



George Whitefield. A.B.

THE
DOCTRINES
OF THE
GOSPEL

Asserted and Vindicated,

In Eighteen GENUINE

SERMONS,

Upon the following SUBJECTS, viz.

- I. *Of Justification by Christ.*
- II. *The Almost Christian.*
- III. *The Extent and Reasonableness of Self-Denial.*
- IV. *The Necessity and Benefits of Religious Societies.*
- V. *Intercession every Christian's Duty.*
- VI. *The Great Duty of Family-Religion.*
- VII. *The Heinous Sin of profane Cursing and Swearing.*
- VIII. *Thankfulness for Mercies received, a necessary Duty.*
- IX. *The Eternity of Hell-Torments.*

- X. *Directions how to bear Sermons.*
- XI. *Worldly Business no Plea for Neglect of Religion.*
- XII. *The Marks of the New Birth.*
- XIII. *The Power of Christ's Resurrection.*
- XIV. *The Duty of searching the Scriptures.*
- XV. *Satan's Devices.*
- XVI. *The Knowledge of Jesus Christ the best Knowledge.*
- XVII. *The heinous Sin of Drunkenness.*
- XVIII. *The Holy Ghost the Privilege of all Believers now, as well as formerly.*

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L O N D O N :

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M. DCC. XXXIX.



T H E
P R E F A C E.



*W*HEN Religion is attack'd on all Sides; by the openly Prophane, such as make a Mock at Sin, and set the Almighty at Defiance; by professed Atheists, those Fools that say there is no God; by the miserly Worldling, who makes his Religion truckle to his Avarice; by the false Hypocrite, who assumes a Shew of Godliness, merely to serve some mean and selfish Purpose: Since, I say, Religion is thus hardly beset; 'tis presum'd that an Attempt to vindicate her Honour, to assert the Purity of her Doctrines, to illustrate her native Beauty and Loveliness, and recommend her as an Object worthy the Choice of every Man, will appear at least pardonable. Many are the Ways by which the God of this World endeavours to lead Men blindfold to Destruction, and surely it will not be thought a Work of Supererogation to expose those Deceits and Delusions, and disperse those Mists of Error, that cloud the Understanding, and bring the Safety of our Souls into the utmost Peril. Whoever professes himself, or would be thought a Christian, must confess, that there is no other Name given among Men, whereby we can be

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saved, but that of the Blessed Jesus; and that the Doctrines and Precepts contained in the Gospel, are the only Rules for his Conduct and Practice, the Objects of his Faith, and the Foundation of his Hope and Happiness. He whose Persuasion is thus grounded, will not be displeas'd to see the Way of his Salvation made easy, and the Things which he is to believe and practice, proved, explained, and enforced from Reason and irrefragable Argument.

The Design then of the following Sermons, is to establish such Truths as of late have been made the Subjects of Ridicule and Banter by the profane Wits and Scoffers of the Age; to set right those who have been misled by Sophistical Arguments of Men that design nothing less than the Honour of God and the Good of Souls; and to vindicate the Honour of the Gospel, to assert the Truth and Reasonableness of its Doctrines, and to defend its Author, the Blessed Jesus, against the Attacks of his profess'd Enemies, and the base, cowardly, or treacherous Practices of his false, or weak Friends.

S E R-



S E R M O N I.

Of Justification by CHRIST.

But ye are justified,——I Cor. vi. 11.

The whole Verse runs thus: —— *And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.*



It has been objected by some who are so unhappy as to dissent from, nay, I may add, by others also, who actually are Friends to the present Ecclesiastical Establishment, that the Ministers of the Church of *land* preach themselves, and not *Christ Jesus* our Lord; that they entertain their People with Lectures of mere Morality, without declaring to them the glad Tidings of Salvation by *Jesus Christ*. How well grounded such an Objection may be, is not my Business to enquire: All I shall say at present to the Point is this; namely, that whenever such a grand Objection is urged against the
B whole

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whole Body of the Clergy in general, every honest Minister of *Jesus Christ* should do his utmost to cut off all manner of *Occasion* from those that desire an *Occasion* to take Offence at us; that so by hearing us continually sounding forth the Word of Truth, and declaring with all Boldness and Assurance of Faith, that *there is no other Name given under Heaven, whereby they can be saved, but that of Jesus Christ*; they may be ashamed of this their same confident Boasting against us.

It was an Eye to this Objection, joined with the Agreeableness and Delightfulness of the Subject (for who can but delight to talk of that which the blessed Angels desire to look into?) that induced me to discourse a little on that great and fundamental Article of our Faith; namely, our being freely justified from all our Sins by the precious Blood of *Jesus Christ*. *But ye are washed, says the Apostle, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.*

The Words beginning with the Particle *But*, have plainly a Reference to something that went before; it may not therefore be improper, before I descend to Particulars, to consider the Words, as they stand related to the Context. The Apostle, in the Verses immediately foregoing, had been reckoning up many notorious Sins, such as Drunkenness, Adultery, Fornication, and such like; the Commission of which, without a true and hearty Repentance, he tells them plainly, would certainly shut them out of the Kingdom of God. But then, lest the sincere *Corinthian* Converts, who we find were once infamous for most or all of these Vices, should either on the one hand grow spiritually proud by seeing themselves

selves differ from their unconverted Brethren, and therefore should be tempted to set them at nought, and to say with the self-conceited Hypocrites in the Prophet, *Come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou*: Or, on the other hand, by looking back on the Multitude of their past Offences, should be apt to think their Sins were too many and grievous to be forgiven: He first, in order to keep them humble, reminds them of their sad Estate before Conversion, telling them in plain Terms, *Such* (or as is might better be read, *these things*) *were some of you*; that is, Not only one, but all that sad Catalogue of Vices I have been before drawing up, some of you were only guilty of; but then, at the same time, to preserve them from Despair, behold he brings them glad Tidings of great Joy: *But ye are washed, says he, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.*

The former Part of which Text, namely, our being *Sanctified*, I did, in some measure, treat of, when I discoursed on *the Nature and Necessity of the New Birth*: I come now, as was before proposed, to enlarge on the latter Part of it, namely, of our being freely *justified* from all our Sins, by the precious Blood of *Jesus Christ*: *but are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

From which Words I shall endeavour to consider these Three Things.

