel. They prophaned the tabernacle with rapine, lust, and sacrilege; till at last the just judgment of God cut them both off in one day, entailing a curse upon their posterity to all succeeding generations.

Such were the consequences of only one branch of those sins, which an unactive slothful temper betrays us to, *viz.* the neglect of childrens education. Which is accounted so great a crime before God that he himself specified it in his denunciation of judgments against the house of Eli: *Because* (it is said) *his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not* <sup>2</sup>.

There are many men of the same complexion with Eli, of a mild, but unactive disposition. I speak of persons, whom the world commonly accounts inoffensive; men of an easy, careless, and as it is said, harmless temper. But such men, if they do not resist this unmanly softness and dissoluteness of spirit, are far from harmless. Though you suppose them in plentiful circumstances, circumstances in which their sloth can be best afforded, though not excused: yet you will find this unhappy temper exceedingly mischievous. For besides the sins of omission, which are inseparable from sloth: it will also betray them into many other vices,

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 13.



some of which a real generosity in their natures may much abhor. They not only tempt others to *defraud* them, while they neglect to look into their own affairs : but they are often forced upon doing the same thing themselves, when their substance is wasted through their want of application to the management of it. And thus they not only give manifest occasion to others to be unjust by their negligence ; but are oftentimes unjust themselves out of necessity : and from plentiful fortunes wherewith they might, and ought to have done much good, they become a burden to others, receiving charity instead of bestowing it.

From this supine dissolute temper I pass on to another capital vice, which easily besets many, and is a common cause of great disorders : I mean incontinence, whereof we have two melancholy examples in the histories of Sampson and Solomon, men of miraculous endowments of body and mind ; each the first in his character ; one the strongest, the other the wisest of our whole race : yet both blasted, and rendered vile by this one vice of incontinence.

Let us survey their stories severally.

Sampson was a person of such importance, that his birth was twice foretold, and his education as a consecrated Nazarite prescribed by an angel. He was endowed with supernatural gifts of strength and manhood. He was or-  
dained

clained to great exploits, the profest champion and destined deliverer of the people of God. No enemy, or number of enemies could stand against him in the field of battle: but he had a bosom enemy, a sin that easily beset him, that quelled his force, quite subdued him; and rendered *him* the slave of a vile woman, who was a terror to all the armies of Palestine. This resistless warrior, softened with voluptuousness, charmed, enchanted with his Delilah, deserted the cause of Israel, and at last betrayed it. He betrayed himself, he betrayed the fatal secret of his miraculous strength, and fell into his enemies hands; who put out his eyes, and made him work in chains, at the mill, in a public prison: a servitude base indeed, but not so base as that which he had endured unto Delilah.

Solomon was the other instance proposed of the sad effects of incontinence: a prince the most illustrious for riches, wisdom, and power, that ever adorned a throne. But in his declining years his bosom enemy incontinence beset and subdued him; sullied all his glories, and from a pitch of wisdom never before attained, plunged him into an abyss of folly and ignorance. God gave him over to a reprobate mind, and his foolish heart was darkened. This oracle of wisdom, this man of miraculous knowledge, who understood and taught the nature of all



vegetables from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop which springeth out of the wall, at last became ignorant of the Creator: and infatuated by female forceries he worshipped heathen idols, built them temples, offered incense, and fell down before stocks and stones. Such absurdity can scarce be accounted for in the meanest and most stupid of human race: in Solomon it was a mystery, a prodigy of folly and impiety.—But what cannot lust do in hearts wholly abandoned to it? It made Sampson a slave, and Solomon an idolater. The son of Sirach<sup>3</sup> bewails the fall of this latter very pathetically in his account of the ancient worthies. Speaking as to Solomon he saith: “How wise wast thou  
 “in thy youth, and as a flood filled with un-  
 “derstanding! Thy soul covered the whole  
 “earth—thy name went far unto the islands.  
 “—But thou didst bow thyself unto women,  
 “and by thy body thou wast brought into  
 “subjection. Thou didst stain thine honour,  
 “and pollute thy seed: so that thou broughtest  
 “wrath upon thy children, and wast grieved  
 “for thy folly: so that the kingdom was di-  
 “vided, and out of Ephraim ruled a rebellious  
 “prince.”

When I would apply these two stories, as I did the former, and describe the nature of that vice, which is exposed in them; I must own

<sup>3</sup> Chap. xlvii.

that I am at a loss.—The works of uncleanness are in a peculiar sense, more than other sins, *works of darkness*: they will not bear the light of the public even for a distinct conviction and reproof. They are fortified in their impurity. They are too foul to bear the handling. There is danger of infection in the most cautious representation of them: they can scarce be exposed for censure without contagion. But though my mouth be shut, I hope the consciences of the guilty are not silent.—I refer such to their consciences. I exhort them to hearken seriously to their just reproaches. Let them be assured, that, although this be a bosom enemy, yet it is not invincible: although it be hard, yet it is not impossible to overcome it: that God is faithful, who has promised to deliver all those who fly to him for help in the time of temptation: that perseverance in prayer, with proper mortification, and a scrupulous exactness to avoid all occasions, are by God's grace infallible remedies; and that all those, who fail not to use them aright, will certainly overcome this adversary to their unspeakable peace here, and glory hereafter.

I pass on to another capital sin, *Covetousness*; which, where it predominates, as it does in many, leads them almost insensibly into a horrid variety of other crimes, which they were



not capable of committing, till their hearts were hardened by an habitual covetousness.

This is verified in the story of Judas. The worst of vices in the worst of men. Covetousness was his predominant passion.—Hence his falling away from grace under such powerful means of it, as the immediate presence, and divine sermons of our Lord. Hence his disrelish of spiritual truth, and incapacity to apprehend the mystery of godliness. Hence his vile and hypocritical regret of the costly ointment, which Mary Magdalen poured forth upon the head of our Lord, and which he pretended might have been better employed for the relief of the poor <sup>4</sup>. Hence the basest breach of trust in robbing those very poor, for whom he seemed so zealous; in stealing alms, and enhancing theft into sacrilege. Hence, to conclude, his betraying his master, because he could sell him, and get thirty pieces of silver for a life so precious, that it was an equivalent for the whole world.

From this sad example we should learn to take heed and beware of covetousness, a sin that easily besets the greater part of mankind. In some complexion, in most men the depraved customs of the world are a powerful inducement to it. Yet this sin does effectually hinder all advancement in our christian course: it is a

<sup>4</sup> John vi. 66, &c.

*weight* that must *be laid aside* before we can run the race of virtue.

All immoderate desire of riches is covetousness: and when we observe how immoderately most men desire wealth, we must conclude that covetousness is a very common sin. But some writers have so disguised this vice by absurd aggravations, that if we look for a covetous man by the character they describe, we should be often at a loss to find one in the habitable world. For they represent him as a mortified kind of sinner, renouncing all other passions and appetites; and even starving himself to increase his store: as a sordid abject wretch, condemned even by the maxims of this world, as much as by the laws of eternal righteousness. Such monsters are very scarce, and rarely found but in description. And such exaggerated representations do an injury to religion, inducing men to absolve themselves from this vice, because they fall very short of the character given of it by these declaimers.

We may hear men vouch their luxury and extravagance to clear themselves from the charge of avarice; yet are they nevertheless guilty of it: for they have learnt the art to unite sins which are seemingly inconsistent, and render them mutually subservient. Luxury and covetousness often take possession of the same heart, and divide the man between them. For



as luxury is very expensive, it puts those who are addicted to it, upon raising fresh supplies by all methods of fraud and rapaciousness, corruption and extortion: so that avarice and prodigality oftentimes become a complicated principle of action. The noted character which Sallust gave of Catiline, *That he was covetous of other mens wealth, while he squandered away his own*, is still a very common one, and applicable to great numbers, who make their avarice as it were the steward of their sensuality, and general minister of all their other vices. St. Paul seems to have this in view where he says that *the love of money is the root of all evil*. All evil is reduced by another apostle under the three heads of *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*. These three notoriously concur in covetousness, as it has a triple relation to riches in the *acquisition, possession, and use*. *The lust of the eye*, i. e. a craving desire of what they see others enjoy, putting men upon unjust means to obtain it, is too common in the *acquisition* of wealth. *The pride of life*, vain glory, ostentation, insolence, and hard-heartedness, are very frequent in *possessing* it. And *the lust of the flesh*, sensuality, with all the train of carnal appetites, are indulged in *spending* it: into such a multiplicity of sins does this wicked root branch itself. But I shall conclude this head with giving you the whole passage out of  
of

of St. Paul's first epistle to Timothy: "They  
" that will be rich fall into temptation, and a  
" snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts,  
" which drown men in destruction, and per-  
" dition. For the love of money is the root  
" of all evil, which while some have coveted  
" after, they have erred from the faith and  
" pierced themselves through with many sor-  
" rows. But thou, O man of God, flee from  
" these things."

And thus I have instanced in some of those capital sins, which *most easily beset us*; and shewed how they branch out into many other corruptions, such as will lead to certain perdition, if we continue in them. It is each man's business to look into his own heart, and single out the bosom adversary, that he may with all his might oppose and mortify it. I know this is a difficult task; but it is not impossible: *but* it is necessary, for our salvation depends upon it.



## DISCOURSE XXIII.

## On ETERNITY.

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 DEUT. xxxii. 29.

*O that they were wise, that they understood this ;  
that they would consider their latter end !*

**T**HE style of this chapter is peculiarly lofty and magnificent, proper to the sublime sentiments of the author, who appears in it, as in a divine rapture, labouring with matter of most extraordinary importance, for which he bespeaks the attention of his hearers by a solemn invocation of heaven and earth. *Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak : and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth !* In the body of his speech he pathetically laments the folly and impiety of his people ; and displays the charms of God's mercy, and the rigours of his justice to reclaim them. In the text he sums up the drift of his whole discourse in one passionate wish for their welfare. *O that they were wise, that they understood this ; that they would consider their latter end !*

The

The *wisdom* here recommended is that quality, by which we apprehend and prosecute our eternal welfare, the happiness of our whole being. And it is thus defined to distinguish it from *worldly* wisdom; which looks no farther than this life, and leaves the endless remainder of our existence unprovided for: while heavenly wisdom looks forward, through the whole course of our duration: where sense fails, and reason yields but a dubious glimmering light; this, by the help of faith, continues the prospect, and piercing the shades of death contemplates the ever-during state, so as to take proper measures in this life, for a future well-being in that which is to come, and still to be. This was what Moses wished for his people, and at the same time taught them that it was to be obtained by *considering their latter end*, or, as the original strictly signifies, *their futurity*. Death is the *end* of this life, an end which we shall soon arrive at: but we shall not end there. Our existence will extend itself beyond that short period through everlasting ages without end. We must therefore carry on our views, through the vale of death, into the boundless ocean of eternity, and so learn this lesson of wisdom.

To consider eternity even in the cool lights of philosophy is a very pleasing speculation. The soul delights to expatiate and lose herself  
in



in the wide unbounded prospect. She is elated, suspended, and feels a grateful stillness and amazement in the contemplation of it. But *true wisdom* will not rest in such speculation: it will alarm the *heart* by representing the interest we have in it. For this eternity, long and endless as it is, is the measure of our duration: we must live through all its course; and if we have any regard to our welfare, it must urge us to think what shall become of us in this ever-during state. The lowest degrees of happiness or misery that are to last for ever, must be very affecting to every thinking man: but the scriptures teach us that the happiness and misery of the next state are exceeding great in kind, as well as perpetual in duration: and if men would act reasonably, nothing could tempt them to run the least hazard in an affair of such amazing consequence.

Certain it is that every wilful transgressor forgets his immortality. This is the great folly, for which Moses prescribes as a remedy *the consideration of our future state*, our eternity. It would be endless to shew how that thought would influence us in every particular instance of duty: and it will be sufficient if we fix upon the great springs of action, I mean the *passions* or affections of mind, which are the motions of the soul, and denominate the man *good* or *bad*, as they are *well* or *ill* directed.

The

The principal disorder of the passions is that they are disproportionate to the object, *i. e.* greater or less than it deserves. It is common to remark only the *excess* of the passions as criminal; but their *defect* is equally unreasonable and pernicious. To have *no* desires after a great and solid good, worthy and proper to be loved, is as great an irregularity, as to love excessively what is but little amiable. And, on the contrary, to have *no* apprehension of a great and certain danger, is as blameable as to be vehemently afraid of what is insignificant.

So the passions, you see, may be faulty either way. Sometimes they are violent, where they should be moderate; and in other respects cool and remiss, where they should be warm and transporting.

Their excess usually relates to the good or evil things of this life, which being present and obvious to sense, having fixt their several characters in our hearts before we attain the use of reason, and maintaining the same by the high opinion we see the rest of the world have of them, are commonly over-rated by us: while spiritual things, discernable only as very remote by the glimmerings of reason, or the evidence of faith, which few attend to; seldom work in us that concern which their importance deserves: and our passions consequently are very languid and defective concerning them.

To



To explain this by an instance in each extreme: fame or reputation is one of the good things of this life which men are very fond of. It is indeed a good in its order; God has wisely implanted in our natures a grateful relish of it, on purpose to engage us to deserve it by virtuous actions. But though it is a good, and we may, nay we cannot but be a little concerned for it: yet that concern has its limits, which we are in great danger of transgressing: we seek it eagerly, want it impatiently, or fondly triumph in the possession of it. We envy others that have a greater share than ourselves; and are extravagantly solicitous about it, though foreign to our main happiness, and what we ought often to renounce upon views of a greater good. Our reputation may in some respects be compared to our shadow, which those about us often disfigure and trample on; while we, by an excessive delicacy, strangely sympathize with it. Yet after all it is but a shadow; and we ought not to be diverted from any laudable pursuit by a superfluous attention to the figure it makes.

I might instance after the same manner in other worldly enjoyments, as wealth, and sensual pleasure, which are transient diminutive goods; yet such as we are apt to affect, pursue, enjoy, or regret with a zeal and fervour very unsuitable to such trifles. I call them *trifles* in

com-

comparifon of our eternal welfare; yet moft men feek thefe trifles as their chief good, and love them, *as they ought to love God, with all their hearts*—An exceeding great diforder in the paffions, which, if not corrected, muft end in certain ruin.

Yet thofe who are fo folicitous about their petty interefts in this world, are moft remifs and negligent in the concerns of eternity. Their paffions here fall vaftly fhort of the merit of the object; they are *calm* and *unmoved*, where right reafon requires a great intenfenefs and vehemence. The thought of heaven excites in them no pleafing hopes or defires: nor does the idea of future punifhments carry with them any terrors to thofe who are moft obnoxious to them. *They have no hunger and thirft after righteousnefs; though it is the one thing neceffary.* Temperance and patience, meeknefs and humility, piety to their Maker, and love to their fellow-creatures, thefe noble, thefe divine objects raife no paffions, excite no defires in their breasts: nor do they in their computation of happinefs take in thofe things that are the moft intrinsic parts of it, and confequently the proper objects of defire. Many and various are the wants of mankind, and loud are their complaints upon that head. Yet feldom do we hear any lament their want of virtue. This is the only real want, yet the only one



one they are easy under, the only one they bear with patience.

Such is the double inordinancy of the passions, zealous and vehement for trifles; cold and languid in things of the utmost importance. The cause of this is a great error in our judgment: we mistake the nature of things: accounting such a particular good or evil, greater or less than it really is; and therefore entertaining it with more or less of desire or aversion than it deserves; which is unjust, and the proper disorder of the passions, but caused by errors in our judgment, and those errors occasioned by forgetting our *eternity*, by leaving everlasting ages out of our account: but the due consideration of eternity will rectify the judgment; and when that is set right, the passions will be soon adjusted, and suiting themselves to the nature of things, will treat them according to their intrinsic merit.

That the rectitude of the judgment depends upon the remembrance of *eternity* will appear, if we reflect that he who judges without sufficient information, knowing only a small part of the thing debated, will certainly judge wrong in proportion to his ignorance. But he who does not consider his eternity, has in view only a small part of his existence; and must necessarily judge very wrong of his interest upon the whole. His judgment may be true, according  
to

to his view of things; but as his views are false, his judgment will be alike erroneous. He may argue right enough according to his own principles, when he makes the enjoyment of this world his only good; and considering his being as circumscribed by the uncertain term of a few years, contracts all his desires into the same narrow span which he imagines to bound his existence; and thinking that he shall die like the brute, resolves to live as such: but a future judgment, with a succeeding eternity, make a strange alteration in the case. This consideration will make a general revolution in our notions; a new light will rise in our minds, wherein the pleasures of this life will lose their little lustre and disappear, as stars in the broad day-light, while the momentous things of eternity are present to our thought.

For we judge by comparison, and little things appear great to them who know no bigger. So a vulgar mind, unacquainted with the discoveries of astronomy, considers the earth we inhabit as an immense space, as the only, as all the world: but the knowing, who are used to contemplate it as one planet among many, rolling round the sun, and the sun itself as one among the numberless host of stars, with each their several sets or orders of worlds attending them and receiving day from them: such think our earth a small spot, a globule, a narrow  
point



point in the universe. In like manner, the worldly-minded man, regarding nothing beyond this life, and consequently thinking its pains or pleasures his only concern, prosecutes them with the whole stress of his passions: while a mind enlarged with habitual thoughts of eternity, sees through their genuine meanness and vanity. His extensive views take in the whole of his interests at once: his reason corrects the prejudices of sense, and he judges not things *little*, merely because they are *remote*; but knowing that future pains or pleasures lose nothing of their reality by their distance, and will one day be present in their full weight, and in a degree infinitely greater than the pains or pleasures which he now feels; he takes true measures for his eternal welfare, and renounces all present gratifications that are inconsistent with his views of an hereafter. He judges truly that nothing can make a man happy but what must last as long as the man himself lasts: therefore maintaining an holy indifference to the fleeting joys of sense, he turns the united stream of his affections towards *the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity*: him he loves with all his heart, and all his soul, the collected force of all his faculties, and finds in *him* an object adequate to the infinity of his desires, and commensurate to the perpetuity of his duration.

Such is the happiness of the man whose affections are thus rectified: but those, who continue in the disorder above-mentioned, suffer even for the present, great inconveniences; for hence it comes to pass that their passions are *insatiable*.

It has long been the complaint of mankind that *something* is still wanting in every state. But this is contrary to the gracious intentions of our Creator, who provided suitable objects for every faculty, and never designed to torment his creatures with larger capacities than the pleasures he allotted them. As he created man immortal, he gave him passions proper for an immortal state, boundless as the objects there: but when we apply desires made for infinite good, and in some sort adequate to it, to the petty concerns of the present life, no wonder such desires are insatiable; they are out of their proper element, and can find no rest in things so disproportionate. But the great things of eternity open scope enough for our boundless passions. There is no room for exceeding in our desires, our hopes, or our love of celestial bliss: nor can our fears, or our aversions be too great, when applied to those things which endanger our eternal interests. Our passions thus employed become so many virtues, each the more noble, as it is the more intense: and moving here, as in their proper sphere, will



prosper under the benediction of heaven: the grace of God, which first excites them, will assist and promote them to their proper ends: our just fears will work our deliverance from all real evils; and our pious hopes will carry us forward to the supreme Good, until they are lost in everlasting fruition.