I. *First*, What is meant by the Word *Justified*.

II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to prove, that all Mankind in general, and every individual Person in particular, stands in need of being *justified*.

III. *Thirdly and lastly*, That there is no Possibility of obtaining this *Justification*, which

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we so much want, but by the *precious Blood* of Jesus Christ.

I. *First* then, I am to consider what is meant by the Word *Justified*.

But *ye are Justified*, says the Apostle; which is all the same as though he had said, You have your Sins forgiven, and are looked upon by God, as though you never had offended him at all: For that is the Meaning of the Word *Justified*, in almost all the other Passages of Holy Scripture where this Word is mentioned. Thus when this same Apostle writes to the *Romans*, he tells them, that whom God calls, those he also *justifies*; that is, forgives them their Sins: And again, speaking of *Abraham's Faith*, he tells them, that *Abraham believed on Him that justifies the Ungodly*: That is, who forgives the ungodly Man his Sins. Which Expression the Apostle himself explains by a Quotation out of the *Psalms*; *Blessed is the Man*, says he, *to whom the Lord imputeth no Sin*. From all which Proofs, and many others that might be urged, it is evident that being *justified*, or having our Sins forgiven, are the same as to Signification: So that what the Apostle here affirms of the *Corinthian Converts*, namely, that they were *justified*, amounts to what all of us profess to hold when we just now repeated our *Creed*, and each of us declared in his own Person, *I believe the Forgiveness of Sins*. Which leads me directly to the

II. *Second* Thing proposed, namely, to endeavour to prove that all Mankind in general, and every individual Person in particular, stands in need of being thus *justified*, or having his Sins forgiven.

And

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And indeed the Apostle supposes this in the Words of the Text: *But ye are justified*, says he, thereby implying, that the *Corinthians* (and consequently all Mankind, there being no Difference, as will be shewn hereafter) stood in need of being thus *justified*.

But, not to rest in bare Suppositions, in my farther Enlargements on this Second Head, I shall endeavour to prove that we all stand in need of being *justified*, on two Accounts: First, as we stand chargeable with Original — Secondly, as we have been guilty of Actual Sin.

And first, I affirm that we all stand in need of being *justified*, as we are chargeable with Original Sin: Which, though a Proposition that might be denied by a self-justifying Infidel, who *will not come to Christ that he may have Life*, and stoop to those Terms God has graciously settled for his Salvation; yet can never be denied by any one who believes that St. Paul's Epistles were written by Divine Inspiration; where we are told, that *in Adam all die*; that is, *Adam's Sin* was imputed to all: And lest we should forget to make a particular Application, it is farther added in another Place, that *there is none that doth good* (that is, by Nature) *no, not one*: That we are *all gone out of the Way*; namely, of Original Righteousness; and are by Nature the Children of Wrath. And even *David*, who was the Man after God's own Heart, and if any one could, might surely plead an Exemption from this universal Corruption, yet confesses, that he was *shapen in Wickedness* and that *in Sin did his Mother conceive him*. I mention but one more Text, as immediately applicable to the present Purpose, St.

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Paul, in his Epistle to the *Romans* says, that *Death* came upon all Men, for the *Disobedience* of one Man, namely, of *Adam*, even upon those, says he, (that is, little Children) who had not sinned after the *Similitude* of *Adam's* *Transgression*; or, had not been guilty of actual Sin, and therefore could not be punished with temporal *Death* (which came into the World, as this same *Apostle* elsewhere informs us, only by Sin) had not the *Disobedience* of our first Parents been imputed to them. So that what has been said on this Point seems to be excellently summed up in that Article of our Church, where she declares,
“ That *Original Sin* standeth not in the follow-
“ ing of *Adam*, but it is the Fault and Cor-
“ ruption of the Nature of every Man, that
“ naturally is ingendred of the Offspring of *A-*
“ *dam*; whereby Man is very far gone from
“ Original Righteousness, and is of his own
“ Nature inclined to Evil, so that the Flesh
“ lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and
“ therefore in every Person born into this World
“ it deserveth God's Wrath and Damnation.

I have been the more particular in treating of this Point, because it is the very Foundation of the *Christian* Religion: For I am verily persuaded, that it is nothing but a Want of being well grounded in the Doctrine of *Original Sin*, and of the helpless, nay, I may say damnable, Condition each of us come into the World in, that makes so many Infidels oppose, and so many that call themselves *Christians*, so very Lukewarm in their Love and Affections to *Jesus Christ*. It is this, and I could almost say this only, that makes Infidelity abound amongst us so much as it does: For alas! we are mistaken, if we imagine that
Men

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Men *now* commence or continue Infidels, and set corrupted Reason, in Opposition to Revelation, merely for want of Evidence, (for I believe it might easily be proved, that a modern Unbeliever is the most credulous Creature living;) No, it is only for want of an humble Mind, of a Sense of their Original Depravity, and an Unwillingness to own themselves so depraved, that makes them so obstinately shut their Eyes against the Light of the Glorious Gospel of *Christ*. Whereas, on the contrary, were they but once pricked to the Heart with a due and lively Sense of their natural Corruption and Liableness to Condemnation, we should have them no more scoffing at Divine Revelation, and looking on it as an idle Tale; but they would cry out with convicted *Paul* — *Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?* Or, with the trembling Jailor, on a like Occasion, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do to be saved?* It was an Error in this Fundamental Point, that made so many resist the Evidence the Son of God himself gave of his Divine Mission, when he tabernacled amongst us. Every Word he spake, every Action he did, every Miracle he wrought, proved that he came from God. And why then did so many harden their Hearts, and would not believe his Report? Why, He himself informs us, when he tells us, *They will not come to me that they may have Life*: They will obstinately stand out against those Means God had appointed for their Salvation: And *St. Paul* tells us, that *if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost*: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not; lest the Light of the Glorious Gospel of *Christ*, who is the Image of God, should shine upon them — 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

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But to return from this Digression, which I could not very well avoid making; if it be asked, How it suits with the Divine Goodness, to impute the Guilt of one Man's Sin, to an innocent Posterity? I should think it sufficient, to make use of the Apostle's Words: *Nay, but O Man, Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* But, to come to a more direct Reply — Persons would do well to consider, that in this first Covenant God made with Man, *Adam* acted as a publick Person, as the common Representative of all Mankind, and consequently we must stand or fall with him. Had he continued in his Obedience, and not eaten the forbidden Fruit, the Benefits of that Obedience would doubtless have been imputed to us: But since he did not persist in it, but broke the Covenant God made with him, and us in Him; who dares charge the Righteous Judge of all the Earth with Injustice, for imputing that to us also? But I shall have an Occasion by and by, to vindicate the Divine Proceedings in this Point more particularly, and therefore I chuse to wave all farther Consideration of it in this Place, and proceed to the other Thing proposed under this Second general Head, namely,

II. To endeavour to prove, That we all stand in need of being *justified*, not only as we are chargeable with *Original*, but as we stand convicted of *Actual Sin*.

That God, as he made Man, has a Right also to demand his Obedience, I suppose, is a Truth no one will deny: That he hath also given us both a natural and a written Law, whereby we are to be judged, cannot be questioned by any one

one who believes St. Paul's Epistle to the *Romans* to be of Divine Authority: For in this we are told of a Law written in the Heart, and a Law given by *Moses*; and that each of us hath broken these Laws, is too evident from our own sad and frequent Experience. Accordingly the Holy Scriptures inform us, that *there is no man which liveth and sinneth not*; that *in many things we offend all*; that *if we say we have no Sin we deceive ourselves*, and such like. And if we are thus found Offenders against God, it follows that we stand in need of Forgiveness for thus offending Him; unless we suppose God should enact Laws, and at the same Time not care whether they are obeyed or no; which is as absurd as to suppose that a Prince should establish Laws for the proper Government of his Country, and yet let every Violator of them come off with Impunity. But God has not dealt so foolishly with his Creatures: No, as he gives us a Law, he demands our Obedience to that Law, and has obliged us universally to obey it, under no less a Penalty than incurring his Curse and eternal Death for every Breach of it. For thus speak the Scriptures: *Cursed is he that continueth not in all Things that are written in this Book to do them*; as the Scripture also speaketh in another Place, *The Soul that sinneth, it shall die*. Now it has already been proved that we have all of us sinned; and therefore, unless some Means can be found out to satisfy God's Justice we must perish eternally.

Let us here then stand awhile, and see in what a deplorable Condition each of us comes into the World, and still continues, till we are put into a State of Grace: For surely nothing can well be supposed more deplorable than to be born under the Curse of God; to be charged with *Original Guilt*;

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Guilt; and not only so, but to be convicted as actual Breakers of God's Law, the least Breach of which justly deserves Eternal Damnation. Surely this can be but a melancholy Prospect to view ourselves in, and must put us upon contriving some Means whereby we may satisfy and appease our offended Judge. But what must those Means be? Shall we repent? Alas! There is not one Word mentioned about Repentance in the first Covenant: *The Day that thou eatest thereof, says God, thou shalt surely die.* So that if God be true, unless there be some Way found out to satisfy his Justice, we must perish, and there is no Room left for to expect a Change of Mind in God, though we should seek it with Tears. Well then, if Repentance will not do, shall we plead the Law of Works? Alas! *By the Law shall no Man living be justified: For by the Law comes the Knowledge of Sin.* It is that which convicts and condemns, and therefore can by no means acquit, much less justify us. *Wherewith then shall we come before the Lord, and bow down before the Most High God, in order to procure the Forgiveness of our Sins? Shall we come before him with Calves of a Year old, with thousands of Rams, or ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? Alas! God has shewed thee, O Man, that this will not avail.* For he hath declared, *I will take no Bullock out of thy House, nor He-Goat out of thy Fold: For all the Beasts of the Forest are mine, and so are the Cattle upon a thousand Hills. Will not the Lord then be pleased to accept our First-born for our Transgression, the Fruits of our Bodies for the Sin of our Souls? Even this will not purchase our Pardon: For he has declared that the Children shall not bear the Iniquities of their Parents.* Besides, they are Sinners, and therefore,
fore,

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fore, being under the same Condemnation, equally stand in need of Forgiveness with ourselves. They are impure, and will the Lord accept the Blind and Lame for Sacrifice? *O wretched Men that we are! Who shall deliver us from this Body of Death? Why, I thank God, our Lord Jesus Christ.* Which naturally leads me to the *Third general Thing* proposed, which was to endeavour to prove,

III. That there is no Possibility of our obtaining this *Justification*, which we so much want, but by the *precious Blood* of our Lord *Jesus Christ*: *But ye are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

But this having been in some measure proved by what has been said under the foregoing Head, wherein I have shewn that neither our Repentance, Works, or Sacrifices could possibly take away, or make Attonement for our Sins; nothing remains for me to do under this Head, but to shew that the *Death of Jesus Christ* has done it for us.

And here I shall still have Recourse to the *Law and to the Testimony*. For after all the most subtle Disputations on either Side, nothing but the lively Oracles of God can give us any Satisfaction in this momentous Point: It being such an inconceivable Mystery, that the Eternal, only-begotten Son of God should die for sinful Man, that we durst not have presumed so much as to have thought of it, had not God revealed it in his holy Word. It is true, Reason may shew us the Wound, but Revelation only can lead us to the Means of our Cure. And though the Method God has been pleased to take to put us in a Way of being happy, may be to the Infidel a *Stumbling-block*, and to the wise Opiniator and Disputer of this World *Foolishness*; yet *Wisdom*, that is, the Dispensation of our Redemption

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demption, *will be justified*, or approved of, and submitted to *by all her truly wise and holy Children*, by every sincere and honest *Christian*.

But to come more directly to the Point before us. Two Things, as was before observed, we wanted, in order to make our Peace with God.

1. To be freed from the Guilt of *Original Sin*:
And,

2. From that Punishment we had most justly deserved for our *actual Breaches* of God's Law.

And both these (*Thanks be to God for this unspeakable Gift*) are abundantly secured to us by the Death and Passion of *Jesus Christ*. For what says the Scripture?