Until our passions are thus happily restored to their genuine employment, their *insatiableness* must produce another great disorder, *viz.* variableness or *inconstancy*, which is a necessary consequence of the former; because the keenness of our desires soon exhausts the sweetness of any temporal good, and then rejects it for somewhat else, which promises fair at a distance, but upon the experiment is found as unable to answer our large demand for happiness, as any of the former. Thus men rove on *unstable in all their ways*, from one folly to another, through the whole circle of vanity in search of what this world can never afford, an object worthy their passions: but the cause of their inconstancy is their disappointment, and the only cure for their disappointment is to divert their passions to the concerns of eternity, which, as was said before, are adequate to them, and may challenge their strongest efforts. Here they may fix, here they may rest as in their center. To this purpose the leading passion *hope*, which rightly directed commences a theological virtue, is by St. Paul very aptly compared

pared to an anchor, which, fixed in *the rock of ages*, keeps the soul steady amidst the changes and vicissitudes to which worldly things, and worldly men that cleave to them, are liable. His words are, *which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, which entereth into that which is within the veil*<sup>1</sup>. There is now as it were a veil between us and eternity, but death will draw that veil, and demonstrate those tremendous truths, which reason and religion have so often in vain suggested to worldly-minded men.

And thus it appears how this charitable wish of Moses contains all things desirable, and instructs us in the sum and substance of religion, which is nothing else but a preparation for eternity. All that it requires of us is, that we live as men conscious of our immortality: all that it teaches is how to make provision for it. Nothing will more assist us in this than frequently to *consider our latter end*. The best preparation for eternity is often to meditate upon it. While the traveller has the end of his journey in view, there is no danger of missing his way; that prospect is the surest direction. To conclude, therefore, I humbly join with the man of God, and offer up this devout wish at the throne of grace: *O that we were wise, that we understood this! That we would consider our latter end!*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 19.



## DISCOURSE XXIV.

On PATIENCE.

LUKE xxi. 19.

*In your patience possess ye your souls.*

**W**E learn from story, and observation and experience, that the life of man is full of misery. All histories are little more than continual registers of the evils incident to humanity. And what we read of the past times, we find repeated in the present. We see men struggling in a strange variety of difficulties, and often aggravating their common distress by their cruel treatment of one another. Some we see fatigued and spent with labour, others still more wretched under the lingering torments of idleness: some pining away for want, others groaning under pain, and almost all discontented with their present circumstances. What we observe in others we experience in ourselves: for all ages from helpless infancy to decrepit dotage, and all conditions from the anxious sceptre to the laborious spade, have each their peculiar troubles,

troubles, beside the general calamities to which our whole race are obnoxious: so that nothing stable, nothing that may insure our happiness, is to be found here below.

Yet notwithstanding these concurrent advertisements from what we read and see and feel of human misery, we are still too apt to promise ourselves a lasting felicity in the enjoyments of this world: and though our *past* life has been vexatious, and the *present* is still perplexed with daily evils: yet we feed ourselves with vain hopes in the *remainder* of it.

The scripture gives us a different view of things, teaching us that this life is a state of probation and exercise; wherein God leads us through many wants and difficulties, to humble, to rectify, and to improve us. The scripture, I say, deals fairly and plainly with us, and tells us what we must expect. It promises no outward calm, but inward serenity and peace of mind in the midst of the storm: not peace with the world, but successful war: not to escape evil, but to overcome it. *No sorrow, no pain,* are the privilege of the next life, and appropriated to it. Now is the season of suffering. The uninterrupted joys of perfect bliss are reserved for heaven. In a word, this world is evil, and we must endure it: yet so as thereby to fit ourselves for heaven, where only is perfect happiness, because there is only perfect holiness.



The art of rightly enduring the evils of this life is the great virtue of patience, a virtue always in season. The words in which our Lord teaches it are very remarkable. *In your patience possess ye your souls.*

To possess is the common desire of mankind, but they do not rightly consider what those things are, the possession of which can make us happy. They look for happiness without themselves, in the possessions of this world: but true happiness must arise from within, from a rectified frame of mind: and the only rule to attain it is this which our Lord prescribes, *In your patience possess ye your souls.*

*Soul* here means *the thinking faculty*. Now *to think as we ought*, is the sum of duty: for action depends on thought, and is only the execution of it. But we cannot think as we ought, till this thinking faculty, our soul, be fully possessed by us, *i. e.* till we have it in our power, and use that power to the proper end: and this cannot be done while passions disturb the mind, and put us, as it were, beside ourselves. Anger, for instance, or grief, when they are excessive, obstruct the use of reason: and the proper office of patience is to repress and hold them down, so that the soul may be maintained in vigour to bear, and to extricate itself from the evils which invade it. For as long as we can preserve an inward calm and composure, the cross accidents  
of

of life make but small impressions on us: but when we lose our temper, then they break in with violence, they overbear the judgment, they captivate the will, and fill the soul with darkness and confusion.

The soul may in this respect be compared to a water, which, while it stands serene and undisturbed, is within its own substance clear, pure, transparent, and delightful: and from its surface, as from a polished mirror, reflects the images of all that surround it, in a distinct and perspicuous manner, in their proper forms, and just proportions: but when it is ruffled with winds, its clearness and brightness ceases; and though it should not be so much obscured, as to lose all reflection; yet the wrinkled surface gives at best but false and mis-shapen forms, broken and fallacious images, imperfect and monstrous representations of things.

Thus it is with the soul, whose inward peace and tranquillity can only be preserved by patience. While that is duly exercised, all is calm and serene: a man has the free use of his reason, he can hear, and follow its dictates. But when the soul is ruffled through impatience, evil passions darken and obscure it; the turbulence of anger, or the dejection of sorrow take possession of it; they dethrone reason, unhinge the mind, and discompose all its faculties.



Hence we may collect the force of that expression, *Possess ye your souls*; which to do under any notable provocation is the proper act of patience. A virtue which prevents many evils, and mitigates all. A virtue which is found so necessary in order to make life tolerable, that even those, who have no religion, and reject many of the virtues, are forced to have recourse to *this*, and extol its excellence. They cannot but agree with Solomon, that the triumphs of patience are more estimable than those of valour: or as he speaks, that *the patient man is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city*<sup>1</sup>. They must confess too the danger and misery of the contrary practice, as the same author expresses it, where he says, *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls*<sup>2</sup>. These are acknowledged truths even by bad men, who though void of those religious principles which only can produce a genuine patience, forge to themselves some spurious kinds of it, which may be termed a *political*, or a *stoical* patience.

The *political* patience is much studied, and practised by men of business. Wise as they are in their generation, they hold, as a sure maxim, *that good policy has no passions*: and therefore they heedfully suppress their own,

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xvi. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxv. 28.

and

and strive to excite those of others, that they may dexterously play them off to their advantage. This is a cruel cunning, an anti-christian self-denial, which will one day have its proper reward.

The *stoical* patience is chiefly in vogue among lettered and speculative men; who, confiding in the force of their own minds, endeavour to harden themselves against misfortune: and by resolute efforts, and forcibly diverting their thoughts by a constrained application to some other objects, may sometimes maintain a certain serenity and self-possession in the article of distress. But as this firmness of temper depends much upon constitution, and a flow of animal spirits, it will not prove a lasting remedy: and it is happy for such men that it will not. For as all the dispensations of God tend to the good of his creatures, and misfortunes in particular are graciously sent to reclaim them to a sense of their duty, and of their dependance on him; to humble them under his almighty arm, and oblige them to have recourse to him for deliverance: if these men could support themselves by their vain philosophy, and deaden the sense of their sufferings, so as not to be affected by them; they would frustrate the merciful designs of the Creator, who never corrects his creatures but for their amendment.

Such



Such are the spurious kinds of patience; they are void of religion, and therefore want the *essence* of true virtue. Not so the genuine patience, which is a pious submission to the will of the Creator. Her first lesson is to *see his hand in all our sufferings*; and from that view she receives not only consolation and support under the present evil, but also gradually engages us to extirpate the cause of all evil, *even the root of all inordinate passions*, as it will evidently appear if we consider what the passions are, and wherein their disorder consists.

Every passion is an emotion of the animal spirits, which, while it continues, heightens our sensation of the agreeable or disagreeable qualities of its objects, and thereby renders the mind more affected by the stronger impressions made on it. For the difference between our ordinary thoughts, and those which passion animates, consists in this; that the latter are caused, maintained, and strengthened by some motion in the heart, which affecting the blood and spirits, thereby influences the mind.

<sup>3</sup> If the sentiment conceived in the mind be absolutely right and just, then the addition which passion brings, may be an improvement of it, which we call zeal. This is no parti-

<sup>3</sup> *Animæ affectus omnium sunt virtutem & vitiorum quasi quædam principia & communis materia.* Augustin. lib. de Spiritu & Animâ.

cular virtue, as some have imagined, but common to all the virtues, rendering them more vigorous and triumphant.

But if the sentiment conceived in the mind be a bad one, then passion supervening makes it worse, and thrusts us on to do worse than we ourselves should choose to do, if we were free from a foreign impulse. For in the too intimate alliance there now is between soul and body, the bodily part so inflames or strengthens the sentiments of the mind, that they often get the better of it, perverting the judgment, and, if I may so speak, pressing the will into their service; from which the mind cannot totally recover itself, till the ferment in the blood be appeased.

This in one view is a deplorable servitude: but in other respects it may be highly useful. For it may contribute much to the true knowledge of ourselves: it may serve to open our eyes, and convince us of many faults, which lurking only in the heart we might easily overlook: but when they break out into passions to our great vexation, and against our better judgment; this should alarm us, and make us search our hearts to discover the evil root, which produces fruits, that we ourselves abhor.

As disorders in the body cause bodily pain, which by warning us of the hurt received, and importunately requiring a remedy, is greatly useful



ful to the preservation of life: so the pain which inordinate passions give the mind, may be useful, inasmuch as it is a certain indication that the mind is distempered, and calls loudly upon us to search out the disorder, that we may rectify it.

All the passions are *desire differently modified*. If the desire be just in its nature, and reasonable in its degree, the passion, in whatever form it appears, will be equally just and reasonable. But all excess in the desire will be felt in the passion which it produces. And therefore patience assuaging passion is never a solitary virtue that acts alone, but must have with it some of that specific virtue which answers to the original excess. When *pride* is the cause of anger, patience cannot calm that anger, if *humility* does not concur with it. It might be dangerous (if we could do it) to stop a symptom, while the disease remains in its vigour: yet the symptom may be of great service in directing where to apply the remedy.

When therefore an ambitious man is perplexed with passions, which destroy his peace: when he is enraged with anger, or oppressed with grief at the disappointment of his aspiring projects: he should consider such grief, or anger, as the painful symptoms of a depraved heart, a heart estranged from God, and idolizing worldly grandeurs. If he desires the relief of  
 patience,

patience, he must first *turn from those vanities to the living God*<sup>4</sup>. This is the cardinal point, the hinge on which all that deserves the name of virtue depends and moves. He must in prayer obtain some lively knowledge of God, some pious sense of the Divine Majesty, who made, who governs all things; and graciously interposes those obstacles to his ambitious pursuits, on purpose to divert him from them. He will then discern the hand of God in the cross accidents which caused his distress, and he will bear it with patience, seeing that in reality he ought to be thankful for it.

What has been here said of ambition, is equally applicable to covetousness, sensuality, and every other evil propension, which bring with them their own punishment in the painful affections which accompany them. The crime is ours, but the punishment comes from God, and is executed within by the fixed laws of our nature, which it is vain to strive against. As mercy predominates in all the works of God, so these pains, which he has annexed to every inordinate desire, are intended for its cure. *He hedges up our way with thorns*<sup>5</sup>, as his prophet speaks, to hinder our advancing in it: and patience can give us no redress until we change our course, and return to him in a dutiful submission. Men want a patience whereby they

<sup>4</sup> Acts xiv. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Hosea ii. 6.



may sin at ease, whereby they may indulge their evil desires with impunity. But by the goodness of God that is not possible: for a solid patience can never be attained but in the practice of religion.

The true art of patience under any kind of trouble consists in a devout recollection, whereby we withdraw our attention, as much as possible, from the painful ideas that are excited in us, that the mind may ascend in pious meditations to the throne of grace, and there find shelter from the anguish and tumult of the passions. There it will feel divine influence, and recover an inward peace, which will soon diffuse itself through the lower faculties. Such was the advice of Eliphaz to Job: *Acquaint thyself with him (speaking of God) acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace. Receive the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up: and thou shalt put away iniquity far from thee—Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence: thou shalt have thy delight in him, and the light shall shine upon thy ways*<sup>6</sup>.

Such is the true practice of patience, and such is the reward of it. By patience we possess our souls, and by patience we shall save them for eternity: where patience will be a needless virtue, and all our duty, joy.

<sup>6</sup> Job xxii. 21, &c.

## DISCOURSE XXV.

AWAKE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.

I COR. xv. 34.

*Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God.*

**W**HOSOEVER gives advice to a multitude, must bring together instructions of various kinds to suit the various characters of those to whom he addresses. And for this reason the apostolical epistles, which are directed to whole churches or congregations of men, contain precepts that are inconsistent, and would be absurd if applied to any single person: but are very proper as they are intended for an assembly, that each particular might find, and select the advice which suits his circumstances.

The scriptures are to be considered as a copious dispensatory, containing prescriptions very opposite; yet each efficacious when adapted to the case for which it was intended. This in the text belongs to the *unconverted*, i. e. Those who



who live without religion, and a proper sense of moral obligations; to such it is said, *Awake to righteousness, and sin not*, i. e. do not persist in a wilful habit of sin. The apostle, subjoining the reason for giving this precept, shews to whom it was addressed: *for* (says he) *some have not the knowledge of God*. He had described them before at the twelfth verse, as denying a future state of rewards and punishments, and in the context he repeats the conclusion they were come to: *Let us eat, and drink, for to-morrow we die*: as if sensual enjoyments were all our business in this world; and the thought that we must soon leave it, instead of being a motive to prepare for the future state, were only an incentive to greater voluptuousness: *Let us eat, and drink, for to-morrow we die*. It is the reasoning of those whom we call *men of pleasure*. Nor are they the only persons, who, *not having the knowledge of God*, mistake the true end of life; for *the men of business*, who are void of religion, make altogether as false an estimation of it in their way of reasoning, which is well described. *Forasmuch as they know not their Maker;—they count our life a pastime, and our time here a market for gain: for, say they, we must be getting every way, though it be by evil means*<sup>1</sup>. How just a representation is this of the sentiments and behaviour of many

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. xv. 11, 12.

among

among us? who though they may not have so far got over the happy prejudices of a good education, as formally to deny a future judgment, yet, if their belief does not influence their practice, if they are mere *children of this world*, as our Lord calls those who are intent only upon secular pleasures or interests; if *they count our life a pastime, and our time here a market for gain, which they will be getting every way, though it be by evil means*: if (I say) that be their character; then *they* too are the persons to whom this exhortation of St. Paul is addressed.

*Awake to righteousness*, i. e. Justice; by which we are to understand all kinds of duty. For so *justice* is commonly to be understood in holy writ, because our *duty* is to give all things their due, i. e. to do them *justice*. And upon the same account every sin is called a debt, i. e. *a due not paid*, as may be observed particularly in the literal translation of the Lord's prayer, where we say, *forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*. So that *awake to righteousness* is the same as, awake to a sense of justice. But all will say, that they have a sense of justice: why then are they called to awake to it?

I own that all men have a sense of justice, or else they could not be condemned for neglecting it. When righteousness, i. e. justice, is considered in the general notion as *obliging to do no*



*wrong*; the mind readily acquiesces in the abstract universal, because, so considered, it costs nothing to approve it; and because it is requisite to our self-esteem that we should not appear to ourselves so unreasonable, as we are sensible they must be, who would defend what is *wrong*, *i. e.* maintain what cannot be maintained, or even excused.

Thus we all have a sense of justice in general; and upon many occasions we also have a strong sense of it in particular cases; as when we suffer much by the injustice of others. Here we are strict casuists, perhaps often too strict and severe. Upon such occasions we know, and speak feelingly of the ties of justice. We are fully convinced ourselves, and we are zealous to convince the offenders, that all violations of justice must be punished. We see a necessary connexion betwixt guilt and misery: we console ourselves with the thought, that he who makes us suffer, will finally suffer for it himself. In a word, we are quite awake to justice, when we consider it as our *avenger*: and this works so strong upon our minds, that it is a high point of virtue to desist from our personal claims upon it: I mean to remit our part in the wrong, and forgive our adversary, *i. e.* be content he should not suffer for the injury done us.

So lively are our notions of justice upon some occasions, and so quick our resentments of its violation,

violation, when that affects ourselves. But in our own conduct towards others, when an act of injustice comes recommended by present advantage, facilitated by power, disguised by the name of *perquisite* perhaps, or other pretence; whereof there is a great variety, by some of which men cheat themselves, before they cheat others: then *ungodly* men let drop the thought of justice; they fall, as it were, into a deep sleep: they become deaf to its claims, and insensible of its obligations. The reason of this is declared in the text: it is because they *have not the knowledge of God*, and therefore they lose the practical discernment of justice: they lose their moral sense of things, as men in the dark lose the distinction of the colours and forms of material objects. For,

*The knowledge of God* is not merely to know that he is, but it is a pious sentiment of God in the heart, it is an experimental and efficacious knowledge, which may be compared to the knowledge of the sun, when we are actually cherished and enlightened by his rays. God is light, a mental light, discovering all the obligations of justice, (*i. e.* all our obligations, as was shewed before) and disposing us to fulfil them. As therefore the knowledge of God is the root or source of all the virtues, and consequently the disposition of mind, wherein we are most susceptible of that knowledge, is a subject



of the greatest moment ; that disposition is taught throughout the scripture in a great variety of expressions, one of which is the instructive metaphor here used by the apostle, *Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God.* Such ignorance of God is elsewhere figuratively expressed by *sleeping*, and that figure is presupposed in this call to *awake*. In order therefore to explain it, we must first consider the opposite metaphor here alluded to, viz. *bodily sleep* ; and shew with what propriety it suits the disposition expressed by it.

Sleep is attended by *insensibility* on one hand, and *delusion* on the other. By the *insensibility* of sleep we are excluded from the whole material world, and the mind is shut out from every thing that is solid and substantial. By the *delusion* of sleep we are conveyed into the land of dreams and imposture, and amused with false and fallacious representations, which have no existence but in the phantasy. These two, the *insensibility*, and the *delusion*, which happen in sleep, produce respectively two effects, viz. *ignorance*, and *error*, which two exactly verify the comparison of sleep to a state of sin.

First of the *insensibility* which sleep induces, and which sinks the sleeper into a total ignorance of what passes, although it be of the greatest importance, and the nearest concern to him. He perfectly forgets himself, and the  
world

world about him. His true circumstances, whatever they be, may have no place in his consideration. Put a crown at his head, or a dagger to his breast, he will lie equally negligent of both. A well-grounded hope, or fear, sorrow, or joy, cannot make its way into his apprehension: and, in a word, all knowledge is excluded, by the closing of those senses which are the ordinary passage for its admittance.

The next thing to be considered is the delusion of sleep. While truth is shut out, the mind lies open to imposture: while reason is suspended, phantasy is active; and dreams supply the place of sensation and reflection. The passions are agitated by imaginary hopes and fears, and there is nothing so extravagant which will not pass upon a man in this condition.

Such is the state of sleep, by which the Holy Spirit represents a state of sin. It imports not only ignorance, but also falshood, and delusion.

And first of ignorance. The unconverted sinner is ignorant and insensible of those things which are of the greatest and most immediate consequence to his welfare. *He has not the knowledge of God,* and consequently no true knowledge of himself, which latter altogether depends upon his relation to God. He is wilfully ignorant of heaven, hell, and eternity, things most worthy to be known and considered. He may indeed sometimes, as it were, dream of



them, and talk superficially about them: but when I say he is ignorant of them, I mean that he has no true, lively, and affecting sense of them; he does not lay them to heart, he does not suffer them to influence his conduct. And this is his reproach, and will be his condemnation, if he persists in it, that he actually forgets what he seems to know habitually: he forgets the truth at the very instant when he ought to remember and apply it; and he goes on in his dreams of vanity without receiving any check from all the calls and remembrances wherewith he is surrounded. Although he lives continually in the presence of God, who inspects all his behaviour; who, as the Psalmist speaks, *is about his table and about his bed; who spieth out all his ways*, and will accordingly judge him at the last day, when the issue will prove endless bliss or misery: yet have these things no place in his consideration, nor any influence on his practice.

If a man should openly violate a law in the presence of the authority that enjoined it; if he should often repeat, and persist in his crimes before the judge, who will surely and severely punish them: should we not conclude that he was blind, or distracted?

Yet such is the unaccountable behaviour of every wilful sinner. He offends in the presence of his judge: he never thinks of God, who is always attent to his behaviour: he lives without

out God, although he lives in him. Like a man asleep in the broad sunshine, his eyes are closed in darkness, and he knows nothing of the bright light that surrounds him.

And as he is blind to the light, so he is deaf to the voice of God, which may be said to speak to us three several ways. First by his works of nature and providence, secondly by his revealed will in the scriptures, and thirdly by the motions and dictates of conscience, whereby he excites us to the care of our souls, and strives with men to rouse them from the lethargy of sin.

The first, by the works of nature and providence, is as a voice *sent out in all lands*, ever sounding in our ears. The sun, the moon, and the stars in their courses, in their orderly revolutions and beneficial influence declare the glory of God, and admonish us of our duty towards him. All the works of nature bear witness of God continually, they incessantly give in their evidence, attesting the truth and perfection of all the divine attributes. *He hath not left himself without witness* (saith St. Paul) *in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*<sup>2</sup>. But the sinner rejects this testimony. He will not consider the wisdom, the power,

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 17.



the goodness, the justice of that God, by whom and for whom all things were, and are created. The sinner (I say) is encompassed with demonstrations of the Deity. Everything that he hears, sees, smells, feels, or tastes, conspire to inform him of God, with all the momentous consequences that will present themselves upon the most transient consideration of the Almighty Being. Wheresoever he turns, whatsoever he does, in all times, and in all places, such evidence of the Deity and the obligations of religion still recur to him. He is daily fed and clothed by the bounty of God. He enjoys his works in all his senses. He is supported by his power, protected by his care, maintained by his goodness, reprieved by his mercy: and yet the inconsiderate wretch forgets his benefactor, dreams on in the stupidity of his soul, stark dead in the sleep of sin, and therefore deaf to this language of universal nature. And though the knowledge of God is thus forcibly obtruded upon him from all parts, *yet he worshippeth him not as God, neither is he thankful, but he grows vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart is darkened.* The lethargy gains ground upon him continually, and sin and ignorance propagate each other by a mutual generation.

The second way by which (as was said) God speaks to mankind, is the holy scriptures. In the works of nature his voice is sent forth loudly  
and

and incessantly; but by reason of the dulness and inadvertency of mankind it sounds in their ears less distinctly and intelligibly, even after such a manner as requires some thought to construe and explain it. God has therefore vouchsafed to reveal himself more clearly in his written word. He there comments upon, enforces, and illustrates the language of nature; supplies whatever might seem deficient in it, and sets the whole of our duty before us in the strongest light. Every man may there read his own history, inform himself of his origin, judge rightly of his present circumstances, and learn how to make provision for futurity. These important truths are in the old testament declared, repeated, inculcated, enforced with precept upon precept, and line upon line; with examples, promises, threatenings, all methods of conviction, all arts of persuasion, every thing that might serve to reduce man to his primitive innocence and felicity: and at last, *God, who thus at sundry times and in divers manners had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, did after all send his Son into the world*<sup>3</sup>.—He, upon his appearance, alarmed mankind with miracles, and diverted the ordinary course of nature, to gain himself a favourable attention. He renewed all the former means used by God for our recovery, and impregnated them with fresh vigour and efficacy.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. i. 1.

But



—But it is endless to go on with this account; the reason why I mention it is only to shew the stupidity of sinners, who can hear these things unmoved.

The scriptures expressly declare to every sinner, that this life is his time of trial: that he is now upon his good behaviour, and that his demeanour here is of the greatest and most amazing consequence, for his whole eternity depends upon it. That there are powers of darkness combined to seduce him: that his own nature is so depraved, as to lay him open to their assaults: that he now stands, as it were, tottering upon the brink of perdition: but that the gracious God still desires to save him, and actually interposes his assistance. That the Lord Jesus has shed his blood upon the cross to expiate his past guilt, and purchase the means of his recovery: that thus the powers of good and evil have on both sides exerted their utmost force on his account, and that heaven and hell are at strife about him. Yet he, like another Jonas, sleeps quietly in the midst of the storm, that is raised upon his account, and may probably end in his destruction. The poor creature is so intent upon his dreams, so swallowed up in his vain imaginations, that these tremendous truths make no impression on him. He is buying, or selling; building, or planting; getting, or spending an estate; or perhaps re-  
pining

pinning for want of one : and these things so engross all his attention and care, as to allow him no leisure to reflect upon the state of his soul, upon the love of his dying Saviour, upon judgment and eternity, things that merit all our attention, and should engross all our concern.

The third way mentioned by which God speaks to man is the inward call of the Holy Spirit in our consciences, whereby he invites and solicits us to repentance. And these indeed are the immediate voice of God, and accompanied with a vital energy for our reformation, if we receive and attend to it with the proper dispositions. It is indeed a small still voice, such as cannot be heard in the midst of the hurry and tumult of our lusts and passions. Though sometimes it will be louder, so as to be perceived distinctly for a short time, whether the sinner will or no. It darts in upon the soul like a flash of lightning in a dark night, and for a while interrupts the deadly sleep of sin with the sense of guilt, and gloomy fears of an *hereafter*. But the generality of sinners soon nod again, and doze on in their wonted security. They lose these golden minutes, because they are afraid of melancholy or enthusiasm they say : so they forsake God, run into company, and drown themselves in fresh cares, or diversions.

To conclude. The universal language of nature has no sound, the word of God in his scriptures



scriptures no energy, the inward calls and motions of grace no force, that can rouse the obdurate sinner: the infinite mercy of God has no endearments, the love of his dying Saviour no charms, the threatenings of provoked omnipotence no terrors, the impending sword of divine justice no dangers; heaven has no pleasures, hell no pains, guilt no fears, death no horrors, damnation no torments, that affect him, that move him, he minds not these things. No; for he has other things to mind. Company meet in such a place, and he is going thither to eat, and drink, and be merry. Or perhaps business for a while suspends sensuality, and *counting our time here a market for gain, he will be getting every way, to make ample provision for the indulgence of his inordinate desires.*

For although he is so stupid and insensible about the concerns of eternity, yet he is a very busy creature, very active in his impertinence. He takes much thought for to-morrow, though he thinks not of everlasting ages. He hunts eagerly after every shadow of pleasure that presents itself. He is all ear, all attention upon the subjects in which his passions take an interest.

And this illustrates the other part of the metaphor here alluded to, sin being compared to sleep, not only upon account of its insensibility, but also because it subjects the mind to  
the

the delusion of dreams; whence arise vain hopes and fears, and in general a wrong valuation of things so common in sleep.

Analogous to this the sinner lives in perpetual error and mistake, and his life passeth away like a dream. For the superior faculties of his soul being benumbed and rendered useless by the lethargy of sin, and his innate activity still exerting itself in the lower faculties without constraint or controul from the superior, (even as fancy forges dreams in the imagination, while reason is suspended in the intervals of natural sleep) hence it comes to pass, that those vain conceits and false representations are produced, which amuse and seduce him in an endless round of error.

We shall plainly see that in fact the sinner is so seduced when we consider that in every deliberate sin the will must have given its consent to somewhat evil; which cannot be done, where the mind sees things clearly, and is not under the power of some delusion. For the will has not a power to choose evil, absolutely considered as evil, this being directly against its nature, and the determined method of its operations. So that no man does any thing, though never so wicked and base, but all circumstances weighed, he judges it better for him to do it, than not to do it. And there cannot be a plainer evidence of delusion, than for a man to judge  
that



really *best* for him, which directly tends to, and often ends in his utter ruin.

I pray God that the persons concerned may duly consider this, so as to rouse from their lethargy, and awake to the practice of their duty, before it is too late.

## DISCOURSE XXVI.

*On the* EUCHARIST.

I COR. ii. 28.

*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

**T**HE sacrament of the Supper of our Lord is the most solemn institution of our religion, for its greatest benefits are therein both commemorated and conferred: as our receiving those benefits depends upon the temper and disposition with which we communicate, I need not say of how great consequence it is that we make due preparation for it.

I have

I have read the direction of St. Paul upon this head. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* In this self-examination there are two points to be insisted on.

First, whether we have right notions of this sacrament : and secondly, whether we are qualified to receive it.

It is the purpose of the following discourse to assist and direct you in these enquiries, by shewing,

First, the nature of that sacrament. And, secondly, the qualifications requisite for a worthy participation of it.

In explaining the nature of this sacrament I shall follow the method used in our catechism, because I think it the clearest and most intelligible that can be proposed. The subject is there divided into several parts, that it may be the more distinctly apprehended.

First we are taught what is here meant by the word *Sacrament*, viz. “ that it signifies  
 “ an outward and visible sign of an inward  
 “ and spiritual grace communicated ; which  
 “ sign was ordained by Christ himself as a  
 “ means whereby we receive the same, *i. e.* the  
 “ grace ; and a *pledge* to assure us thereof.”

Hence we learn that by a christian sacrament is meant an outward *sign* of a spiritual grace, a *means* of conveying that grace, and a *pledge*



or token to assure us that we receive it. For our Lord herein condescends to assist our faith by our senses, assuring us that as certainly as the body receives the sign, so certainly the soul also receives the grace, *i. e.* divine favour thereby signified, when we are duly prepared for it.

There are then, as is said in the next answer of the catechism, two parts in a sacrament, an *outward sign* and an *inward grace*. To illustrate this by a comparison, as a sacrament consists of two parts, so man consists of two parts, a body and a soul. The body is outward and visible: *i. e.* such as you can see: the soul is inward and spiritual, but cannot be seen, nor felt, nor perceived by any of your senses: yet it is this which moves the body, which thinks, and does every thing. The body is only the tool or instrument by which the soul acts: and when the soul leaves it, as it does at death; you know how vile and useless it becomes. Yet, as was said before, the body only is visible: the soul is hidden and concealed within it after a spiritual and inconceivable manner.

The reason why I explain this so largely, is, because I have observed that many understand by the term *spiritual* only *figurative*: and when they say we receive *Christ spiritually*, they mean only in *figure* or *type*, and not in reality. But does the soul exist in the body only figuratively? and are not spiritual things as real as corporeal? and

and faith not our church in the most express terms that “ the body and blood of *Christ* are  
 “ *verily and indeed* taken and received by the  
 “ faithful in the Lord’s Supper?” She re-  
 futes sufficiently the gross and offensive doc-  
 trine of transubstantiation, which as she ob-  
 serves in her articles, *overthroweth the nature*  
*of a sacrament* \* by taking away one essential  
 part of a christian sacrament, *viz.* the visible  
 sign, the outward elements which are said to  
 be annihilated in the consecration: and she ac-  
 counts it no less erroneous to take away the  
 other essential part, *viz.* the thing signified,  
 the inward grace, *i. e.* the nature of Christ  
 communicated to sanctify our nature, and  
 feed our souls, as the bread and wine feed our  
 bodies.

It is therefore a dangerous error to mistake  
*spiritual* for *figurative*. They are the unworthy  
 communicants who in the sacrament receive  
 Christ only figuratively and not in reality: for  
 so our church teaches in the twenty-ninth ar-  
 ticle, whereof the title is *Of the wicked which*  
*eat not the body of Christ in the use of the*  
*Lord’s Supper*. The words of the article are  
 these: “ The wicked, and such as be void of  
 “ a lively faith, although they do carnally and  
 “ visibly press with their teeth (as St. Augus-  
 “ tine saith) the sacrament of the body and

\* Art. xxviii.



“ blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they par-  
 “ takers of Christ, but rather to their own  
 “ condemnation do eat and drink the sign or  
 “ sacrament of so great a thing.” You see  
 here the opinion of our church, that they are  
 wicked and unworthy communicants who re-  
 ceive only the figure, but do not really partici-  
 pate of Christ in the ordinance.

Hear again the doctrine of our church in the  
 homily upon this subject, where, declaring  
 what knowledge is requisite for a due partici-  
 pation of the sacrament, she thus instructs us.  
 “ Neither need we to think that such exact  
 “ knowledge is required of every man, that he  
 “ be able to discuss all points in the doctrine  
 “ thereof. But thus much we must be sure  
 “ to hold, that in the supper of the Lord there  
 “ is no *vain* ceremony, no *bare* sign, no *untrue*  
 “ figure of a thing absent; but as the scrip-  
 “ ture saith, the table of the Lord—yea the  
 “ communication of the body and blood of the  
 “ Lord in a marvellous incorporation, which  
 “ by the operation of the Holy Ghost (the  
 “ very bond of our conjunction with Christ)  
 “ is through faith wrought in the souls of the  
 “ faithful.” And a little lower it is said that,  
 “ The ancient catholic fathers truly under-  
 “ standing this union betwixt believers and  
 “ Christ, call his supper a deifical communion.”  
 I might bring many other authorities from the  
 service

service of the church, but it will suffice to subjoin to those before mentioned the positive asseveration of Christ himself. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*<sup>2</sup>.

But here the great difficulty presents itself. What are we to understand by the body and blood of Christ? To answer this I must remind you of an observation which I have already often inculcated as generally necessary for interpreting the scriptures, *viz.* that spiritual things have no proper name in the language of men; and therefore there is a necessity of borrowing such terms from the natural world as are best adapted to express them. The body and blood of Christ then signify his spirit, they signify Christ himself, I mean *his communicable nature*: which he therefore calls his body and his blood, because it is his very self, as essential a part of him as the flesh and blood he suffered in: and with respect to us he calls also the same thing *bread*<sup>3</sup>: because, when received in faith, it does as intimately unite itself to, and become one with our soul, as the food we eat does with our bodies: and he afterward chose to represent it sacramentally by that thing [bread] the name of which he had used as a metaphor to express it by.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



For it is observable, and serves to give farther light upon this subject, that Christ called his communicable nature by both these names, of *body* with regard to himself, and *bread* <sup>4</sup> with regard to us, a considerable time before he instituted this sacrament.

The communicable nature of Christ is in scripture compared to the *sun* <sup>5</sup>, which is light, a body of light continually streaming forth upon the globes around him. The sun communicates his very substance to all objects properly disposed. It is, I say, a part of the substance or body of the sun derived down to us, which is the light of men, and the light of at least the vegetable world. In like manner Christ is the light and life of the spiritual world; the prophets style him the Sun of Righteousness. Righteousness, (which in modern language we call virtue) is his substance, his very nature and essence, which he communicates to the faithful in the eucharist, by the worthy partaking whereof we also *become partakers of the divine nature*, as St. Peter speaks <sup>6</sup>, for he is *the LORD our Righteousness*.

That Christ should communicate his nature to us for our restoration, was eternally necessary to that end, and before his incarnation the fathers under the law partook of it: for the apos-

<sup>4</sup> John vi.  
Wisdom.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah xxx. Malachi iv. Book of

<sup>6</sup> 2 Pet. i. 4. Jer. xxiii. 6.

the faith *that they eat the same spiritual meat, and drank the same spiritual drink, which were Christ* <sup>7</sup>. But it seems matter of arbitrary choice, when and with what symbols he would ordain a sacrament to effect it, *because he could, and did effect it without.*

As in the former sacrament that of *baptism*, although Christ should not have instituted the ceremony of washing: yet the inward grace, the substance of baptism, which is repentance and conversion, ever were, and ever will be necessary in the church: so in this latter sacrament of the eucharist, although the solemn receiving the consecrated elements had not been commanded, yet the thing by them signified and effected, *i. e.* the communication of Christ's nature to us, was always necessary for our sanctification. And therefore, before the species of bread and wine were made sacramental, our Lord had said *I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world—except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.—He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.



When Jesus knew in himself that many of his disciples murmured at this doctrine as a hard saying, he added by way of explanation: *It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.*

I do not think it strange that many at that time should wonder at these expressions of our Lord, for it was, as I said, a considerable time before his death, while his disciples themselves were ignorant of many important truths, being, as Christ told them, *not yet able to bear them, or capable to apprehend them.* The great mystery of the gospel was gradually unfolded, and not completely revealed till the day of Pentecost in the mission of the Holy Ghost, who made a full discovery of the evangelical truths. It is therefore, I say, no great wonder that these passages then stumbled some novices in christianity. But since the whole plan of our redemption is displayed in the writings of the apostles and evangelists, wherein we are told, as by St. Paul, *that the mystery of the gospel manifest in the saints, is Christ in us the hope of glory*<sup>2</sup>. By St. Peter, *that its exceeding great and precious promises were given us, that by them we might be partakers of the divine nature*<sup>3</sup>. By St. John, *that he that hath the Son, hath life: and he that hath not the Son, hath not life*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 27.<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. i. 4.<sup>4</sup> 1 John v. 12.

And again by St. Paul, *that they are reprobates (i. e. void of judgment) who know not Christ to be in them*<sup>2</sup>, with other numberless declarations to the same purpose: after these one would think that no Christian could doubt about the meaning of this sacrament, which is a *conveyance of Christ's nature to us for the sanctification of ours*. He thereby enters our hearts as our *Saviour* to deliver us from the power and guilt of sin; as our *King* to govern us, and as our *God* to receive our perpetual homage and devotion.

It is in this sense and upon this account that the *kingdom of heaven is within us*, I mean in all those who choose him to reign over them, who sincerely subject themselves to his dominion, and resign themselves to his conduct. He dwells in them as his temples, and sanctifies their hearts by his presence. He unites himself to them so intimately that he becomes their *life*<sup>3</sup>: and in the degree that they subject themselves to him, he animates their souls as their souls do their bodies. This was St. Paul's glorying—*not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*<sup>4</sup>. By faith he

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Col. iii. 3, 4. John vi. 33,

57, &c. 1 John v. 11, &c.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. ii. 20.



received Christ, by *faith* he trusted in him, by *faith* he resigned himself to his guidance: for he renounced and suppressed his own will that the *will* of Christ might be predominant in him. Thus (as he adds in the next verse) *he did not frustrate the grace of God*, because he did not resist the spirit of Christ, but was governed by it in all he did.