1. As to the First, or our being freed from the Guilt of *Original Sin* — It informs us, that *as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. And again, *As by the Disobedience of one Man, or by one Transgression, namely, that of Adam, many were made Sinners, so by the Ordinance of one, Jesus Christ, many were made righteous*. And again, *As by the Obedience of one Man, Judgment came upon all Men into Damnation; that is, all Men were condemned, on having Adam's Sin imputed to them: So by the Obedience of one, that is, Jesus Christ, the free Gift of Pardon and Peace come upon all Men unto Justification of Life*. Which, by the Way, clears up (as I promised to do before) that seeming Disagreement between God's Attributes, in imputing *Adam's Sin* to us, (namely, his Justice and Mercy) and wholly takes off that Imputation of Injustice, which wicked and ungodly Men would blasphemously cast upon the *Righteous Judge of all the Earth*. Had God indeed imputed *Adam's Sin* to his innocent Posterity, and left them to perish in it:

it: Had he looked upon and punished them as all Sinners, without providing them a Saviour, we might perhaps have had some Pretence to complain of his Severity, though we could not even then but acknowledge his Justice in the Punishment of Sin. But since *He has not dealt with us after our Deserts, nor rewarded us according to our Iniquity*: Since the same Revelation acquaints us, that *as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. Since the same God that informs us, that *Death came even upon those who had not sinned after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression*, declares likewise, that *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*, or put into a State of Salvation: I say since these Things are so, What Reason have such Worms as we to quarrel with the most High God? Doubtless no more than a condemned Criminal has to find fault with his Judge for condemning him for breaking the Law, only that he might give him the Pleasure of a Reprieve. No; as for God, his Ways are perfect, and his Dealings with his Creatures are *holy, just and good*; and as in all his Dispensations, so more especially in our Recovery from our fallen Estate by the Death of *Jesus*, we may justly say, *Mercy and Truth have met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other*. But

2. Pardon for our *actual Transgression* of God's Law was another Thing which we wanted to have secured to us, before we could be at Peace with God. And this the Holy Scriptures inform us is abundantly done by the Death of *Jesus Christ*. The Evangelical Prophet foretels that the promised Redeemer should be *wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities*; that *the Chastisement of our Peace should be upon him*; and that *by his Stripes*

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Stripes we should be healed, Isaiah liii. 6. The Angel at his Birth says, that he should save his People from their Sins: And St. Paul declares, that this is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners: And here in the Words of the Text, Such (or, as I observed before, these Things) were some of you; but ye are washed, &c — And St. Peter, alluding to the forementioned Passage of Isaiah, testifies of Christ, that His own Self bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead to Sin, should live unto Righteousness; by whose Stripes, says he, ye are healed; 1 Pet. ii. 24. And in another Place the same Apostle says, Neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among Men, whereby we must be saved, but the Name of Jesus Christ, Acts iv. 12. How God will be pleased to deal with the Gentiles who sit in Darkness and in the Shadow of Death, and on whom the Son of Righteousness never yet arose, is not for us to enquire. What have we to do to judge those that are without? To God's Mercy let us recommend them, and wait for a Solution of this Point till the Great Day of Accounts, when all God's Dispensations, both of Providence and Grace, will be fully cleared up, by Methods to us, it may be, at present unknown, because unrevealed. However, this we know, that the Judge of all the Earth will, most assuredly, do right.

But it is Time for me to draw towards a Conclusion.

I have now then, Brethren, by the Blessing of God, discoursed on the Words of the Text in the Method I proposed; and have in as plain a manner, as I could, shewn you what is meant by the
Word

Word *Justified*, that it signifies our having our Sins forgiven: And have also in some measure proved that we all stand in need of being thus *justified*, as we are chargeable with *Original*, and have been guilty of *Actual Sin*: And lastly, that nothing but the *precious Blood of Jesus Christ* has, or can procure this inestimable Privilege for us.

Many useful Inferences might be drawn from what has been delivered; but as I have detained you, I fear, too long already, permit me only to make a Reflection or two on what has been said, and I have done.

If then we are *freely justified* by the Death of *Jesus Christ*, let us here pause awhile; and as before we reflected on the *Misery*, let us now turn aside and admire the *Happiness* of Man. But alas! how am I lost to think that God the Father, where we were in a State of Enmity by *original*, and of Rebellion by our *actual Sins*, should notwithstanding yearn in his Bowels towards us his fallen, his apostate Creatures: And because nothing but an infinite Ransom could satisfy an infinitely offended Justice, should send his only and dear Son *Jesus Christ* (who is God, blessed for ever, and who had lain in his Bosom from all Eternity) to die a cursed, painful, ignominious Death, for us and for our Salvation! O who can avoid crying out, on the Consideration of this great Mystery of Godliness——*O the Depth of the Riches of God's Love* to us his wretched, miserable, undone Creatures! *How unsearchable is his Mercy, and his Loving Kindness past finding out!* Now know we of a Truth, O God, that thou hast loved us, *since thou hast not withheld thy Son, thy only Son Jesus Christ, from thus dying for us.*

But

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But as we admire the Father sending, let us likewise humbly and thankfully adore the Son coming, when sent to die for Man. But alas! what Thoughts can conceive, what Words express the infinite Greatness of that unparalleled Love, which drew the Son of God down from the Mansions of his Father's Glory to die for sinful Man! The Jews, when he only shed a Tear at poor Lazarus's Funeral, said, *Behold how he loved him*: How much more justly then may we cry out, *Behold how he loved us*, when he did not spare to shed not only a Tear, but his own precious Blood for us!

And can any poor returning Sinner, after this, despair of Mercy? What! can they see their Saviour hanging on a Tree with Arms stretched out to embrace them, and yet, upon their truly believing on him, doubt of finding Acceptance with him? No, away with all such dishonourable, such desponding Thoughts — Look on his Hands, bored with Pins of Iron; look on his Side, pierced with a cruel Spear, on purpose to unloose the Sluices of his Blood, and *open a Fountain for Sin, and for Uncleaness* — And then despair of Mercy if you can! No, do but believe on him with your whole Hearts; *Do not crucify Him afresh, and put him again to open Shame*, by leading wicked, lukewarm, ungodly Lives: In short, do but labour to attain *that Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord*; and then, *though your Sins be as Scarlet, yet shall they be as Wool; though they be as Crimson, yet shall they be whiter than Snow*.

Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant, &c.

S E R M O N II.