I believe there is no doctrine in the whole New Testament so often inculcated as this faith in the indwelling power of Christ. The strongest similitudes to represent intimacy and union that are to be found in the whole circle of nature, are there used to give us the fullest conviction. Such intercourse as in the vegetable world is between the *root and its branches*; in the animal world between *the head and its members*; and in the divine, between *God and Christ*; is there said to be between *Christ and Christians*. So *I am the vine* (saith our Lord) *ye are the branches*. *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing* <sup>4</sup>. Another species of similitude used, as I said, to illustrate this communication, is that of a *head with its members*, which members live and move only by the spirits conveyed to them from the head. But the sublimest comparison that can be made, (and indeed it is a very awful one) is that of

<sup>4</sup> John xv. 5.

the union of *Christ with his Father*, which he scruples not to use upon this occasion: *as I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

To return now to the sacrament itself, than which there cannot be a more express and sensible representation of intimacy and union. For is not the food we eat converted into our substance? Does it not become one with us? Is it not our strength, our life, our whole support? Yet to this Christ compared himself: and he established it for a sacrament to assure us, that as the bread and wine nourish and incorporate with our bodies, so his body and blood shall feed our souls.

It would be presumptuous and absurd to pretend to account for the manner of this divine communication. For who can tell how even the natural bread nourishes his body? Who can explain and give satisfactory reasons for the several changes it goes through, before it can be assimilated into our substance; before, from *corn* the product of the ground, it be transmuted into flesh and blood; nay and sublimed into animal spirits, until it become the materials of thought and reason? our ignorance of natural things should bar all vain curiosity about spiritual; and we should acquiesce in the plain doctrine of scripture, and determinations of our church, *that our souls are strengthened and re-*  
*freshed*



*refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.*

There is indeed this blessed difference between the spiritual food and the material, that whereas our body changes the material food into its own kind and substance, this spiritual food changes and transforms our nature into its own, and thereby conforms us to the image of the Son of God from whom it proceeds. It transforms (I say) our souls and assimilates them to itself, upon which account it is called elsewhere the *engrafted word*<sup>5</sup>, for the *graft* is not changed into the nature of the stock, but turns the stock into its own, and makes the evil tree bring forth good fruit.

To conclude this head, you see the reason of the term *communion*, why this sacrament is called the communion; it is because the nature of Christ thereby becomes common to him and to us. It is one spirit from one head in many members: so St. Paul, *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ*<sup>6</sup>?

The other head to be treated of was the qualifications necessary for a worthy communion. They will appear very plain and intelligible. They are infinitely reasonable. And yet ——— but I

<sup>5</sup> James i. 21.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

come not here to complain. It is my business to instruct you.

In the sacrament you are to receive Christ as your *master*. You put yourselves under his discipline, to learn his doctrine, obey his commands, and enjoy his protection. Now suppose that you had lived while Christ taught publicly in Judea, what dispositions were then requisite to become his disciples? the same are now required for receiving the sacrament. I say the same dispositions of heart are requisite. We must in will and inclination leave all to follow him. We must have no other design but purely to do what he shall direct us: and we must resolve to follow his directions though at the expence of our fortunes or our lives.

There is no great knowledge of spiritual things, no great proficiency in virtue required; these we are to expect from him: but a sincere conversion is indispensably necessary. Our heart must be turned from the world to God: our heart, *i. e.* our *desire*, must seek him above all things, or else we communicate unworthily. Weakness and ignorance are no obstacles, provided we are duly sensible of them, and have a general disposition to use the strength and knowledge which he shall infuse. He came to save sinners, but such sinners only as preferred that salvation to all worldly goods and selfish interests. In a word, he only is fit to receive the sacra-



sacrament. who comes to it with a fixed and settled purpose to forsake every known sin. For this end the common forms of preparation furnish you with catalogues of sins, that you may enquire, not only what sins you have committed, but also whether you are willing to forsake them, whether you heartily renounce them, and desire above all things to be delivered from them. And that you may not deceive yourself (for the heart is a great impostor) you must judge of the sincerity of your will to forsake sin, by the fruit it produces. Whosoever *wills* the end, *wills* also the means. If you would forsake the sin, you must avoid all occasions of it. You must no more go into the bad company which has seduced you: you must throw away the unjust weight or measure, and, in a word, break all worldly engagements, which may hinder your total subjection to the government of Jesus Christ. This is the due preparation for the communion. *For wherefore should you receive Jesus Christ but to obey him?*

Is it not presumptuous, is not prophane, to invite him into your hearts, only to be, as it were, a nearer spectator of your disobedience, a nearer witness of those proud, covetous, sensual, or spiteful thoughts, which you *wilfully* entertain there. That such thoughts have, and still do arise in your mind, is no obstruction to  
his

his coming. He who did not abhor the stable of Bethlehem, will not disdain a heart polluted with evil lusts and passions, when it laments and detests them, when it strives against them, and above all things seeks deliverance from them. To such he comes a Saviour.

The parable related in St. Luke <sup>7</sup> of a great supper prepared, and many, who were invited, refusing to come upon different pretences of business or pleasure, is generally, and with reason, applied to the Lord's Supper: and occasion is taken from it to shew the great danger and guilt of refraining from the communion. The verses next following that parable are as applicable to dissuade us from a rash and unworthy approach to it. It is said ver. 25. that *there were great multitudes with Christ*, whereof the greater part intended, as appears from what he said to them, to become his disciples. But he thought fit to prevent all hasty and inconsiderate engagements in his service by laying before them the terms of discipleship in such strong, I had almost said, exaggerated expressions, as exclude, and should deter all from attempting it, but such as were possessed with so ardent a desire to please him, as far surmounts all natural affection, all regard to worldly interests, yea and all concern for their lives. Now, as was said before, the same preparation is re-

<sup>7</sup> Chap. xiv.



quired for receiving the sacrament, as was necessary to qualify a man to become a disciple of Christ, for *surely none but disciples should partake of it.* To what purpose should they receive him, who will not follow his advice; who will not be governed by his spirit? Here therefore you must examine yourselves and the force of your resolutions. For as our Lord adds <sup>8</sup>, *which of you intending to build a tower, setteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Or what king, going to make war, does not first compute his forces whether they be sufficient to resist the enemy? for without such prudent forecast their enterprises will prove vain and ruinous. So likewise (saith Christ) whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* Your heart therefore must be quite taken off the world: you should count all things (as St. Paul speaks) but *as loss and dung that you may obtain Christ:* and then you are fit to receive him. He will enter into your heart, and make his abode there. He will fill you with his peace and love. He will perfect you in holiness, and lead you to happiness everlasting.

<sup>8</sup> Ver. 28.

## DISCOURSE XXVII.

## JUDGE NOT.

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MATT. vii. 1, 2.

*Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

THE qualities requisite in a judge are *authority, knowledge, and integrity*. If he wants *integrity*, if he is partial and prejudiced in the cause; *that* alone is a ground to except against him, and set him aside. If besides this he is *ignorant* too; not sufficiently informed of the fact he would judge of; nor of the law he should judge by; that is a *farther* incapacity which totally disqualifies him. And if we add to this, that he has no *authority*, no legal call, no kind of right to judge, then the sentence he passes will be quite inexcusable. Yet such is the guilt of that censoriousness or rash judging our neighbour, which you have heard so strictly forbidden on the severe penalty of

of



of incurring the divine judgment. *Judge not, that ye be not judged, &c.*

To restrain the *cenforiousness* here prohibited we should therefore consider in the first place, that it is without *authority*, of which there needs no other proof than what we feel in ourselves, when *we* suffer by the cenforiousness of others. We question, and with reason, what title they have to judge us? Are *they* our masters? or are we accountable to *them* for our behaviour? What an impertinence, what a presumption is it in *them* to arrogate such a right over us, and insolently subject us to their censures?

This is true, our complaints are just. And the same complaints will be equally true and just in our neighbour's mouth, if we give occasion for them by our own cenforiousness. We are *not* his masters, nor is he responsible to us for his conduct. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?* (so St. Paul exhortates upon this subject) *to his own master he standeth or falleth, i. e.* he shall be absolved or condemned by him. *Why dost thou judge thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God*<sup>1</sup>: and therefore it is usurping God's jurisdiction, when thrusting ourselves into the tribunal we rashly pass sen-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 4, 10, 12.

tence upon our brethren, who are accountable only to *him*, or those under him, whom he in special cases appoints to judge in his name, such as magistrates, parents, masters, or other lawful superiors. These *powers are ordained of God*, in whom alone resides the original right of calling men to an account for their actions; and we speak not now of legal judgments, but of rash and unwarrantable censures. In this case God is so far from communicating his right to us, that he has expressly forbid us, and that with severe threatenings, to punish those with rigor who presume to encroach upon his prerogative.

The apostles often repeat the same prohibition, enforcing it with the reasons before alleged. So St. James puts the question, *Who art thou that judgest another*?<sup>2</sup> Whence hast thou authority over him? has the sovereign Judge committed his office to thee? has he not on the contrary reserved it to himself with dreadful penalties denounced against those who presume to usurp it?

God proposes and recommends his *mercy* to our imitation: he commands us in *this*, in *mercy* to be *perfect as himself*, and live up to the pattern of infinite goodness which he has set us, but his *judgment* is a reserved preroga-

<sup>2</sup> Chap. iv. 12.



tive, and they shall feel the weight of it who rashly invade its office.

Besides this want of *authority*, we are under a second incapacity for judging, I mean want of *knowledge*, want of sufficient information, which certainly renders our censures vain and erroneous.

God, as was said, is the proper judge of men, in virtue of all his attributes, and particularly his omniscience. *He is the Searcher of Hearts.* His knowledge ministers to his justice, and renders him *the righteous judge of the world.* St. Paul urges this consideration to silence our rash censures. *Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts* <sup>3</sup>.

Those who preside in human judicatories by the appointment of God, and with authority delegated from him, as they cannot know the heart of man, so neither do they pretend to judge it: but after enquiring concerning particular *facts*, they pronounce according to the best information. And here it is to be observed with what great precaution they proceed. Witnesses are examined on both sides. The person accused is allowed full liberty to plead for himself. All material circumstances both of the accusation and the defence are maturely weighed, and

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.

carefully recapitulated by grave and learned men, who propose the substance of all that has been alledged on either hand, in the best light they can, to a number of sworn persons, whom the person accused has himself admitted for proper and unexceptionable judges: and according to their unanimous verdict the cause is at last determined. So well have human laws guarded the property of men in two kinds of possession, *viz.* of *life* and of *goods*; a third kind, that of *reputation*, is left almost at mercy and without defence. *Judge of your neighbour by yourself*<sup>4</sup> (saith the Preacher) and estimate how valuable his reputation is to him by the price you set upon your own. Yet how rashly and wantonly do we injure our neighbour in this tender point. Upon slight conjecture, and obscure surmise, upon hearsay, and the most fallacious appearances; upon such kind of evidence as would not be endured in a court of justice, we precipitately give judgment, and that, not only without due cognizance of the cause, but oftentimes even without due knowledge of the law itself by which we condemn him.

There are two kinds of knowledge necessary in a judge, knowledge of the law, and knowledge of the fact. Now in some cases we are very defective in both.

<sup>4</sup> Eccles. xxxi. 15.



Our ignorance of the law, in some points, is much greater than men are commonly aware of. We find such instances of this even in the times of primitive christianity, as should make us very modest and reserved in our decisions. There were then, as there always will be while this world lasts, even among sincere christians, many different opinions concerning matters not essential to salvation. In these cases each man's judgment is the rule of his own actions, but not a rule for other men. We must be content with the light which God gives us, and which is sufficient for us to walk by, but not to discover all the ways by which he leads our brethren: for as he has not given us an authority, so neither has he given us a capacity to judge them. We have St. Paul's advice to this purpose. *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations, or as it is rendered in the margin, not to judge doubtful thoughts. For one believeth that he may eat all things, all sorts of food, another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not: and let not him who eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.—One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let each of them follow his own opinion without scruple. He who observeth the day, observeth it to the Lord, i. e. with a religious view. And he who observeth*

*serveth not the day, acts by the same motive. So also he that eateth, does the same: for he giveth God thanks: and he that eateth not, does it on a religious account, and giveth God thanks.—Let us not therefore judge one another any more*<sup>5</sup>.

Since therefore those who are truly devout and enlightened by the Spirit of God for their own conduct, do not perceive the limits of duty with such certainty and distinction, but that they are liable to mistake, when they judge of the conduct of their brethren; it is no wonder that false devots, who with great pretensions to religion have no solid piety: it is no wonder I say that such often err in their judgments through ignorance of the rule they should judge by. Of this kind were the Pharisees, who with all their boasted skill in the law, so mistook the whole drift and tenour of it, as to condemn our Lord himself for transgressing it, while he was actually accomplishing it in its highest perfection.

This ignorance of the law is an absolute incapacity, yet in many particular points all men are more or less liable to it. Education, party and complexion have a great share in the notions we form, and those notions will be our rule of judging. When the *rule* is faulty, the judgment formed by it must of course be wrong;

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xiv.



and our care to apply the rule right will only confirm us in error.

Besides these mistakes in the rule, there are others still more frequent in the application of it, as when we pass our censures without due information of the *fact*. If we will constitute ourselves judges, though never so irregularly, we should at least perform the judge's part. We should patiently hear, and examine, and consider all that may be said on both sides. If we refuse this trouble, why do we intrude into the office only to abuse and betray it? Appearances are very fallacious, and he who is not perfectly sensible that they are so, is ill qualified for a judge. Yet, fools that we are, it is according to these appearances that we judge our neighbour. We take a few probable circumstances for a sufficient ground to pass sentence on him. How many of these follies have we to answer for? May the gracious God forgive us, and mend us, and by his Spirit write in our hearts that law, wherein he commands us *not to judge according to appearances, but to judge righteous judgment* <sup>6</sup>, intimating that when we judge by appearances, we often judge unrighteously.

So it was with that Pharisee, who, while Mary Magdalen was weeping at our Saviour's feet, said in himself *This man, if he were a*

<sup>6</sup> John vii. 24.

*prophet would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.* Here are two false censures implied, for the Pharisee, *judging according to appearances*, supposed from our Lord's goodness and condescension to Mary, that he was ignorant of her former misbehaviour, therefore that he was fallable and easily imposed on, therefore no prophet but a seducer and an impostor. The judgment which the Pharisee passed on Mary was better founded, yet very false and blameable. Her crimes indeed had been too notorious to be doubted of: but she was now repenting of them: her tears testified her contrition, which was so efficacious, that her many sins were forgiven her, while he who condemned her continued in his, and encreased their number by his uncharitable censoriousness.

So it will happen when we judge according to appearances. I shall briefly mention three other sources of rash and unwarrantable censures. As when we judge of mens *intentions* by their actions; which is a deceitful rule, because the same action often has its rise in different men from opposite principles. Again, when we judge of a man's *whole* character by single actions: for man is too various a creature to be known at once by one, or even many single actions. And lastly, when we judge of others by *ourselves*, imputing to them such corrupt



motives as we find ourselves inclined to act by upon like occasions.

Thus far has been considered our want of *authority*, and our want of *knowledge*: the third and worst disqualification for judging is want of *integrity*. We are proud, passionate, partial, interested judges, and consequently corrupt, and very unfit for the office. For the proof of this I appeal to the observation and experience and complaints of mankind. We cry out mutually of each others injustice. Every one complains that his neighbour censures him wrongfully. The fact is notorious, but what is the cause of it? What dark principles are there in the heart of man which render him so prone to judge falsely? They are *pride* and *malice*, which are as inseparable as cause and effect. Pride implies ill-nature, *i. e.* malice: for all excesses in self-love do necessarily make a proportionable defect in charity. Pride then is the cause of censoriousness; pride makes us judge others, though we have neither authority nor capacity; and pride makes us judge falsely and maliciously. Of these two effects of pride I shall speak severally. And

First I would show how it inclines us to judge others. To judge is an act of sovereignty: it is an exercise of such authority, as is indeed very considerable, if we were really possessed of it. Pride among its other usurpations arrogates to  
itself

itself this province. It raises us above our brethren in an imaginary tribunal, from whence we seem to distribute praise or infamy with an arbitrary sway. Pride strangely delights itself in thus taking the ascendant over others in the sentences we pass upon them. For we plainly set ourselves above them, when we call them to our bar, and subject them to our censures. Hence it appears how pride finds its account in making us judges: why it makes us corrupt judges is our second enquiry.

To apprehend this it must be remembered that the first-born of *pride* is *malice*. He that loves himself *more* than he ought, must love others *less* than he ought. The same principle which makes us overvalue ourselves, makes us undervalue our neighbour. For as our notions of *excellence* are by comparison, we cannot ascribe it so immoderately to ourselves, but upon a supposed defect of it in others. Their abasement seems to set us higher, and we erect trophies to ourselves upon their ruins.

While the Pharisees *trusted in themselves that they were righteous*, it was but natural for them to *despise others*. For the same self-love which made them blind to their own faults, not only sharpened their sight to spy those of other men, but even aggravated and multiplied them. And this is the true reason why *our* judgments err so much oftener to the prejudice, rather than  
to



to the advantage of our neighbours; why, so commonly, we think *worse* of them, rather than *better* than they deserve. I shewed before the *ignorance*, what I now insist on is the *corruption* of our judgment. Mere ignorance has an equal chance either way: and what is thrown in the dark and at random, might as probably hit above, as below the mark. The reason why we are so often under it is the *malice* of our hearts, which makes us delight to find faults in others, as excuses for our own faults, or foils to our virtues.

Men are rivals for reputation, they all run for the same prize. The sentence, by which we condemn another, gives us the start of him in our own esteem. And hence it happens that those who excel most, are often censured with greatest rigor: there is a conspiracy against them: it is the interest of multitudes to defame them: and they suffer accordingly. While those whose privacy, or notable worthlessness less provokes the jealousy of others, are treated with much greater indulgence.

Such are the causes of censoriousness, they are pride and malice. We must seek a remedy for these evils in the practice of the contrary virtues, even humility and charity. Charity will teach us to pass over that in others, which humility teaches us to apprehend for ourselves.

If, according to the apostle's precept, we *judged ourselves*, we should not be so rash and precipitate in judging others: but recognizing in our own breast the root of that evil which we are tempted to blame, we should turn our censures upon ourselves. So St. Augustin diverted his mind from uncharitable censures, even of certain and apparent faults, by reflecting that he had within himself the same seeds of evil, and that he should do *worse*, if the divine grace did not restrain him.

It is St. Paul's advice that we should *consider ourselves lest we also be tempted*<sup>7</sup>. If we sufficiently *considered* ourselves, our past miscarriages and our present dangers, we should be often inclined to pity others, but never to condemn them: and thereby we should obtain from God the mercy we shewed to men, according to our Lord's gracious assurance, that *if we judge not we shall not be judged, if we condemn not, we shall not be condemned: if we forgive we shall be forgiven*.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. vi. 1.



## DISCOURSE XXVIII.

## On SLOTH.

ROM. xii. 11.

*Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

**O**F all their follies and vices there is none which men so readily acknowledge as *laziness*: and this not from ingenuity or a settled purpose to amend it, but purely from the little sense they have of its guilt. They think it a very pardonable frailty, and often plead it in excuse for many faults, which are much less faults than itself: some account it almost a species of innocence, and openly make profession of it with a wanton confidence. I shall essay therefore to represent the proper guilt and malignity of sloth from the following considerations:

First, that of our own nature as we are *men*, *i. e.* creatures endowed with great capacities and abilities for thought and action. Now the  
nature

nature of things is in some sense their law, and every good faculty we are endowed with implies an obligation to use and exert it. Accordingly man even in the state of innocence had his daily work appointed him, which argues his dignity, and the peculiar regard of heaven to *him*: since the inferior animals were left to rove idle and unemployed, the Creator taking no account of their doings.