T H E

ALMOST CHRISTIAN:

O R, T H E

Danger of resting satisfied in any
State short of Perfection,

I N T H E

KNOWLEDGE and PRACTICE

O F T H E

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

*Be ye perfect. even as your Father which is in
Heaven is perfect. Mat. v. 6.*

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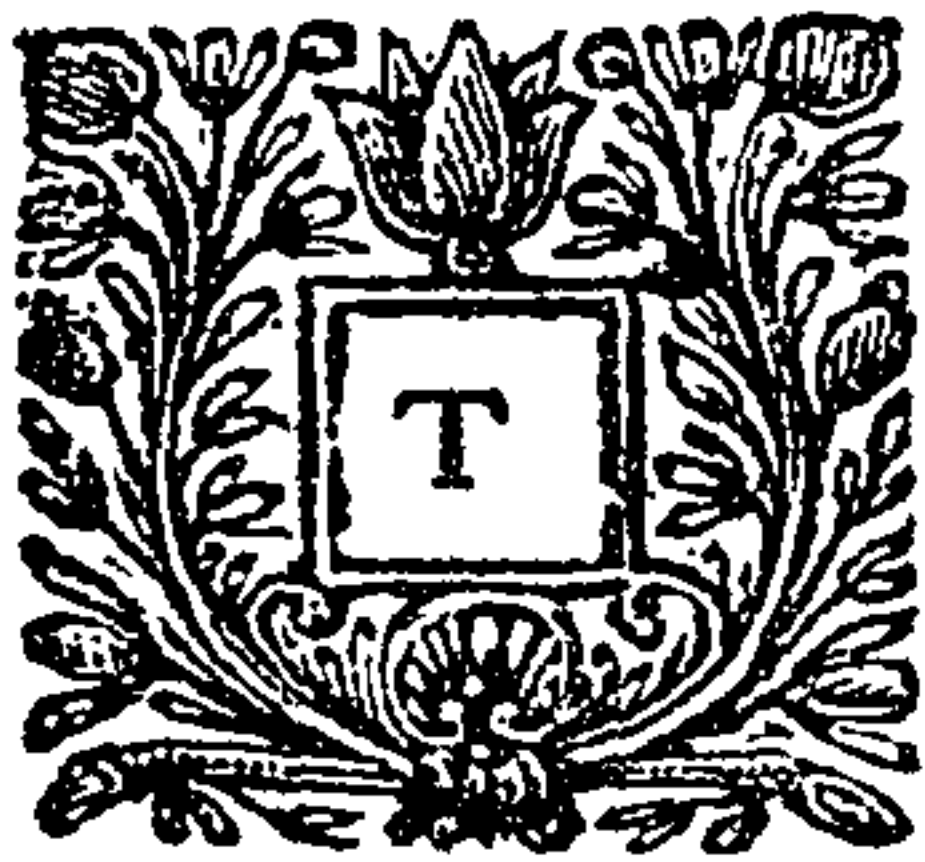


S E R M O N II.

The Almost CHRISTIAN.

A C T S xxvi. 28.

Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.



THESE Words contain the ingenuous Confession of King *Agrippa*; which having some Reference to what went before, it may not be improper to relate to you the Substance of the preceding Verses, to which these Words are so closely connected.

The Chapter then, out of which the Text is taken, contains an admirable Account the great *St. Paul* gives of his wonderful Conversion from *Judaism* to *Christianity*, when he was called to make his Defence before *Festus* and another *Gentile* Governor. Our Blessed Lord had long since foretold, that *When the Son of Man should be lifted up, his Disciples should be brought before Kings, for his Name's sake, for a Testimony unto them.* And very
good

good was the Design of Infinite Wisdom in thus ordaining it: For *Christianity* being from the very Beginning a Doctrine of the Cross, the Princes and Rulers of the Earth thought themselves too high to be instructed by such mean Teachers, or too happy to be disturbed by such unwelcome Truths; and therefore would have always continued Strangers to *Jesus Christ, and him Crucified*, had not the Apostles, by being arraigned before them, gained Opportunities of preaching to them *Jesus and the Resurrection*. St. Paul knew full well that this was the main Reason, why his blessed Master permitted his Enemies at this time to arraign him at a publick Bar: And therefore, in Compliance with the Divine Will, thinks it not sufficient, barely to make his Defence, but endeavours at the same Time to convert his Judges. And this he did with such Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power, that *Festus*, unwilling to be convinced by the strongest Evidence, cries out with a loud Voice, “ Paul, *much Learning doth* “ *make thee mad*”. To which the brave Apostle (like a true Follower of the Holy *Jesus*) meekly replies, *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the Words of Truth and Soberness*. But in all Probability seeing King *Agrippa* more affected with his Discourse, and observing in him an Inclination to know the Truth, he applies himself more particularly to him: *The King, says he, knoweth of these Things; before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of those Things are hidden from him*. And then, that if possible he might compleat his wished-for Conversion, he, with an inimitable Strain of Oratory, addresses himself still more closely — *King Agrippa, believest thou*
the

the Prophets? I know that thou believest them. At which the Passions of the King began to work so strongly, that he was obliged, in open Court, to own himself affected by the Prisoner's Preaching, and ingenuously to cry out — Paul, *almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

Which Words, taken with the Context, afford us a lively Representation of the different Reception the Doctrine of *Christ's* Ministers, who come in the Power and Spirit of *St. Paul*, meets with now-a-days in the Minds of Men. For notwithstanding they, like this great Apostle, *speak forth the Words of Truth and Soberness*; and with such Energy and Power, that *all their Adversaries cannot gainsay or resist*; yet, too many, with the most noble *Festus* before-mentioned, being, like him, either too proud to be taught, or too sensual, too careless, or too wordly-minded to live up to their Doctrine — in order to excuse themselves cry out, that *much Learning, much Study, or, what is more unaccountable, much Piety, hath made them mad.* And though, blessed be God! all do not thus disbelieve our Report; yet amongst those many others, who gladly receive the Word of Truth and Soberness, there are so few who arrive at any higher Degree of Piety than that of *Agrippa*, or are any farther persuaded than to be *almost Christians* — that I cannot but think it highly necessary to warn my dear Hearers of the Danger of such a State. And therefore, from the Words of the Text, shall endeavour to consider these three Things:

First, What is meant by an almost Christian.

6 *The Almost* CHRISTIAN.

Secondly, What are the chief Reasons, why so many are no more than *almost Christians*.

Thirdly, I shall consider the Ineffectualness, Danger, Absurdity, and Uneasiness that attends those that are but *almost Christians*.

Fourthly, I shall conclude with a general Exhortation, to set all upon striving not only to be *almost*, but *altogether Christians*.