And farther, as by our natural constitution we are fitted, so we are commonly much inclined to action. Which inclination has occasioned the invention of so many different amusements and exercises, to which men have recourse in order to vent their innate activity, when they decline the regular employments of virtuous industry. Hence it is, that so many, who neglect their proper business, are impertinently laborious in their sports and pastimes; which is a clear proof that we are by our natural frame and temper of mind strongly inclined to industry. And when any so far suppress that inclination as to abandon themselves to sloth and indolence, nature soon punishes the violation of her law by grievous distempers of body and mind: the man grows a burden to himself, and languishes in the listless, lingering torments of idleness.

To this aptitude and propensity to business with the mischiefs consequent to sloth in men-  
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tal pains and bodily diseases, the Divine Providence has added more pressing incentives in the many wants we are subject to of food and raiment, with other various necessaries or conveniences of life. Nature only furnishes the rough materials, which demand much skill and pains before they can be accommodated to our uses. The corn of the field and the wool of the flock require long preparations, with care and labour, ere they become food and raiment. The stone of the quarry and the timber of the forest furnish work for many hands, before they can afford us convenient shelter. So that absolute necessity engages the far greater part of mankind in daily labour, and all that religion requires of *these* is to make a virtue of that necessity, by conscientiously, *i. e.* in obedience to God, performing the task imposed on them.

Nor may the rest, who seem placed in an higher sphere, exempt themselves from this common tax upon human nature. They are bound, according to their several stations, to make suitable returns of service to the rest of mankind, and contribute their share towards the public good. For no rank or quality can confer a privilege to be a worthless drone, and useless burden to society.

Upon this account St. Paul<sup>1</sup> represents idleness as a sin against the order of Providence,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Theff. iii. 6, &c.

which

which requires a reciprocal communion of benefits among men: and thence he argues that the idle man has no title to his daily bread, because *he* has no right to the service of others, who does not repay them with his own. And he concludes with exhorting them *to labour quietly, and eat their own bread*: accounting that only for such as they themselves had earned.

Yet some may think that *their* condition exempts them from this duty, because they are already provided for, and have wherewithal to maintain themselves in ease and idleness. But sure it is no excuse for a fault, that we are in a capacity to commit it. *Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unjust*<sup>2</sup>? Can your greater obligations to God for his bounty dispense with your obedience to him? There is no state of life which does not furnish employment for care and industry. For as the Preacher declares, “great labour is appointed for every  
 “man, and a heavy yoke is upon the sons of  
 “Adam, from him that sitteth on a throne of  
 “glory, unto him that is humbled in dust and  
 “ashes: from him that weareth purple and a  
 “crown, unto him that is clothed with a linen  
 “frock<sup>3</sup>.” And from the imperial daughter  
 to *the maid behind the mill*. For the mean must serve the great out of necessity, and the great

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxxii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Eccles xl. 1.



are equally bound to serve the mean out of justice and charity.

Thus far it has been shewed that idleness contradicts the original law of our nature, because our frame and constitution is fitted for labour, because the natural bent of our mind inclines to it, and because our own wants, and the returns which we in justice owe to society for the services received from others, strictly oblige us to it.

These obligations are greatly enforced by the revealed doctrines, which make *self-denial* and *the mortification* of inordinate desires, an essential and principal point of duty. To discharge this, some have recourse to strange and unnatural austerities: but God himself has provided the sacrifice, which he meant we should offer him; he has provided it, I say, in the daily labour enjoined us. For to take due pains in our proper business is the best kind of *mortification*, and severe enough, if we discharge it faithfully.

Our Lord commands us *to take up our cross to follow him*. Every man has his *cross*, but they only *take it up*, who impose it on themselves by a voluntary acceptance of it. This we do when we conscientiously practise that habitual *self-denial* which is necessary to maintain a christian industry. The weight of sloth is so oppressive, the charms of pleasure so alluring, and our natural inclinations so fickle and changeable,

changeable, that we must do ourselves great violence to persevere steadily in the narrow and trite, yet often rugged path of business; and always do what is best and fittest to be done, though never so irksome or difficult. This is the daily cross which Christ has commanded us to take up, and those who reject it can have no interest in him.

He has assured us that *every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof at the day of judgment*. With how much greater reason then shall we be accountable for our idle hours, idle days, idle years! Our great Master will then call all his servants to account for the talents he has entrusted them with. And he has told us beforehand the sentence which will be passed upon the *unprofitable servant*<sup>4</sup>, who was condemned, not for doing ill, but for doing nothing: his sloth was his only crime, and for that he was condemned to *outer darkness*.

But farther, besides the proper guilt of sloth, it is exceedingly pernicious in its consequences. For men, rather than do nothing, are inclined to do ill: and when the heart is not occupied by good thoughts, bad ones are ever ready to insinuate themselves. Idleness is the nursery of vice, which grows there as naturally as weeds in a neglected field. It is the wise man's ob-

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxv. 30.



servation, that *idleness teaches much evil*<sup>5</sup>. For the mind being vacant and dissolute, every temptation impresses itself with great advantage and force, men in that circumstance being apt to comply with temptation purely to divert and entertain themselves, to pass their time and cure their listlessness, committing sin merely for want of better employment.

Industry on the contrary is a guard of innocence, fencing the avenues of the heart, and securing it from many occasions of temptation. When a man is engaged in honest employment, and seriously intent upon it, his mind is taken up, is prepossessed, so that commonly there is not room for evil suggestions. His senses lie not open to ensnaring objects, nor is he at leisure to mind the solicitations of sinful pleasures: and (which is his principal advantage) he is more immediately under God's protection, while he is thus engaged in his service.

Such are the advantages of a christian diligence, I say a *christian diligence*, for a misplaced industry may be worse than labour lost, worse than idleness itself. To make haste, when we are in a wrong road, is an impertinent hurry at best, and commonly serves only to prolong error. In that case our first care should be to get into the right way. Until that be done the exhortation in the text does not belong to us, as ap-

<sup>5</sup> Eccles xxxiii. 27.

pears from the clauses subjoined to the caution against sloth, viz. that we should be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*.

In the last of these, *serving the Lord*, the phrase is as intelligible as the sense is reasonable: but the former, *fervent in spirit*, requires some explanation of the term *spirit*, which at the time the apostle wrote, was commonly understood to mean one constituent part of the human nature.

Man was then considered as consisting of three parts, called *body, soul, and spirit*. Writers who were cotemporary with the apostles speak often of this division, which certainly is just and proper, since it occurs so frequently in the scriptures, where we find soul [ $\Psi\acute{\upsilon}\chi\eta$ ] and spirit [ $\Pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ ] not only distinguished, but opposed, as being not only distinct, but opposite principles. Very early in the primitive church this distinction was abused by some enthusiastic heretics, which probably is one reason why in process of time it was much disused, and at last quite neglected; so that to supply the want of it latter writers, using the word *soul* in a much larger sense than the ancients did, distinguished what they now call soul into two parts, one called the *inferior* and the other *superior*. By the inferior they mean the seat of the passions and receptacle of whatever kind of sentiments man may have in common with the rest of the



animals: by the superior they mean his capacity for religion, to which appertain conscience, the knowledge and love of God, with every thing that conduces to virtue and piety; and consequently those nobler faculties of the mind whereby we control the low animal sensual part of our nature, and with erected thought, thought raised above sordid transitory interests, which are the bane of our true interest, we follow the dictates of right reason, and behave, as intelligent beings ought to do, in the presence of their Creator.

A zealous exertion of these nobler faculties is what the apostle means by *being fervent in spirit*: and the following words shew wherein that fervour should be employed, even in the service of God. *Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. Many confine the service of God to the public service of the church, or the stated offices of private devotion: but these are far from being the whole of our service to God; for they are only seasons proper to excite, renew, and invigorate our piety, so that it may spread over all life, and become the incessant spring of our diligence, the habitual motive of all we do. This is *serving* God, and the most indifferent actions performed in this disposition, will thereby be ennobled, and made divine.

## DISCOURSE XXIX.

*The* S O W E R.

MATT. xiii. 3.

*He spake many things unto them in parables, saying: Behold a sower went forth to sow.*

**J**ESUS was sitting by the sea side, where a great multitude was gathered about him, so that he went into a ship, and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Here surveying his numerous audience, and perhaps reflecting with inward grief how few of that populous assembly would profit by his doctrine, he spake the following parable of a sower sowing seed in four kinds of ground, with the different success of that seed according to the different nature of the soil it was cast upon.

When we consider that this seed signifies the *Word of God*, as our Lord after explained it; it may seem strange that any particle of such divine seed should prove fruitless. *The Word of*



God is the seed of universal nature, the seed whence all things sprung into existence. It made the world, and it supports it. And when this Divine Word, in itself so efficacious, is addressed to rational beings, it is so much their interest, as well as their duty, to comply with it, that it is astonishing *they* should refuse obedience.

But here is the great misfortune. That freedom of will, which constitutes our dignity above other parts of the creation, by *our* perverseness is become our disgrace and our bane. That generous, voluntary obedience to which we were ordained, implying necessarily a possibility of disobedience; that fatal possibility has proved our ruin. And although God daily renews his call that we should return to our duty and allegiance, yet we see the greater part of mankind totally neglect him.

God speaks to men by various ways: a principal one is this present ordinance. God has given power and commandment to us his ministers to declare his will, to publish his laws. We are entrusted with the divine seed of his word: and woe be to us if we *use it deceitfully*: woe be to us, if we mingle it with the tares of human traditions, or prostitute it to any worldly interests!

² 2 Cor. iv. 2.

Such

Such profanation of it may indeed sometimes be committed by ignorant or designing men: but the sacred scriptures are in your hands; and it should be your care to search them, and try if our doctrine be agreeable thereto, *whether it be of God, or we speak of ourselves*<sup>2</sup>.

While we faithfully do our duty, God speaks by our mouths, all unworthy as we are. Under our great master Jesus Christ we are the sowers sent into his field the church, to scatter the good seed of his word. This is our part: yours is to receive it with the proper dispositions, which can be judged of only by the fruit it brings forth. You will all find yourselves described in this parable, which represents four sorts of hearers, and each man is concerned to judge himself what class he belongs to.

The first sort are compared to the *way-side*, the common road, upon which when the seed fell, *the fowls came and devoured them*. Our Lord interprets this of those, *who hearing the word understand it not*. By which he means, not that they are ignorant of the sense of it, but that they do not exercise their understanding about it; they do not mind, they do not consider it as the rule of their conduct. The Psalmist describes them in those words, *they know not, neither will they understand: they walk*

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 17.



*on in darkness*<sup>3</sup>. They hear, if I may so say, without hearing, *i. e.* without minding what is said. Their heads are like a high-way or common thoroughfare, in which nothing rests, but passes out as it entered; they persevere in a wilful stubborn ignorance; and all the tremendous truths of religion make no impression on them: like Gallio *they care for none of these things*, as if they had no part or concern in them.

Why then do they come here? to what purpose do they enter this school of wisdom? why, merely to comply with the custom, to follow the multitude, to pass away an hour or two, that would be burdensome at home: or perhaps to criticise on what they hear, and remark the preacher's faults instead of their own.

If I should add that many come to our churches to shew themselves, to make a wanton ostentation of their person and dress, to take out new lessons of vanity, to learn fashions and practise them:—If I should say this, is it not true?—And if it be true, is it not abominable?—But fools make a mock of sin, and turn our just rebukes into a jest. The preacher must be very cautious upon these subjects, who does not incur their ridicule. But, Christians, this is a very serious matter; and you must renounce the name of Christians, if you do not

<sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxxii. 5.

lay it to heart. Our master Christ, who was mildness itself, most dove-like mildness, changed his wonted indulgence into severity and indignation against those that profaned the church. Though his general demeanour to transgressors was so meek and gentle, so condescending and familiar, that his adversaries reproached him as the friend of publicans and sinners: yet when he found sinners polluting the holy place, his just zeal so far transported him that he made a scourge of small cords, and drove them out of the temple.

This uncommon indignation of Christ argues that it is no small crime to abuse this house of God to any purposes different from, and, as they often prove, opposite to those of its institution. This is the house of prayer, a holy place, wherein we are to humble ourselves before God; to implore his mercy, and acknowledge his goodness; to learn his will, and celebrate his sacraments: and if any come here for other ends, to display their fopperies, and act over their little vanities; let such be warned by this admonition, and not presume for the future to approach these sacred walls, but with such modesty, sobriety, and devout recollection of mind, as become the holy offices for which we here assemble.

It is indeed a melancholy thought to reflect how great a part of the congregation come hither for other purposes than those for which  
these



these walls were consecrated. They come to God's house, but not for God's sake: they neither seek him in the prayers, nor hear him in the sermon. They seem to approach him with their lips, and their ears, but their hearts are far from him. They hear our discourses, as they hear the organ, as an amusing sound, without reflection or application. We preach against pride, intemperance, uncleanness, fraud, calumny, revenge; in short, every kind of vice: we denounce the judgments of God against those who do such things: we exhort them to be reconciled to God by a timely repentance: but all in vain. The word takes no root in their hearts. Such are they who received the seed by the way-side.

The second sort of hearers are compared to *stony places, where the seed had not much earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had not root, they withered away.* So far the parable. Now hear our Lord's application of it. *He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he who heareth the word, and at first with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, he presently relapses.*

Such are the second sort of hearers: they receive, they relish the word, they delight in it, they partly apply it to themselves, and reduce  
it

it to practice. But all proves superficial, and consequently vain: for they are a *stony* ground, in which the seed cannot take root. By this metaphor of stones we may here understand *bosom sins*, habitual vices in which they indulge themselves; such as covetousness, or uncleanness, or sloth, or rank ill-nature, or some other reigning vice, which they will not do themselves the violence to surmount. Of this we find a remarkable instance in Herod, of whom it is said that “he revered John, knowing him  
 “to be a just and holy man, and therefore pro-  
 “tected him, having reformed many things,  
 “upon his remonstrances, which he used to  
 “receive very graciously,” or as it is literally in our public translation, *when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly*<sup>5</sup>. This seemed a very hopeful conversion. For a prince bred in the pride and luxury of courts to become attentive to the austere Baptist, to *hear gladly* his mortifying lessons of penitence, and not only to hear, but begin to put them in practice; for it is said that *he did many things*: this was very promising, and one might expect from it some extraordinary reformation. But he had still a stony place in his heart, Herodias was there, and the good seed could not take root in it. You know the sad event: his adulterous passion destroyed not only the seed, but the

<sup>5</sup> Mark vi. 20.



sower too ; lust produced murder : and, entangled with a rash oath, he gratified the malice of Herodias with the head of the prophet. So fallacious is that fond gladness which is often felt upon hearing the word ; many are pleased with it, who never profit by it.

For as the soul of man was made for truth, it naturally takes delight in it : and while the truth does not directly oppose our favourite errors we receive it with joy, we let it sprout, and put forth leaves, and make a shew of reformation. But when it reaches the bosom sin, the darling vice, which you will not part with : then it meets a rock, then it can make no farther progress. You shut your eyes against the light, you *choose darkness and falsehood, because your deeds are evil.*

And therefore they deceive themselves, who, when they have been touched and affected with a sermon, think that all is done, and that they have discharged their duty. Quite the contrary : nothing is done if they stop here. God indeed has done his part : the seed is sown in your hearts. It is your part now to cultivate it, to make room for its growth, to cast out all the *stones* or the *thorns* that may hinder its encrease.

The thorns were the third obstacle mentioned to the fertility of the good seed. *Some fell among thorns* (said Christ) *and the thorns sprang*

*sprang up and choked them.* This is explained at ver. 22. *He that received the seed among thorns is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

When we speak of the *care of this world* as sinful, there presently occur many objections to what we teach. No man, it is said, can live without care: and if any should, he would be justly blamed for his negligence. *Six days shalt thou labour* (saith God) and *labour* there relates to the mind as well as the body, and the most general labour of the mind is carefulness. Wherein then does its sinfulness consist, or how can any man discharge the business of his calling without it?

To this we answer, that care to please God, and work out our salvation in the state to which he has called us, *i. e.* to do the business which God has appointed us, *as* the business God has appointed us, is an indispensable duty: and it is not care in general, but the *care of this world* that is criminal, *i. e.* care merely for the sake of this world, and exclusive of our regard to God: care, whereof worldly goods are the sole motive and end: such care as we should not engage in but for the temporal profit we expect from it.

Morality consists not in the outward action, but in the motive to it, *i. e.* the reason why we



do it, the end for which we perform it. The servant of God and the servant of mammon may appear both alike careful and industrious, but from very different principles. The one fulfils the desires of his covetousness; while the other obeys the commands of God. As our motives or principles of action are of a secret nature, and commonly lie hid in the intricacies of the human heart; men do very frequently deceive themselves in this matter, and mistake their worldly-mindedness for christian industry. The frequency of this self-deceit is, as I suppose, the reason why our Lord adds to *the care of this world the deceitfulness of riches*; and in other places warns us so earnestly, with a double caution that we should *take heed, and beware of covetousness*: because the temptation to it commonly solicits men under the disguise of duty of frugality, of providing for their families, and fulfilling their vocation.

That we may not be deceived by worldly care in this disguise of a virtuous diligence, our Lord has given us this character to know it by, viz. that it chokes the good seed of the word, stops its influence, and hinders the due and natural effect it would have upon our lives. For instance, the *word* saith “Love your neighbour  
“ as yourself; and deal by him, as you yourself  
“ would be dealt by.” If this take root in our hearts, it will produce a most amiable integrity,  
disinterest-

disinterestedness, and generosity in our dealings: but worldly cares come and stifle this good seed, making men selfish, griping, disingenuous, and over-reaching.

The word again commands that “we seek  
“the kingdom of God and his righteousness  
“in the first place, and depend securely upon  
“Providence for our support.” Hence the christian industry is full of faith in God, sedulous to please him, and only him: so intent upon duty that it is indifferent to all beside: so confiding in the divine protection, that it is void of all cares for itself, and rests in a perpetual inward peace by reason of its habitual resignation to all the orders of Providence. The care of this world, on the contrary, is disquieting and vexatious: it seeks the world in the first place as its principal affair; and where it predominates true religion must be excluded: for true religion can never be an inferior or secondary pursuit, it must be the first, or none; it must root out the thorns, or be choked by them.

The last kind of soil on which the seed is said to have fallen is *good ground*, which is interpreted to represent them who, *with an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience*<sup>1</sup>. To these happy auditors are assigned three proper-

<sup>1</sup> Luke viii. 15.



ties worthy our notice and imitation. They receive the word with *an honest and good heart*. They *keep* the word they have heard, and they *bring forth fruit with patience*. They are sincere in hearing, faithful in retaining, and patient in practising their duty.

The first part of this character, *viz.* sincerity in receiving the word, is well exemplified and expressed by Cornelius, who was directed by a heavenly vision to send for St. Peter; and after having got together a small congregation of his friends and relations, he at their head thus addressed himself to the apostle for instruction. *Now are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*<sup>2</sup>. So spoke that *honest and good heart*, which was rightly prepared to receive the word. *We are here present before God*. A devout sense of the divine presence dispels all secular cares, recollects the attention, stills every faculty of the mind, and composes it in a religious silence. Such should be our disposition, when we read the word of God in the Scripture, or hear it faithfully dispensed by his ministers. We shall then feel its efficacy: for it will make a great impression on us; it will sink deep into our hearts; and taking root there, and being warmly cherished by successive meditations, it will spring forth in holy purposes, with ardent and

<sup>2</sup> Acts x. 24, 33.

incessant desires to accomplish it. This is what we understand by the second property before mentioned of a good heart, viz. *that it keeps the word*. It suffers not itself to be dissipated in pleasures, distracted with cares, or engrossed by any sensual affection: but attentive to the truth received retains it as a sacred depositum, cultivates it (as was said) with assiduous meditation, and puts forth all its force to co-operate with it in the production of virtue. Those who have their heart thus disposed are Christ's favourite auditors, and he has pronounced upon them a very memorable benediction; for when a certain woman was so transported at the hearing his instructions, that by a very natural expression of her passion, *she lift up her voice, and said unto him: blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked*, he replied, *yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it* <sup>3</sup>.

The third and most essential quality of a good heart is that it brings forth fruit with patience. This is the completion of its character, the perfection of its goodness and felicity, *if* (says our Lord) *ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free* <sup>4</sup>: then you become the children of God, and endeared to Christ by every kind of relation. So he him-

<sup>3</sup> Luke xi. 28.

<sup>4</sup> John viii. 31.



self assures us, when, as he was discoursing, being told that *his mother and brethren stood without desiring to speak with him, he answered and said unto him that told him: who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples and said,*

*“ Behold my mother, and my brethren, for who-  
“ soever shall do the will of my father which is  
“ in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister,  
“ and mother.”*

Blessed therefore, eternally blessed are all they that hear the word of God, and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience; which that ye may all do, the peace of God which passeth, &c.





tention, and persuade obedience with such efficacy, as is natural, where novelty exerts its usual force to make impressions on us.

That we are continually maintained by the providence of God is a notorious truth ; yet grown so trite that it rarely moves our gratitude : but the portion of scripture now read may serve to enliven it with the new circumstances, in which it represents our obligations to God for our daily food ; which is as verily his gift to us, as the loaves and fishes miraculously increased to feed four thousand, were the gift of Christ to that multitude.

Had we been present at that wondrous feast, and seen the creating hands of our Lord actually producing food, encreasing the small pittance of bread and fish to a quantity sufficient to feed so many thousands ; with what pleasing wonder and awe should we have felt ourselves seized ! with what devout thankfulness should we have received our portion of the miraculous entertainment !

Now every meal we eat is in reality as much the gift of our Lord, as was that amazing banquet. His power created, and his goodness bestows our every morsel. The whole world indeed is his family, for which he daily provides, and gives to every creature his food in due season. *He causeth the grass* (saith the Psalmist) *to grow for the cattle, and herb for the*  
*service*

*service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth*<sup>5</sup>. Thus are all things living in the earth, air, and sea subsisted by God: and as they are so subsisted chiefly for the sake of man, and subjected to his dominion; he, as the priest of this lower world, must pay *their* homage and service to the common Lord. God has made man to have dominion over his other works, giving him a kind of property in them; and it is therefore highly reasonable that man should pay their tribute of praise, they themselves not being capable of knowing their dependance on God. *The young lions are said to seek their meat from God, and the young ravens to cry unto him*<sup>6</sup>: yet these are only the complaints of languishing nature, heard and relieved by the God of nature, but not directly addressed to him. Man alone is capable to hold such communion with God, to know his goodness, and celebrate his praise. Yet most men live as insensible of their obligations to him as the meanest animals, who have no capacities to apprehend them. Though they receive their daily sustenance from God, yet make they no returns of praise and thanksgiving. And the reason is, because their sustenance comes *naturally*, i. e. by the ministry of second causes: for nature is the established method by which God produces it. But second causes do not derogate from the

<sup>5</sup> Psalm civ. 14, 15, 28.<sup>6</sup> Psal. civ. Job xxxviii.



first; though, to the great reproach of human reason, they too often obscure it. And therefore our Lord, in the case before us, acted without them; producing food immediately by his creative power, and shewing, without a veil, to whom we owe it. This is the sentiment which I purpose, with God's blessing, now to inculcate, after briefly relating the story upon which it is grounded.

Great multitudes had followed our Lord from the neighbouring cities and villages into the wilderness. Their attention to his doctrine, and admiration of his miracles, had suspended the call of natural appetite: and a holy care for their souls had made them, for a while, neglect their bodies: a happy and a glorious neglect, which sometimes devout souls fall into, when hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they fast, and deny themselves more than their bodily strength will bear; an error indeed, but such as rather moves the compassion than the anger of our merciful Redeemer. For it is said, that *He called his disciples, and said unto them: I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for many of them came from far. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?* The  
place

place indeed was a wilderness, a barren desert, but Christ *was there*: he who furnished a table in the wilderness for their forefathers; he who gives the fruitful vallies their fertility, and whose *open hand filleth all things living with plenteousness*, He was there; and could immediately have created food for their present supply, as he did the world out of nothing. Why then did he enquire for the seven loaves? seven stones, or seven clods of earth were as sufficient in his hand to have fed his four thousand guests. All things were equally possible to his power, but not equally agreeable to his wisdom. He was to teach in every action, and set an example in all he did. And therefore, though possessed of the inexhaustible stores of omnipotence, he extended his power only in such degree, as the present occasion called for. Seven loaves he had, and those he used; but seven were not sufficient, and therefore he produced a miraculous supply.—He used the ordinary means as far as they would go, and had recourse to the extraordinary only as a supplement to their deficiency. A great lesson to us, as on the one hand not to tempt God with vain and presumptuous expectations of assistance, when the abilities already given are sufficient, if we duly exert them: so on the other hand, to rely with a steady assurance upon his goodness, after we



have used our utmost endeavours, and done the best we can.

To instruct us in this, our Lord took the small pittance that was at hand, the seven loaves and few small fishes.—For these *He gave thanks* (seeing these were all) *and he brake them, and gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude: and they did all eat and were filled.* And at the same time doubtless their minds were affected with reverence, and the warmest emotions of gratitude. For when our Lord repeated this miracle upon a like occasion, as we read in the sixth of St. John, those, who saw and partook of it, were so sensibly affected, that they immediately professed their faith in him as the great Messias: and in the sudden transports of their zeal they would have made him their king: and at length grew so importunate, that they would by violence constrain him to accept that office: for the evangelist adds, *that when Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.* He fled from offered royalty, for he came into the world for a far higher end, than to wear its crowns. He was indeed a king, *and to this end was he born* (as he declared before Pilate) *and for this cause came he into the world that he should bear witness to the truth of his being so.* But his kingdom was not of this world;

world; it was a spiritual dominion, a rule over souls, an everlasting kingdom of saints. All other empire was unworthy him, and far beneath his innate supremacy.

The people therefore were mistaken in offering him a temporal crown: but though they erred in that particular through the grossness of their apprehensions, yet they judged true in the main, that such obligations required the utmost efforts of gratitude: that the power which created their food had a rightful claim to their subjection; that the goodness which bestowed it deserved their obedience; that they ought to be wholly devoted to his service who maintained them; and in a word, that they should live *for* him, *by* whom they live.

This conclusion was most just and rational. Why then do not we agree in it? They would have made Christ their king for one meal thus bestowed. We receive our daily sustenance from him, yet the greater part make no such return of homage and obedience. And why are we less affected than that multitude? The cause lies only in the *manner*, not the *matter* of the obligation; it is because we receive it by the mediation of natural causes, which proceed in a regular uninterrupted course, according to the wise appointment of the God of nature.

That we call *the course of nature* is truly the will of God, and a continual exertion of his providence.



providence. St. Paul says, that *God gives us rain from heaven*<sup>7</sup>, and mankind naturally seek to him for it in their want. Yet rain proceeds from natural causes, but is not less the gift of God, because bestowed by means that are ordinary and established. So our Lord, in that part of his sermon on the mount which concerns providence, sayeth, that *God feedeth the ravens* : and God does as verily feed them, as they by his appointment fed his prophet Elijah at the banks of Kidron. Yet no man doubts but they are fed by the ordinary course of nature, which is not less providential, because constant and regular.

Nature is the servant of God, and ministers our food, as the disciples did the loaves multiplied by our Lord : and our gratitude should terminate in him, as theirs did, when they would have made him their king. But our minds are not affected with things that happen often : we contract a certain familiarity with common events, and the daily wonders of nature grow cheap and unaffecting by their frequency. Things which rarely happen, strike ; whereas frequency lessens the admiration of things, though in themselves ever so admirable. This miracle of the multiplied loaves has only its novelty to recommend it, the others as much deserve our devout acknowledgments.

<sup>7</sup> Acts xiv. 7.

We may best judge of this by some other instances. Is it more strange that the rod of Aaron should bud, than that ten thousand woods and forests, stripped by the frosts, should in the spring shoot forth buds innumerable, and make new shades with returning leaves and bloom? Or that food should descend nightly from heaven, as the manna did upon one certain spot where the Israelites were encamped; is this more strange, than that food should spring, as it does yearly, and all the world over, out of the ground? God is alike the author in both cases, and man's obligations are the same: but when his productions appear frequent and after the same manner, we heedlessly pass them by as natural: and when they appear in a manner new and unusual, then we cry miracle, and prodigy! The strangeness of the thing, as it were, alarms us, and makes us raise our eyes to the hand that caused it.

In condescension therefore to our weakness and inadvertency, Almighty God has vouchsafed, upon some extraordinary occasions, to divert his power out of the common channel of nature, and shew it in some other manner that is new and surprizing. In the case before us he quite threw off the disguise of second causes, and visibly and in person exerted that power, from which the earth gives its increase, and the fountains flow with perpetual streams.

His



His operations in nature proceed very leisurely from small and seemingly despicable beginnings, passing through various successive changes, and advancing by just degrees, they attain at last their due perfection. Thus a grain of corn, sown in the earth, and perishing there, by a virtue God has implanted in it, communicates we know not what fecundity to the glebe. From that secret spark of vegetative life the tender roots spread, and the green blade springs forth, which, after a revolution of various seasons, with the concurrence of frost, and rain, and snow, and dew, and sunshine, displays the ear, first green with little cells full of a milky substance, which ripens and hardens in the sun, till the grain, perfected and ready for the labours of men, is gathered, and after various operations becomes proper for our nourishment. So long a progress through natural causes, with diverse arts and labours of men, is necessary to make a piece of bread. But the Lord of Nature might, and did go a nearer way to work. It was *corn* in its maturity, it was *bread* in its perfection, at once, in his creating hands.

The ordinary method of producing food is in general the most proper, as it employs the time, quickens the industry, and exercises the ingenuity of men: the extraordinary way was fit only for those particular occasions whereon our  
Lord

Lord used it, and wherein he had particular views and designs. A principal thing he had regard to was to remind us in that sensible manner of our obligations to him for our daily bread; to teach us to reflect, that however wonderful the sudden increase of loaves may appear, yet every harvest renews the miracle for the subsistence of all the world.

I add one or two instances more of the same nature, because I am desirous to inculcate this sentiment so often, as may render it familiar, that our mind may readily enter into it upon all occasions, and as often as we partake of the gifts of God, we may at the same time see the hand that bestows them.

Had we fed upon the miraculous quails with the Israelites in the wilderness, and quenched our thirst at those sudden streams into which the rock melted at the stroke of Moses: how should we have been transported with a sense of God's goodness! would not such a meal, while it fed our body, also entertain our mind with holy wonder, praise, and thanksgiving; would not every morsel have renewed our gratitude, and excited perhaps a more ardent devotion than that wherewith we now attend the altar to partake of its holy mysteries.

And what difference is there between the food wherewith God fed the Israelites in the desert, and that wherewith he feeds us in this  
land



land of plenty? None in respect of the author, none in respect of our obligations to him. The food he rained from heaven, and the corn he produces out of the earth, are both alike his creatures; and he that furnished that table in the wilderness, is the same that furnishes our table every day.

There is no room for argument upon this occasion. We all know that our food is the creature of God, that his power made, and his goodness bestows it, as verily as they did the food that fed the four thousand. Yet many men make no returns to this universal benefactor. How just therefore is that exhortation of the prophet: *Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise! is not he thy father, that created, and fed thee<sup>s</sup>?* that gave thee all thy faculties, and all the objects wherewith they are gratified? Why have men reason wherewith to trace effects to their causes? why have they lively apprehensions of benefits, and capacities for grateful sentiments, if they do not exert these faculties in the cause that most requires, that best deserves them? if receiving daily obligations, they continue as void of grateful reflections, as beasts grazing in the fields or feeding in the stalls, who have no understanding? Yet even these, from the blind instincts of nature, express something like an acknow-

<sup>s</sup> Deut. xxxii. 6.

ledgement of favours. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib (saith God) but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

How justly might God punish the ingratitude of men by withdrawing the blessings they have long abused? He sometimes does so even in this life: and many, who have not been thankful for their daily bread, have lived to want it. But generally speaking the case is otherwise, and *God maketh the sun to shine, and his rain to fall, and food to grow, for the evil and the good, the thankful and the unthankful, as long as this life lasts.* Then the scene will be changed, and his blessings be no more bestowed promiscuously; but they who have not acknowledged his bounty, shall learn how great their obligations were by the want of it, and as a just punishment of their unthankfulness, be reduced to that sad state, in which they shall have nothing left to be thankful for.



## DISCOURSE XXXI.

*Nor RICHES nor POVERTY.*

PROV. xxx. 8, 9.

*Give me neither poverty, nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

**T**HE heart of man is a perpetual source of desires: they spring there spontaneous, and pervert our judgment, which is often obliged to control them, as absurd and pernicious. For, although by an invincible instinct we always tend to good in general; yet our desires, which pretend to lead us thither, are very erroneous guides, mistaking evil for good, and good for evil.

We ought therefore at all times to endeavour the regulation of our desires: but we should do this more especially at the times of devotion. For then we present our desires to God, beseeching him to ratify them. And consequently

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it imports us much to offer up only such desires as are reasonable, and tend to our proper good: lest we ask a curse instead of a blessing.

The prayer now proposed for the subject of this discourse may be considered as a model or rule of those desires, which relate to our rank or condition in the world; which is here distinguished into three kinds, *viz.* of want, sufficiency, and superfluity. The two extremes, *i. e.* *want* and *superfluity*, are deprecated: and the middle state of *sufficiency* is besought of God: *Give me neither poverty, nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me; then follow the reasons of this request: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

My purpose is, with the blessing of God, to establish and illustrate the important truths here suggested, by laying before you the inconveniencies and advantages respectively of the three conditions mentioned: to which end I shall treat of them severally.

I begin with that of *poverty*, which signifies real want: the word in the Vulgate is *mendicitas*, beggary; a state in which a man is destitute of the necessaries of life, and knows not where to get them.

It is needless to shew the inconveniencies of this state, we are but too sensible of them, and therefore I shall only take notice of that *one*



mentioned in the text, *lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain*, committing perjury to conceal the theft. A heathen poet<sup>1</sup> in his fabulous description of hell, has placed at the gates of it, *malesuada fames, et turpis egestas*. Ill-advising hunger, and squalid want. The fable may have a good moral. These are placed at the entrance of hell, as importunate seducers, that often lead thither. Pinching necessity is a powerful persuader to break the fence of law, and after the theft committed men are very prone to defend themselves with lies, and even perjuries.

This wretched state is commonly the natural effect and punishment of idleness and extravagance. It is *just* that he who squanders his substance, or neglects to earn his bread, should want it. It is a penance due to sloth or prodigality: and as we are here taught to pray against it, so we must exert our endeavours to prevent it by frugality, and an honest industry.

But poverty is not always the fruit of sin, it may come from the appointment of providence, as well as sickness or any other misfortune. It may be graciously dispensed by God, not only, as in the former case, to correct and amend us; but also for the trial and improvement of our faith and patience, and to prepare us, as it did Lazarus, for Abraham's bosom.

<sup>1</sup> Virgil.

We are allowed not to choose poverty, and we may pray against it, as we pray in general that God would not *lead us into temptation*: but when temptations happen, as in some form they must often happen, for our advancement in piety, it is then our duty to approve ourselves under them by a devout resignation. We must, as in all cases of the like nature, call earnestly upon God; and, confiding in his grace, vigorously resist the evil to which we are solicited. This temptation of poverty is a bitter cup indeed; but healthful, when God administers it: and if we accept it with an humble submission to his will, he will support us under its worst effects, and in due time remove it from us.

The next state to be treated of is that of *sufficiency* or middle life, between the two extremes of want and abundance. This state has been much extolled in verse and in prose, by poets and philosophers. To live secure from indigence, and unincumbered with superfluity, is a condition so apparently reasonable, that in speculation many cannot but approve it. Sir William Temple observed that all the pleasures of sense which any man can enjoy, are within the reach of a moderate fortune: that as they grow fainter with age, so they become insipid by use: that they must be revived with intermissions, and wait the returns of appetite, which are no more at the call of the rich, than of the

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poor:



poor. That all fits of pleasure which are excessive, and consequently such as this middle state can ill afford: that all such fits of pleasure, I say, are balanced by an equal degree of pain and languor: it is like spending this year part of the next year's revenue. Defect follows excess as a natural atonement. They have observed farther, that covetousness is a curse that frequently cleaves to riches, which are more apt to inflame desires, than to satisfy them: for as the Preacher long since declared, *He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver: nor he that loveth abundance, with increase*<sup>2</sup>. Nor is it a less obvious truth, which is suggested in the verse following, *when goods encrease, they are encreased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?* Upon the whole, a judicious Epicure, though void of religion, may make such reflections, and choose, what he calls a *competency*, merely for the present conveniency of that state.

But there are two errors which men are apt to fall into upon this subject. First, they mistake the notion of *sufficiency* or a competent maintenance. And secondly, they often deceive themselves in imagining that, what they now fancy a *sufficiency*, would satisfy them, if they were possessed of it.

<sup>2</sup> Eccclus v. 10.

First I say, that many men mistake the notion of a competent maintenance: for they mean by it some fund or estate sufficient to maintain them in idleness all their days; and also sufficient to maintain their children after them, in idleness too, unto the world's end. And farther by competent maintenance they mean, not only what is needful to support life, but also what is proper to maintain vanity and luxury to such a certain degree as they think allowable.

But this is not what the wise man prays for; it is on the contrary what he renounces by the name of *riches*. *Give me neither poverty, nor riches; but feed me with food convenient for me,* or as in other translations very properly: *feed me with food sufficient for me*. He deprecates superfluity, as well as indigence: and his request coincides with that petition of the Lord's Prayer, *Give us this day our daily bread*. In which petition we do not ask the *bread of idleness* and a dispensation from labour and the order of providence: but we implore the blessing of God upon a virtuous industry.

True prayer always implies our own endeavours. We must use what we have, and ask only what we want; *i. e.* we must employ our talents, and exert our abilities of body or mind in our respective callings. For by *calling* we are to understand that trade or other profession to which God in the course of his providence



has called us, that we should serve him in it, by discharging the business thereof with fidelity and diligence. This is properly that middle state which we are to pray for, and acquiesce in; as long as this affords us food and raiment, we must be therewith content: and not give way to that restless aspiring humour, which is always looking upwards and engages men in a perpetual struggle to raise themselves in the world; for I observed in the second place, that men often deceive themselves in imagining what they call a competency, would satisfy them, if they had it. The state they propose may appear very desirable, while they stand upon lower ground: I mean while they are in an inferior condition: but when they arrive at it, although before it bounded their wishes as well as their prospect, yet, I say, when they are arrived at it, probably they will press forward with the same earnestness. The mind will get new views, new wants will be felt or fancied: new desires will retch, and pine after some distant good. All the world is clambering: and human life is spent in perpetual solicitude to advance higher and higher upon the stage of fortune: until at last the farce ends tragically, for death still closes the scene; and he who got most has only the trivial, wretched distinction of having left most behind him.