I. And first I am to consider, What is meant by an *almost Christian*.

An *almost Christian* then, if we consider him in respect to his Duty to God, is one that halts between two Opinions, that wavers between *Christ* and the World; that would reconcile *God and Mammon*, that is, Light and Darkness, *Christ and Beelial*. It is true, He has an Inclination to Religion, but then he is very cautious how he goes too far in it: His false Heart is always crying out, Spare thyself, do thyself no Harm. He prays indeed, that *God's Will may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven*: But then, notwithstanding, he is very partial in his Obedience, and fondly hopes that God will not *be extreme to mark every thing that he wilfully does amiss*; though an inspired Apostle has told him, that he that wilfully *offends in one Point, is guilty of all*. Above all, he is one that depends much on outward Ordinances, and upon that account looks upon himself as *Righteous, and despises Others*; though at the same Time he may be as great a Stranger to the Divine Life as any other Person whatsoever. In short, he is fond of the *Form*, but never experiences the *Power of Godliness* in his Heart: He goes on Year after Year, feeding and attending
on

on the Means of Grace ; but then, like *Pharaoh's Lean Kine*, is never the better, but rather the worse for them.

If you consider him in respect to his Neighbours, he is one that is strictly just to all ; but then this does not proceed from any Love to God or Regard to Man, but only out of a Principle of Self-Love ; because he knows Dishonesty will spoil his Reputation, and consequently hinder his Thriving in the World.

He is one that depends much on being Negatively Good, and contents himself with the Consciousness of having done no one any Harm ; though he reads in the Gospel, that *the Unprofitable Servant was cast into utter Darkness*, and the barren Fig-tree cursed, and *dried up*, from the Roots, not for bearing *bad*, but *no Fruit*.

He is no Enemy to charitable Contributions, if not too frequently recommended : But then he is quite unacquainted with the kind Offices of *Visiting the Sick and Imprisoned, Cloathing the Naked, and Relieving the Hungry*. He thinks that these Things belong only to the Clergy, though his own false Heart tells him, that nothing but Pride keeps him from exercising these Acts of Humility, and that *Jesus Christ*, in the 25th Chapter of *St. Matthew*, condemns Persons to everlasting Punishment, not for being Fornicators, Drunkards, or Extortioners, but merely for neglecting these charitable Offices, *When the Son of Man, says our Blessed Lord himself, shall come in his Glory, He shall set the Sheep on his Right Hand, and the Goats on his Left. And then shall He say unto them on his Left Hand, Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his An-*

gels : For I was an Hungred, and ye gave me no Meat ; I was Thirsty, and ye gave me no Drink ; I was a Stranger, and ye took me not in ; Naked, and ye cloathed me not ; Sick and in Prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also say, Lord, when saw we Thee an Hungred, or a-thirst, or a Stranger, or naked, or sick, or in Prison, and did not minister unto thee ? Then shall he answer them, Verily I say un'o you, inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my Brothers, ye did it not unto me : And these shall go away into everlasting Punishment. I thought proper to give you this whole Passage of Scripture at large, because our Saviour lays such a particular Strefs upon it ; and yet notwithstanding it is so little regarded, that were we to judge by the Practice of *Christians*, one should be tempted to think there were no such Verses in the *Bible*.

But to proceed in our Character of an *almost Christian* : If we consider him in respect to himself ; as before we said he was strictly honest to his Neighbour ; so he is likewise strictly sober in himself : But then both his Honesty and Sobriety proceed from the same Principle of a false Self-Love. It is true, he *runs not into the same Excess of Riot* with other Men ; but then it is not out of Obedience to the Laws of God, but either because his Constitution will not away with Intemperance ; or rather because he is cautious of forfeiting his Reputation, or unfitting himself for temporal Business. But though he is so prudent as to avoid Intemperance and Excess, for the Reasons before mentioned ; yet he always goes to the Extremity of what is lawful. It is true, he is no Drunkard ; but then he has no *Christian Self-Denial*

Denial to plead for him. He cannot think our Saviour to be so austere a Master, as to deny us to indulge ourselves in some Particulars: And so by this Means he is kept out of a Sense of true Religion, as much as if he lived in Debauchery, or any other Crime whatever. As to settling his Principles as well as Practice, he is guided more by the World, than by the Word of God. As for his Part, he cannot think the Way to Heaven so narrow as some would make it: And therefore considers not so much what Scripture requires, as what such and such a good Man does, or what will best suit his own corrupt Inclinations. Upon this Account, he is not only very cautious himself, but likewise very careful of young Converts, whose Faces are set Heavenward; and therefore is always acting the Devil's Part, and bidding them *spare themselves*, though they are doing no more than what the Scripture strictly requires of them to do. The Consequence of which is, that *he suffers not himself to enter into the Kingdom of God, and they that are entering in he binds.*

Thus lives the *almost Christian*: Not that I can say, I have fully described him to you; but from these Out-lines and Sketches of his Character, if your Consciences have done their proper Offices, and make a particular Application of what has been said to your own Hearts, I cannot but fear that some of you may observe some Features in his Picture, odious as it is, too near resembling your own; and therefore cannot but hope, at the same Time, that you join with the Apostle in the Words immediately following the Text, and with yourselves *not only almost, but altogether Christians.*

II. But it is Time for me to proceed to the *Second general Thing* proposed; namely, to consider the Reasons why so many are no more than *almost Christians*.

2. And the first Reason I shall mention is, because so many set out with false Notions of Religion; and though they live in a *Christian Country*, yet know not what *Christianity* is. This perhaps may be esteemed a hard Saying, but Experience sadly evinces the Truth of it; for some place Religion in being of this or that Communion; more in Morality; most in a Round of Duties, and a Model of Performances; and few, very few acknowledge it to be, what it really is, a thorough inward Change of Nature, a Divine Life, a Vital Participation of *Jesus Christ*, an Union of the Soul with God; which the Apostle expresses by saying, *He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit*. Hence it happens that so many, even of the most knowing Professors, when you come to converse with them concerning the Essence, the Life, the Soul of Religion, I mean our *New Birth in Jesus Christ*, confess themselves quite ignorant of the Matter, and cry out with *Nicodemus*, *How can this Thing be!* And no wonder then, that so many are only *almost Christians*, when so many know not what *Christianity* is: No Marvel so many take up with the *Form*, when they are quite Strangers to the *Power of Godliness*; or content themselves with the Shadow, when they know so little about the Substance of it. And this is one Cause why so many are *almost*; why so few are *altogether Christians*.