Thus

Thus it is with the men of the world : it will give farther light to our subject if we enquire the reason why men are so rarely satisfied. Why so much of the goods of this world, as suffice nature, do not also satisfy desire : why plenty, why abundance, why the greatest excess of superfluity still leaves the mind restless and discontented.

The reason is because man was not made only for this world. God has given us larger and nobler desires, which when they are not turned to their proper objects by religion, when they are not exerted in devotion, but cramped within the narrow circle of transitory things, soon suck out and exhaust the sweetness of such diminutive goods, and turn again to fresh pursuits, and meet again with fresh disappointments. So that the man, who is discontented amidst the greatest affluence of worldly enjoyments, really has some *reason* for his discontent. He feels still an inward want, and his immortal spirit thirsts after an unknown good, for which he was made, and without which he cannot be happy.

But to return to our proper subject, the prayer we were treating of. *Feed me with food sufficient for me.* It is reasonable to ask for *what we want* : God allows, and commands us so to do : but to ask for more than we want, more than enough ; that is unreasonable and presumptuous.



tuous. To desire superfluity is a *covetous* desire; which may indeed rise in our mind without our fault; but cannot without our fault be wilfully and deliberately entertained there: much less may we convert such desires into prayers. Such inordinate desires should not be presented before God but for sacrifice. So far ought we to be from avowing them in his presence and invoking him to ratify them; that we ought on the contrary to renounce them, and implore his help to mortify and extirpate them.

We are taught to offer up our prayers in the name of Christ, and he *is our advocate* with the Father: but he is not the advocat  for our vanity, luxury, sloth, or ambition; which are the latent motives of those greedy desires I am speaking of. He is the Mediator of sinners, but not of sins; and the purchase of his merits is divine grace, to extinguish exorbitant worldly desires; and not vain superfluity to gratify and enflame them.

He has commanded us to *seek in the first place the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, *i. e.* all the virtues practised in direct obedience to God: for all virtue which is not founded in a regard to God, is as mere vanity as any other worldly project. By the *kingdom of God* therefore we mean that state or frame of mind, wherein men become willing and obedient subjects to all the laws of God, and consequently  
 practise

practise all the virtues : this Christ commands us to *seek in the first place*. This is our principal want, and this *ought* to be our principal desire. But men are commonly so blind and stupid that they neither seek, nor know what is their proper good : and ignorant or negligent of their eternal interests, instead of seeking this *kingdom of God*, they ask of him such trifles, things so unfit for them to receive, or him to bestow, that their silly requests move at once pity and indignation.

There are fables which represent very aptly the folly of certain mean persons, who being allowed to ask what they would from some mighty prince, have according to the baseness or narrowness of their tastes or capacities, ridiculously requested some contemptible bauble when the whole royal treasury lay open to their choice. Such are those, who being admitted to the throne of grace in prayer, ask for *riches* : so senseless a request argues great ignorance of their true state and condition. For if they would seriously look into themselves and contemplate the infirmities and depravities of their nature, how brutish appetites and passions tyrannize over reason, and enslave them to sin and folly : if they would duly consider this, they would feel such immense *spiritual poverty within*, such pressing wants of divine grace, as would  
soon



soon suspend and dissipate all fond wanton wishes for things so vain and frivolous.

I will illustrate this by a gross instance, in which the want of *God's kingdom*, *i. e.* the divine grace governing our hearts, is deplorably conspicuous: yet the best among us will on some accounts find themselves involved in the same way of reasoning. The instance I propose is of a man who is addicted to intemperance, and daily subject to commit excesses in eating or drinking. By these he impairs his reason, breaks his constitution, shortens his life; and for every fresh excess suffers afresh in pain or sickness. He cannot but resolve sometimes in his sober intervals that he will be no longer such a slave to his appetite, that he will for the future eat or drink only so much as is proper to nourish life, and not to destroy it. But the poor man has perhaps already made and broken such resolutions above an hundred times: he knows too that his soul is ruined with his body, and that the wicked intemperance which hastens his death——shall I speak it out? But why should I hide the precipice from him, who rushes on it? I say then that the sinful intemperance, which hastens his death, doth also hasten his condemnation. Now what can such a man in reason ask of God, but that *God's kingdom may come in his heart* to set him free from

from this infinitely worse than Egyptian bondage? This is what he means, or ought to mean, by those words of the Lord's Prayer, *thy kingdom come, i. e.* to deliver us from sin, to redeem us from the power of vicious habits, and restore us to true liberty, which is never attained until God himself govern us by his Spirit.

To express more sensibly the importance of this petition, which indeed is so great, as ought in reason to possess our whole heart, and shut out all trivial and superfluous desires: to shew I say the vast importance of this, I put the case (which is not an uncommon one) of a man ruining both soul and body by intemperance, because there are in it some palpable circumstances, which feelingly represent the tyranny of sin, and the unspeakable reason we have to seek deliverance from it. But the argument may be extended to all sin in general, as long as we are held in subjection by it. Incontinence, pride, ambition, covetousness, every evil lust and passion, where they prevail, will at last make men equally miserable: for they will sink them in the same perdition.

And should we, who have such vast interests at stake, be solicitous about the superfluities of life? should we, when we present ourselves before God, ask for a needless abundance of  
worldly



worldly goods, which often serve only to entertain our vices, to make our chains faster and heavier, and plunge us farther in a forgetfulness of God and neglect of our duty towards him ?

It is upon this consideration that the wise man renounces riches in his prayer, *Give me not riches (saith he) lest I be full, and deny thee, and say who is the Lord?* But riches are so important a subject, so extensive, and so interesting, that I shall reserve what I have to offer upon that head for a separate discourse.

## DISCOURSE XXXII\*.

*Nor RICHES nor POVERTY.*

P R O V. xxx. 8, 9.

*Give me neither poverty nor riches : feed me with food convenient for me : lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

**G**IVE me neither poverty, nor riches. We all assent to the first part of this prayer: but the second, in which the wise man deprecates riches too, will make many call his wisdom in question. We have a very lively sense of the advantages of riches, which are considered as almost omnipotent on earth; so that the desire of them is a compendium of all other worldly desires; it is a kind of universal passion, in which all the other appetites and passions concur, inasmuch as wealth is the ready means to gratify them.

\* The second sermon on this text.



It must be allowed that riches discreetly used do notoriously contribute to make the present life more commodious. It is certain too that riches are in their own nature things indifferent, which do no harm, but in the abuse of them. It is also evident that many holy men have possessed riches innocently, and that they may be used as the means of doing much good in the world.

All this is true: and the thing last mentioned, *viz.* the usefulness of riches in *doing good*, ought to be particularly considered by those who have them: but for those who have them not, that is no reason why they should desire them. It is indeed often made a pretext for indulging covetous desires, and a preface for declaring them: but in reality it is a vain, and delusive, and presumptuous imagination. We must leave to God the choice of his almoners, and not aspire to an office, which there is so great danger of abusing. The wise man plainly declines it; and in the same breath prays against *riches*, as well as *poverty*.

We may, and we ought to ask of God a competent maintenance, when we want it, and implore his goodness to continue it, when we have it, as was shewed at large in a former discourse. I shall now propose the reasons why we should not let our desires rove farther, but  
acquiesce

acquiesce in a state of mediocrity, when that is our portion allotted by providence.

For this end I shall, as in a loose essay, treat of the nature of riches: I shall relate their origin, and shew how they came into the world: I shall also mention somewhat of their progress, with the uses or abuses that have been made of them, and, in short, what has occurred to my meditation, that may serve to give light to this interesting subject.

If we examine what is the origin of riches, it will be found that they are a human invention; for there was no such thing in the earliest times, I mean immediately after the fall. Mankind was then busied in fulfilling that sentence passed upon Adam, *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.* A happy necessity then obliged them to daily labour, for their daily maintenance. Arts were not yet invented, nor metals discovered; which have since furnished such commodious instruments for agriculture, building, and clothing, by means of which, one pair of hands will dispatch more business, than one hundred could without them. So that in the first age of the world, every man had his daily task, which he was obliged to perform in order to subsist himself and such of his family, as by reason of old age, or nonage or sickness were not in a condition to work for themselves.

Adam



Adam and one part of his race, particularly Abel, and Seth with his descendents, as recorded in Genesis <sup>1</sup>, continued in *the knowledge of God*; and *walking* as in his presence, painfully wrought out their salvation in a voluntary endurance of the penance prescribed. Enlightened by the *divine wisdom* <sup>2</sup>, which produces and maintains in minds subjected to it a devout sense of God with suitable demeanour towards him: thus enlightened, I say, they lamented, and strove against the corruptions of nature, their main concern was the sanctification of their souls, and they willingly mortified their bodies in the continual labour imposed.

As it is reasonable to have some peculiar concern for our great ancestor Adam, so it is pleasing to find in scripture that he recovered from his fall, and after a long penance of nine hundred and thirty years, changed this mortal life for a happy eternity. We learn this where Solomon, recounting the successes of *divine wisdom* in reforming mankind, notes in the first place, that *she preserved the first formed father of the world—and brought him out of his fall* <sup>3</sup>. And his race by Seth are called *the children of God* <sup>4</sup>. Men of heavenly minds and tempers, who sojourned here on earth as pilgrims or passengers, and had their thoughts so fixed on

<sup>1</sup> Chap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Wisd. x.

<sup>3</sup> Wisd. x. i.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. vi.

another world, that they were little solicitous about their accommodations in this.

One of them in particular, I speak of Enoch, lived with such innocence, and such devotion, that he was dispensed from the common law of mortality, and from his habitual *walking with God* by faith, was translated into the beatific vision.

Another branch of Adam's descendants were employed in a quite different manner; I mean Cain with his race; who forgetting God, and laying aside the thoughts of religion, bent all their care and attention to the things of the present life. All that force of mind, which should have been exerted in the duties of morality and devotion, was turned merely to the accommodation of the animal man.

Daily labour, as I noted before, commanded by God, and their daily wants obliged them to it. The command of God they had no regard to, and all their care was to supply their wants by the shortest and easiest methods they could invent. One of them, who was doubtless a great genius, and is recorded in scripture by the name of Tubal-Cain, found out the use of metals, which discovery did greatly contribute to abridge labour, so that by the benefit of more convenient tools the work of a week might be dispatched in half a day.



As men went on with gradual improvements they took in the other animals to work for them, to till their fields, and carry their burdens. Advancing in the science of mechanics they multiplied their own strength to a surprising degree; and, in general, they attained to a wondrous dispatch of business by taking nature and art to their assistance.

And thus riches came into the world: they are the fruits of arts and inventions, whereby the labour of a few does the work which would have employed very many in the first state of things, so that after deducting the proper maintenance of those few, there remains a large superfluity, which accumulating daily as the work goes on, we call *Riches*. They consist of things immediately useful, at least imagined such; or of certain marks, which by the consent of mankind pass as an equivalent for the useful things we would exchange them for. These marks we call *Money*, and in this sense we understand those words in Ecclesiastes, *Money answereth all things*, i. e. is the measure of their value, and the price with which they are purchased.

While arts and sciences brought in riches, they at the same time would have this effect, among others, that there would soon be a great many spare hands in the world. If, for instance, by the expeditious methods of art, one man did

ten

ten times as much as he could have done without those contrivances; then the labour of the tenth part of mankind would furnish the same necessaries and conveniencies, as the whole could have produced in their primitive condition. Hence there must needs be, as I said, many spare hands, which must be idle, or find other employment. Those who were rich, might be quite idle if they pleased, and farther they might hire the service of others, who were put out of business by the new inventions.

Thus the rich acquired *leisure* for themselves, and *power* over others, whom they might employ at discretion. These are two privileges that appear very desirable to corrupt nature, but which are liable to great abuses, as will appear from what follows.

First of *leisure*, which is a privilege introduced by riches. For in the primitive state of things daily industry was bound upon man by two ties, the divine *command*, and his own *wants*. As oft as a man was remiss in this duty, want, like a task-master at his heels, drove him to his work, and helped to overcome the temptations of indolence. But when the race of Cain, as it was said before, had cast off the yoke of *obedience*, many of them soon loosened, and at length got rid of that of *necessity*. Their abridged methods of husbandry had brought in a large stock of provision beforehand, and promised a



perpetual supply, so that they might say with their fellow-fool in the gospel, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* There is scarce a fillier, and at long run a more impracticable project than this. He who has nothing to do, but to eat and to drink, will soon find *time* an insupportable burden upon his hands. Nor can *mirth* be of any long continuance. It is the offspring of health, which requires exercise, *i. e.* labour, to maintain it. Mirth naturally attends the intervals of an honest industry, and is a sincere delight while the mind feasts upon the consciousness of having done our duty: but continued mirth, like continued rest, turns to irksomeness and loathing, and flat dejection of spirits.

This was soon felt, and those whose wealth had discharged them from common labour, were forced to find out new kinds of business, wherewith to amuse their leisure. To this principally the rest of the sciences owe their rise and progress. We find accordingly that as Tubal-Cain furnished men with brass and iron instruments, so his brother Jubal invented music: as the scripture expresses it, *He was the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ*<sup>5</sup>. The sisters and daughters of these, educated in *pride, idleness, and fullness of bread*, grew very

<sup>5</sup> Gen. iv. 21.

careful of their persons; they spent much time in dress and embellishment, and they succeeded in what they had set their hearts upon; for they became polite and delicate, graceful and alluring, beyond the rest of their sex: so that they seduced the remaining *good* men, who, till that time, had passed their lives innocently in labour and devotion. These were those mentioned before of the race of Seth, who for their piety were called *the Sons of God*. So we read, *The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives, of all that they chose*<sup>6</sup>, i. e. of those that pleased them most. These ill-forted matches did great mischief in the world. The bent of nature is to ease and sensual joy, which gradually bring on a forgetfulness of God, *i. e.* a reprobate condition. These good men, uxorious and dissolved in pleasure, soon lost their goodness, and sunk into the general corruption.

The history of those remote ages is like a piece of ancient ruins, very defective, yet the remaining fragments serve to trace out the general plan. We have seen hitherto the origin of riches, they were the product of arts invented by men who *forgot God*; and they produced the same reprobate condition in others, before good men, and called *the Children of God*, who, being joined

<sup>6</sup> Gen. vi. 2.



with the daughters of the ungodly, became partakers of their wealth and of their wickedness: they gave into the vices, which their plenty could well afford, *viz.* idleness, luxury, and vanity. Nor did the mischief of riches stop here, but in the next generation they fomented ambition, rapine, and oppression. The sons that sprung from the unnatural alliances last mentioned proved great conquerors. For so we understand that passage, *When the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, they bear children to them: the same became mighty men which were of old (a sæculo in the world) men of renown*<sup>7</sup>. They were, as Moses represents them, men of gigantic size, and monstrous ambition, who made havoc of their species, filling the earth with violence and slaughter, and were recorded by fame as heroes, for committing ten thousand times as much villainy, as a private rogue would with justice be hanged for. We have no particular accounts of their depredations, yet we may make reasonable conjectures from the history of later ages. All we know from scripture is, that the earth was overspread with such universal pollution, that nothing less could cleanse it than a general deluge.

I shall stop here, and not proceed farther in the history of riches, which I have hitherto represented only by their dark side, to make you

<sup>7</sup> Gen. vi. 5.

fenfible of the temptations they lead to, and thereby juftify and recommend the exemplary prayer of the wife man, who requested not to be expofed to fuch dangerous trials.

If we were to go on in the facred records, we fhall find both *arts* and *riches* refcued from thefe abufes, and laudably employed by holy men in the works of virtue, and in the folemnities of religion. But this is foreign to my purpofe, and mentioned only to prevent miftakes in fome, who might imagine that I have inveighed againft *arts* and *riches*, as evils in themfelves; whereas all the evil confifts in the mifapplication of them: and both may be, and have often been employed as glorious inftruments in the caufe of virtue and religion. But God knows beft what is fit for *us*: and when he has bleffed us with a fufficiency, we ought thankfully to acquiefce in his appointment, and not indulge vain imaginations of the greater good we fhould do in a higher ftation: for as the Preacher obferves, *Many are deceived by their own vain opinion.—And he that loveth danger, fhall perifh therein*<sup>s</sup>. That of forgetting God is the moft dreadful of all dangers, and this is what riches do certainly expofe men to. For the rich have fo many other things to mind, they have fo much bufinefs, or fo many amufements; and

<sup>s</sup> Ecclus iii. 24, 26.



they so little feel their dependence upon God by reason of the abundant provision they have beforehand of worldly goods, that they are very prone to forget him, and make wealth their idol, so that it usurps the place of God in their hearts. Then their whole life becomes one error, since they mistake the end for which they were created; and as the wise man speaks, *Forasmuch as they know not their Maker—— they count our life a pastime, and our time here a market for gain: for, say they, we must be getting every way, though it be by evil means*<sup>9</sup>. This is a very natural description of the sentiments and the practice of the men of the world: but such sentiments, although notoriously unjust and impious, are so commonly avowed, that I need not farther enlarge on them.

I shall conclude therefore with reminding you of an excellent passage in St. Paul's first epistle to Timothy, which comprehends the substance of all that I have been endeavouring to inculcate. *Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But those who will (i. e. desire to) be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of*

<sup>9</sup> Wisd. xv. 11, 12.

*all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. These are the proper objects of our desires, these are worthy subjects of our prayers; by these we shall lay up treasure in heaven, and be rich to all eternity.*

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DISCOURSE XXXIII.

*The* PRODIGAL SON.

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LUKE xv. 11, 12.

*A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.*

**T**HESSE words begin the noted parable of the Prodigal Son, which I shall endeavour so to explain and illustrate as may best answer the end for which our Lord intended it.

It



It begins as you have heard: *A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father; Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.* The son was young who made this rash request. Youth is a dangerous season, but young persons have seldom sense enough to know their danger. Their reason is weak, and their passions strong: they have great presumption, but little capacity: they are too proud to be directed by others, and too ignorant to direct themselves.

In this season of folly our young prodigal desires his father to give him his portion. *Give me (he said) the portion of goods that falleth to me.* He was tired of submitting to the order and regularity of his father's family. He longed to be master of himself, and live without controul or subjection.

The prophet Jeremiah has pronounced that it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth<sup>1</sup>. But few in their youth are sensible of that benefit. While they are kept in awe and under discipline, they are indeed often restrained from mischief, and hindered from hurting themselves. But that restraint is grievous to them, they repine at it, they strive against it, and are eager for a state of independence as their only happiness, though it often prove their certain ruin.

While we blame this rash youth for his impatience after liberty only in order to abuse it

<sup>1</sup> Lam. iii. 27.

to licentiousness, I must put you in mind, that his story is but too just a representation of our behaviour towards Almighty God the common Father of us all. He has placed us here in the world as children in his family: he has allotted each person respectively his proper office and business: he has prescribed most wise rules for our behaviour: and with a paternal authority and love requires that we submit to his appointments, perform his commands, and do his will, as dutiful and obedient children, promising to requite our filial service here with an eternal inheritance in the heavens.