2. A Second Reason that may be assigned why so many are no more than *almost Christians*, is a fervile Fear of Man: Multitudes there are, and have been, who, though awakened to a Sense of the Divine Life, and *have tasted and felt the Powers of the World to come*; yet out of a base sinful Fear of being counted singular, or contemned by Men, have suffered all those good Impressions to wear off again. It is true they have some Esteem for *Jesus Christ*; but then, like *Nicodemus*, they should *come to him only by Night*: They are willing to serve him; but then they would do it *secretly, for Fear of the Jews*: They have a *Mind to see Jesus*, but then *they cannot come to him, because of the Press*, for fear of being laughed at, and ridiculed by those with whom they used to sit at Meat. But well did our Saviour prophesy of such Persons, *How can ye love me which receive Honour one of another?* Alas! have they never read, that *the Friendship of this World is Enmity with God*, and that our Lord himself has threatned, [*Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, or of my Words, in this wicked and adulterous Generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father and of his Holy Angels?*] But no Wonder that so many are no more than *almost Christians*, since so many love the Praise of Men more than the Honour which cometh of God.

3. A third Reason why so many are no more than *almost Christians*, is a reigning Love of Money. This was the pitiable Case of that forward young Man in the Gospel, who came running to our Blessed Lord, and kneeling before him, enquired what *He must do to inherit Eternal Life*;

to which our Blessed Master replied, *Thou knowest the Commandments, Do not Kill, Do not commit Adultery, Do not Steal:* To which the young Man replied (Oh, that every young Man here present could do so too) *All these I have kept from my Youth.* But when our Lord proceeded to tell him, *Yet lackest thou one Thing, Go sell all that thou hast and give to the Poor — he was grieved at that Saying, and went away sorrowful, for he had great Possessions!* Poor Youth! he had a good Mind to be a *Christian*, and to inherit Eternal Life, but thought it too dear, if it could be purchased at no less an Expence than of his whole Estate! And thus many, both Young and Old, now-a-days come running to worship our blessed Lord in Publick, and kneel before him in Private, and enquire at his Gospel, what they must do to inherit Eternal Life: But when they find they must renounce the Self-Enjoyment of Riches, and forsake *all* in Affection to follow Him, they cry, *the Lord pardon us in this Thing! — We, pray Thee, have us excused. —*

But is Heaven so small a Trifle in such Men's Esteem, as not to be worth a little gilded Earth? Is Eternal Life so mean a Purchase, as not to deserve the temporary Renunciation of a few transitory Riches? Surely it is. But however inconsistent such a Behaviour may be, this inordinate Love of Money is too evidently the common and fatal Cause why so many are no more than *almost Christians*.

4. Nor is the reigning Love of Pleasure a less uncommon, or a less fatal Cause why so many are no more than *almost Christians*. Thousands and ten Thousands there are, who despise Riches, and
would

would willingly be true Disciples of *Jesus Christ*, would parting with their Money make them so; but when they are told that our Blessed Lord has laid it down as an indispensable Condition, that *Whosoever will come after Him must deny himself* — like the pitiable young Man before mentioned, *they go away sorrowful*: For they have too great a Love for sensual Pleasures: They will, like *Herod*, perhaps send for the Ministers of *Christ*, as he did for *John*, and bear them gladly: But touch them in their *Herodias*, tell them they must part with such and such a darling Pleasure; and with wicked *Abab* they cry out, *Hast thou found us, O our Enemy?* Tell them of the Necessity of *Mortification*, *Fasting*, and *Self-Denial*, and it is as difficult to them to hear, as if you was to bid them *cut off a Right Hand, or pluck out a Right Eye*: They cannot think our Blessed Lord requires so much at their Hands, though an inspired Apostle has commanded us to *mortify our Members which are upon the Earth*: And he himself, even after he had converted Millions, and was very near arrived to the End of his Race, yet professed that it was his daily Practice to *keep under his Body, and bring it into Subjection, lest after he had preached to Others, he himself should be a Cast-away!*

But some Men would be wiser than this great Apostle, and chalk out to us what they falsely imagine an easier Way to Happiness. They would flatter us we may go to Heaven without offering Violence to our sensual Appetites; and enter into the strait Gate without striving against our carnal Inclinations. And this is another Reason why so many are only *almost*, and not altogether *Christians*.

5. The fifth and last Reason I shall assign, why so many are only *almost Christians*, is a Fickleness and Instability of Temper.

It has been, no doubt, the Misfortune that many a Minister and sincere *Christian* has met with, to weep and wail over Numbers of promising Converts, who seemingly began in the Spirit, but after a while have fell away, and basely ended in the Flesh; and this not for want of right Notions in Religion, nor out of a servile Fear of Man, nor out of Love of Money or sensual Pleasure, but out of an Instability and Fickleness of Temper. They looked upon Religion merely for Novelty, as something which pleases them for a while; but after their Curiosity was satisfied, they have laid it aside again: Like the young Man that came to see *Jesus* with a Linen Cloath about his naked Body, they have followed him a Season, but when Temptations have come to take hold on them, for want of a little more Resolution, they have been stripped of all their good Intentions, and fled away *naked*. They at first, like a Tree planted by the Water-side, grew up and flourished for a while; but *having no Root of themselves*, no inward Principle of Holiness and Piety, like *Jonah's* Gourd, were soon *dried up, cut down, and withered*. Their good Intentions are but too like the violent Motions of the Animal Spirits of a Body newly beheaded, which though impetuous, are not lasting. In short, they set out well in their Journey to Heaven, but finding the Way either narrower or longer than they expected — through an Unsteadiness of Temper, they have made an eternal Halt, and so returned like the Dog to his Vomit, or like the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire!