But we, like this headstrong prodigal, affect an independent state. The narrow bounds of duty we account an irksome confinement. We would fulfil the devices and desires of our own hearts, and without any regard to our eternal inheritance we choose *our portion in this world*; that now *in this our life-time we may receive our good things*<sup>2</sup>; wealth, and reputation, and pleasure, and success, and our own will in every thing: and when we have got this our portion, we think only how to enjoy it; we forget our Father, we flight his love, and disown his authority.

This our Lord represents to us in the story of this foolish youth: who, when he had got his portion, would no longer depend upon his

<sup>2</sup> P<sup>s</sup>al. xvii. 4. Luke xvi. 25.

father,



father, but went away into a far country: so we read at ver. 13. *Not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country.*

It was doubtless very grievous to his aged father thus to be deserted by a son he loved so tenderly; a son he had so lately and signally obliged by giving him his estate in his life-time; a son from whom he had probably promised himself, (as parents are too apt to promise themselves) great comfort, support, and satisfaction in his declining years. But the unnatural youth had no regard to his father's grief, no compassion for his grey hairs, which, for aught that he knew, his undutifulness might bring with sorrow to the grave. He had received life from him, he had ever since been maintained by him, and had now got an estate from him; what farther need of a father? His father had now nothing more to give him but *advice*, a gift he was too proud to accept. He apprehended that even his father's presence might be a silent reproach to his extravagance, and therefore getting over all sense of gratitude, all obligations of duty, and all ties of natural affection, away he went into a far country.

All men must blame and detest this wicked disobedience of the prodigal son. Yet most men in prosperity behave after the same manner towards our heavenly Father. When they are  
at

at ease in the free enjoyment of the good things he has bestowed on them, they forget that God is their *Benefactor*, from whom they received them; and their *Lord* to whom they are accountable for the use they make of them. They neither love God nor fear him. They retain no sense of his goodness, no apprehension of his power. Such is the twofold stupidity of the sinner; neither hopes nor fears affect him. His case is exceeding dangerous. There seems but one mean left to reclaim him; and that is affliction, which will incline him to own God for his *Benefactor*, when he finds what it is to *want* his goodness; and to own God for his *Master*, when he finds that he cannot escape his power.

For a lively illustration of this, let us follow our prodigal into that far country, that country far from God, where virtue and honour were strangers. See him roving from one vanity to another, as appetite, or passion, or capricious fancy led him. He forgot his father and his father's house. He confided in his wealth as an inexhaustible fund for pleasure and entertainment. And while that fund lasted, his indifference for his father lasted, and would have lasted for ever, could it have been so supported. He never thought of his native home, but with joy and complacence in his deliverance from it; with censure or ridicule of his father's cares and austerities; and with pity or scoffing of his elder

der



der brother's domestic regularity and confinement.

Thus this rebellious son having cast off the yoke of paternal authority, became, as the prophet expresses it, like a *wild ass traversing the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, in her occasion who can turn her away*<sup>3</sup>? Wild and wanton, stubborn and violent, wilful and untractable as that *ass of the wilderness*, he gave a full scope to all his appetites and passions, indulged every lust, fulfilled every desire, and, in a word, became a perfect *libertine*; or, in scripture language, a *Son of Belial*. For *Belial* signifies *without yoke*, and is one of the names of the devil, used to express the impiety of that arch rebel, in renouncing his dependence upon Almighty God: and they are called *Sons of Belial*, who live like him without any dependence upon God, in an open violation of his laws, and profane contempt of his authority.

How many such Sons of *Belial* are there now among us, who live whole years, yea many years, in an open and almost professed defiance of the laws of God? who never think of him, or mention his name, but to profane or blaspheme it, who despise his revelations, ridicule his servants, and give themselves up to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness. What way is there to reclaim these unhappy men, these thoughtless

<sup>3</sup> Jer. ii. 23, 24.

wretches?

wretches? To admonish them of their duty, and propose to them the great truths of religion, is to cast *pearls before swine, who will trample them under foot, and turn again and rent you.* Is their case then quite desperate? is there no mean left to reclaim them? Yes, affliction: which seems the last resort of Divine Mercy to reduce these wandering prodigals. For I have observed of many of them, (I mean chiefly young persons of plentiful fortunes,) that they are intoxicated with such a redundancy of animal spirits, arising from a good constitution, high diet, and little labour, as renders them incapable of reason: their life is a continual phrensy, like that of a fever or drunkenness; and there must be some great change wrought in it, before they can be capable of good advice. Mortifications seem absolutely necessary to bring them to, and keep them in their right senses. While their prosperity continues, their vice will continue, and exclude all possibility of amendment.—Strike then, O Lord, in thy mercy, and make them sensible of their folly by their punishment. Make them know experimentally that it is an *evil thing and bitter that they have forsaken thee their God*<sup>4</sup>. Thy goodness has provided this remedy by natural means, even in the ordinary course of things. Vice soon wastes the stock of mercies bestowed on them; their wealth, health,

<sup>4</sup> Jer. ii. 19.

and



and ease, cheerfulness of spirits, are soon exhausted by extravagance, lewdness, and riot.

So it fared with this rambling prodigal. For we read at ver. 12. *that after taking his journey into the far country, he there wasted his substance in riotous living. And when he had spent all there arose a famine in that land, and he began to be in want.* Thus does the providence of God often strike in to heighten the mischievous consequences of a vicious course. His expensive riotous living did naturally, and of itself bring him to want: but the providence of God likewise concurred to make him miserable. At the same time *there arose a mighty famine in that land.* So that he did not only want where-withal to supply himself, but was also cut off from all hopes of being relieved by the superfluity of others.

What should he now do in his distress? Whither betake himself in his sad condition? Why immediately return to his father, beg his forgiveness, and humble himself before him. The shortest follies are the best. Repentance is never too soon; the earliest is ever the most seasonable. But pride forbids, and shame to acknowledge his offences. Accursed shame! he was not ashamed when he left his father; he was not ashamed of his lewdness, riot, and extravagance: but to own them he is ashamed. And therefore chooses rather to continue in his errors,

errors, than confess them. He prefers the vilest office in life to the painful confusion of seeing his father's face. *So he went, as we read ver. 15, 16. and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he fain would have filled his belly with the husks, which the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.*

He was distressed to a strange degree. Where poverty is not our own fault, it is no disgrace to be poor. Honest poverty is a commendable, and perhaps to an abstracted virtue the most eligible state. But poverty the fruit of vice, poverty the effect of wasteful riot and intemperance, is truly vile and contemptible. This our prodigal had now brought upon *himself*. He had nobody to blame but *himself*, it was his own doing, the natural effect of his extravagance, as well as the just punishment of his disobedience.

This poverty pinched him sorely, for he had known the luscious sweets of plenty, he had been used to superfluity and excess. How does he now regret them? How does he now repent of every lavish expence, every little sum, which in the insolence of his wealth he had squandered?

His business of tending swine in the field gave him leisure enough for such reflections. Here he was left a prey to his own thoughts, which were continually at work in making grating



comparisons between his past and present circumstances. Though he was not yet converted, he was fully convinced of many truths, which in his prosperity he had disbelieved or derided. He had made great improvements in that costly, dangerous science, the knowledge of the world. He had found experimentally that its enjoyments were vanity, and the end of them vexation of spirit. Riot and debauchery now appear to him stripped of their pleasures, and retaining only their guilt. He knew it was folly all.—

The heat and ardour of youth now no longer animated his courage, and inflamed his passions; that genial fire had been made burn too violently to last long. It had been wasted in voluptuousness, and the poor remains were now quite extinguished by the damps of chilling poverty. It is now no longer the gay, the bold and sprightly adventurer, full of hopes, and confiding in his abundance: no longer that self-willed, opinionative fool, who preferred his own conceits to the solid counsels of age and experience. He is no longer that unnatural son, who despised his father, who thought him useless or troublesome: nor the heedless rover, who preferred the fatigues of a long journey, and inconveniences of a foreign land to the odious presence of his parent. He now regrets the distance from him: for he was without friends,

friends, an alien, a poor, hungry, naked vagabond.

At length (so instructive is misery) he *came to himself*, saith the scripture. He became *compos mentis*, of a right mind; he thought reasonably: for before he was mad, as wild and mad as great plenty, high health, and unbounded liberty could make him; which, as I observed, are very apt to turn young heads, but pain and hunger tame the wildest natures, and that effect they soon had upon our young *swine-herd*. They brought him to himself, and to a sober sense of things. So we read, *And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants*<sup>1</sup>.

His serious thoughts began, you see, with comparing his present troubles with the happiness of a regular life. This reflection is common, as it is natural: and I am persuaded, that there are few old offenders, who have not often made it, who have not often compared the slavery of sin, its meanneis, its drudgery, its maladies, with the peace and joy of innocence. But the misfortune is, they do not pursue these

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 17, 18, 19.



thoughts to a consequence. They rail at the world, but do not renounce it: they censure its vanities, but they do not forsake them. They see nothing, they say, in this world to be fond of, they are weary of it, and heartily disgusted with the bad usage they have met there.—It is very true that the world gives occasion enough for such complaints: but those who make them most, are often very worldly-minded men. They rail at the world, only because they cannot enjoy it. Their condemning it is the voice of disappointed lust, of baffled concupiscence, and not of aspiring charity. Those who exult in the possession of riches, or repine for want of them, are both alike covetous. Those who love the world, because they enjoy it; and those who hate the world, because they want it, are equally slaves to it. These latter sometimes talk the language of morality, and say, as they have cause enough, how vain and vexatious they have found it: but they will not do themselves the violence necessary for a hearty and effectual renouncing it. They will not *rise* from the mire of sloth and sensuality, they will not burst the bands of evil habits, and break through the snares in which they have involved themselves; but after some feeble struggles sink down again; their good purposes vanish, and all their conversions end in wishing they were converted.

Not

Not so our exemplary penitent. He arose, he went to his father, though the journey was long, and tedious, and painful as poverty, nakedness, and famine, could make it. But it was better to suffer in penance than sinning, in returning than staying away. So he arose and went to his father.

You know the sequel of the story, which is full of comfort and encouragement for all repentant prodigals, as it gives them the most convincing assurances of a kind reception when they return to their heavenly father, and of an absolute remission of their former extravagance, if they have but learnt, from the misery it has brought on them, to be more dutiful for the future. But I insist no farther, and recommend it to your private meditation; beseeching Almighty God that all we, who have gone astray like this prodigal, may like him return penitent to our heavenly father, in a full assurance of forgiveness and favour, through *Jesus Christ our Lord.*



## DISCOURSE XXXIV.

*Fast Sermon preached before the KING.*

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2 CHRON. xxx. 5, 6.

*Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord,—— and said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?*

**T**HUS spoke the king of Judah, when, being invaded by numerous armies, he had proclaimed a fast throughout his kingdom; that, as all the strength of his subjects was united in his royalty for their common defence, so they might all, in the most solemn manner, join and unite with him in devotion, to implore upon his arms the divine blessing and assistance, without which (he knew) all their military preparations, however formidable in the fight of men, would avail nothing against the danger  
that

that threatened them. Full of this pious sentiment, and zealous to impress it on the minds of his subjects, he stood in the congregation in the house of the Lord, and said: *O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?*

In this passage the great doctrine of an *over-ruling Providence* was proposed by the king to his people, as a seasonable subject for their meditation, upon the solemn fast-day which he had instituted. It is now again proposed upon the same account, and shall be treated with the same view, after we have first made some remarks upon the previous story of Jehoshaphat: who was a pious prince, habitually pious; for we read in the sacred annals that he walked in the commandments of the Lord, and was zealous in the offices of religion<sup>1</sup>: and yet the sudden danger his kingdom was exposed to, quickened and invigorated his devotion. It is said upon this occasion, that *he feared, and set himself to seek the Lord*<sup>2</sup>. Which last clause the Vulgate renders more distinctly, *Totum se contulit ad rogandum Dominum*. He applied his whole mind to invoke the Deity.

As to what is here related of the *fear* which seized him upon the first news of the enemies approach, that is not exemplary: nor indeed

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xvii. 4, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 3.



is it the most commendable motive to religion : but neither is it altogether blameable, being such as human frailty often stands in need of : and when it takes this right turn, and leads the mind into devotion ; that will soon infuse more generous sentiments. For devotion enlarges the heart, elevates the spirits, and induces serenity and assurance from the consciousness it brings of divine favour and protection. And such was the effect which it wrought in the mind of this religious king, as is shewed in the sequel of his story, where we find him so elated with sure presages of victory, that he encouraged all about him, and spread his own valour throughout the nation.

However, as has been said, his first emotion upon the news of danger was that of *fear*. But though it had not been so, though he had taken the alarm with a more martial temper, even with the firmest intrepidity and ardour of spirit ; yet still the religious sentiments to which he immediately had recourse, would have been equally seasonable, and even necessary for his conduct. All the *passions*, inasmuch as they are *passions*, need the guidance of a superior principle. If *fear* has its faults, so has *courage* too, till right reason interposes to direct its motions : without this it is blind, rash, precipitate, and may prove as ruinous by its presumption, as fear by its despondency.

A vigorous circulation of the blood causing a redundancy of the animal spirits will give an animal bravery; but this is merely constitutional, and not in our power to command. Right reason only can confer a stable, genuine fortitude, a fortitude, which maintaining an inward serenity amidst outward perturbations, will preserve the mind in the full possession of itself, in the clear use of its faculties: a fortitude, which will not only repress all dispiriting *fear*, but also restrain the impetuosity of *courage*: and, in a word, controlling all the passions, will aim them aright to the end intended.

Now, in order to do this effectually, the whole mind must be in a good degree rectified. Right reason must preside, and deliberate upon the summit of things: it must weigh all our interests with the dangers that threaten them: it must compute what powers we have for our defence: and, above all, what well-grounded hopes we have in him, who is the *source of all power*, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Thus reason will lead us into religion, which *alone sets all things in their true light*. For raising up our minds to the *first cause*, the creator and governor of the world, it shews us, in that situation, as from his throne, how all things depend upon his will, and are governed by his power; from whence it infers, “that we must  
“ receive his will for our law, in order to en-  
“ gage



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“ gage his power for our protection.” It was with this view, and to inculcate this inference, that the good Jehoshaphat pronounced the awful words which you have heard in the text : *O Lord, God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven ? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the beathen ? and in thine hand is not there power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee ?*

The putting this in the form of a question was intended as a more pathetic affirmation. The supremacy of the divine Majesty, and the irresistible power wherewith he governs the universe, is hereby emphatically represented as an *unquestionable* truth, which needed no arguments to prove it, but was itself a principle to be argued from.

There are in all sciences certain primitive truths, which are admitted for axioms, because they are obvious to every understanding, and therefore need no proof themselves ; but on the contrary serve to prove whatever is rightly inferred from them. If, for instance, a physician were to convince some very indolent patient of the necessity of frequent exercise in order to recover or to preserve his health ; he would not begin his discourse with an anatomical account of the bones, and the muscles by which exercise is performed, in order to prove to him that he really has a *locomotive faculty*. The patient  
must

must be more than indolent and sedentary, who would require such a course of argument.

So likewise in morality, which prescribes a salutary regimen for the mind, the fundamental principles are so well known, so self-evident, that generally speaking, all attempts to prove them are superfluous, and often weaken their force by seeming to call them in question. Jehoshaphat therefore begins his speech with a positive assertion of an over-ruling Providence, as a truth unquestionable: and this he does in a devout appeal to God himself, “*Art not thou* “*God in heaven? rulest not thou over all the* “*kingdoms, &c.*” Thus he elevates his audience to a contemplation of the divinity, as well knowing, that in such contemplation, his superintending providence, with those consoling, or tremendous consequences which directly flow from it, would be imprinted upon their minds, being a constituent part of the notion we form of the Supreme Being.

But men, alas! forget God; they forget his dominion over them: they live, as if they had no dependance upon him. Yet however they may neglect this capital truth, they cannot totally efface it from their minds. For although, while they are dissipated in the pursuits of the animal life, they commonly lose sight of it: although, I say, secular cares or sensual pleasures do for a time obstruct their attention to  
it;



it ; yet when danger and distress call them home to themselves, and turn their thoughts inwards ; then they become sensible of an over-ruling Providence ; then they feel and acknowledge the irresistible hand of the Almighty in the troubles he inflicts. Thus we read in the book of Jonah, how the tempests taught even the heathen mariners to call upon God for deliverance, when they despaired of safety from human means. And this is so natural, and so common an effect of such terrors, that in the prayer appointed by our liturgy to be used at sea in a storm, the public devotion is thus expressed. “ We confess, that when we have been  
 “ safe, and seen all things quiet about us, we  
 “ have forgot thee, our God ; and refused to  
 “ hearken to the still voice of thy word, and  
 “ to obey thy commandments. But now, we  
 “ see how terrible thou art in all thy works of  
 “ wonder, the great God to be feared above  
 “ all : and therefore we adore thy divine Ma-  
 “ jesty, acknowledging thy power, and im-  
 “ ploring thy goodness. Help, Lord, and  
 “ save us for thy mercy’s sake.”

Every other appearance of imminent danger will naturally excite the same sentiments. For men are so constituted, that the pressure of any heavy calamity will awaken in them a sense of the Deity : it will compel them, as by a sudden instinct, to invoke his aid ; and actually practise religion,

religion, although before perhaps they had not so much as professed it.

These are precious moments for those who improve them to a total conversion. And great pity it is that they should ever fail of that effect; most fatal will it prove if they always fail of it: and of this there is no small danger, because such sudden sparks of devotion struck out by instant necessity, are very transient: they soon vanish, and leave the mind in its former darkness, if they are not cultivated with assiduous care and persevering piety. The mind thus forcibly turned to God, must afterwards do itself violence to persist in its attention to him. For true religion is a voluntary homage to the Creator. It is not the servile dread of an avenging justice, but a free generous submission and resignation of ourselves to the bounteous author of our being.

Those forcible impressions which are made on the mind in the article of distress, are *warnings* from God, merciful *warnings*, which require our acceptance and co-operation by repenting of our past errors, and devoting our future lives to his service.

And this is the great work to which this solemn day is dedicated. Secular affairs are now suspended. Diversions are prohibited. And abstinence is enjoined, that our minds may be perfectly vacant to religion. We should now cast  
out



out every other thought to make room for the contemplation of our Creator, our Governor, and our Judge. His goodness, his power, and his justice should fill our minds. Conscience will then take its proper ascendant, and suggest conclusions, which are of unspeakable importance. For conscience is the *substitute* of God, our appointed *monitor* on his behalf. Men are ignorant and false; they unjustly censure, or servilely flatter us: but conscience is a faithful witness, a sure instructor, a bosom-counsellor, which will extricate us from all our difficulties, and establish us in perfect peace and joy, if we faithfully follow its guidance: for it will guide us to the throne of grace, and cast us prostrate in humble adoration before the Divine Majesty, who will accept our homage, and will reward it with greater knowledge of himself. We shall then be enlightened from above. The grand scene of eternity will stand ever open to our view, and regulate all our conduct. Worldly affairs will then be known for the least of our interests: yet far from becoming negligent upon that account, we shall on the contrary quicken our industry with the motives of religion, and perform what is incumbent on us in our several stations, as a principal part of our service to God. Nor shall we then be solicitous about the success; but committing our interests, and resigning ourselves to the supreme disposer

disposer of all events, we shall silence every anxious thought with the pious address in the text. *Art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?*

END OF VOL. I.