But

But I tremble to pronounce the Fate of such unstable Professors, *who having put their Hands to the Plow, for want of a little more Resolution, shamefully look back.* How shall I repeat to them that dreadful Threatning, *If any Man look back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him:* And again, *It is impossible, that is, exceeding difficult at least, for those that have been once enlightened, and have tasted the good Gift of God's Holy-Spirit, and the Powers of the World to come, if they should fall away, to be renewed again unto Repentance.* But notwithstanding the Gospel is so severe against Apostates, yet many that begun well, through a Fickleness of Temper, (Oh that none of us here present may ever be such) have been by this Means, of *the Number of those that turn back unto Perdition.* And this is the fifth and last Reason I shall give, why so many are only *almost*, and not *altogether Christians:*

But you, Brethren, have not *so* learned *Christ.* God forbid that a Fear of a little Contempt, a Love of a little worldly Gain, or a Fondness for a little sensual Pleasure, or want of steady Resolution, should hinder you from entering into Eternal Life, or make you so sottish as to think you may compound Matters between God and your Souls.

III. Proceed we therefore now to the *Third General Thing* proposed, namely, to consider the Folly of being no more than an *almost Christian.*

And to the first Proof I shall give of the Folly of such a Proceeding is, — that it is ineffectual to Salvation. It is true, such Men are almost Good, but

but *almost* to hit the Mark is *really* to miss it. God requires us to *love him with all our Hearts, with all our Souls, and with all our Strength*: He loves us too well to admit any Rival; because so far as our Hearts are empty of God, so far must they be unhappy. The Devil, indeed, like the false Mother that came before *Solomon*, would have our Hearts divided, as she would have had the Child; but God, like the true Mother, will have all or none. *My Son give not thy Heart*, thy whole Heart, is the general Call to all: And if we do not perform this Condition, we never can expect the Divine Mercy.

Persons may indeed flatter themselves, that a partial Obedience will serve their Turn; but God at the Great Day will strike them dead, as he did *Ananias* and *Sapphira* by the Mouth of his Servant *Peter*, for pretending to offer him all their Hearts, when they *keep back* from him the greatest Part. They may perhaps impose upon their fellow Creatures for a while, but he that enabled *Elijah* to cry out, *Come in thou Wife of Jeroboam*, when she came disguised to enquire about her sick Son, will also discover them through their most artful Dissimulations, and if *their Hearts are not whole with him* — appoint them their Portion with *Hypocrites and Unbelievers*.

But secondly, What renders an half-way Piety more inexcusable is, that it is not only insufficient to our own Salvation, but also most prejudicial to that of Others.

An *almost Christian* is one of the most hurtful Creatures in the World: He is a *Wolf in Sheep's Cloathing*; he is one of those false Prophets our Blessed Lord bids us beware of in his Sermon on the Mount, who would persuade Men, that the
Way

Way to Heaven is broader than it really is; and thereby, as it was observed before, *enter not into the Kingdom of God themselves, and those that are entering in they hinder.* These, these are the Men that turn the World into a lukewarm *Laodicean* Spirit; that hang out false Lights, and so shipwreck unthinking benighted Souls in their Voyage to the Haven where they would be. These are they that are greater Enemies to the Cross of *Christ*, than Infidels themselves: For of an Unbeliever every one will be aware; but an *almost Christian*, through his subtle Hypocrisy, *draws away many after him*; and therefore must expect to receive the *greater Damnation.*

But thirdly, as it is most prejudicial to ourselves and hurtful to others, so it is the greatest Piece of Ingratitude we can express towards our Lord and Master *Jesus Christ.* For did he come down from Heaven, and shed his precious Blood, to purchase these Hearts of ours, and shall we only give him half of them? Oh how can we say we love him? How can we call him our Saviour, when we will not endeavour sincerely to approve ourselves to him, and so let him see the Travail of his Soul, and be satisfied!

Had any of us purchased a Slave at a most expensive Rate, that was before involved in the utmost Miseries and Torments, and so must have continued for ever, had we shut up our Bowels of Compassion from him; and was this Slave afterwards to grow rebellious, or deny giving us but half his Service: How, how should we exclaim against his base Ingratitude! And yet this base ungrateful Slave thou art, O Man, who acknowledgest thyself to be redeemed from infinite unavoidable

voidable Misery and Punishment by the Death of *Jesus Christ*, and yet wilt not give thyself wholly to him. But shall we deal with God our Maker in a Manner we would not be dealt with by a Man like ourselves? Shall we mete out a less Measure of Love to our Saviour, than we would have dealt to ourselves? God forbid!

IV. No, (that I may come to the *last Thing* proposed, namely, to add a Word or two of Exhortation to be not only *almost*, but *altogether Christians*) let us scorn all such base and treacherous Treatment of our King and Saviour, nay our God. Let us not take some Pains all our Lives to go to Heaven, and yet plunge ourselves into Hell at last. Let us give God our whole Hearts, and no longer *halt between two Opinions*: *If the World be God, let us serve That*; *If Pleasure be a God, let us serve That*; but *if the Lord He be a God, let us, Oh, let us serve Him alone.* Alas! why, why should we stand out any longer? Why should we be so in Love with Slavery, as not wholly to renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, which, like so many spiritual Chains, bind down our Souls, and hinder them from flying up to God. Alas! what are we afraid of? Is not God able to reward our entire Obedience? If He is, as the *almost Christian's* lame Way of serving Him seems to grant, — Why then will we not serve Him entirely? For the same Reason we do so much, why do we not do more? Or do you think that being only half religious will make you happy, but that going farther will render you miserable and uneasy? Alas! this, my Brethren, is Delusion all over: For what is this but *half Piety*, this waver-
ing

ing between God and the World, that makes so many that are seemingly well disposed, such utter Strangers to the Comforts of Religion? They chuse just so much of Religion as will disturb them in their Lusts, and follow their Lusts so far as to deprive themselves of the Comforts of Religion. Whereas on the contrary, would they sincerely *leave all in Affection*, and *give their Hearts wholly to God*, they would then (and they cannot 'till then) experience the unspeakable Pleasure of having a Mind at Unity with itself, and enjoy such a Peace of God, which even in this Life passes all Understanding, and which they were entire Strangers to before. It is true, if we will devote our selves entirely to God, we must meet with Contempt; but then it is because Contempt is necessary to heal our Pride. We must renounce some sensual Pleasure; but then it is because those unfit us for Spiritual ones, which are infinitely better. We must renounce the Love of the World; but then it is that we may be filled with the Love of God: And when that has once enlarged our Hearts, we shall like *Jacob*, when he served for his beloved *Rachel*, think nothing too difficult to undergo, no Hardships too tedious to endure, because of the Love we shall then have for our Redeemer. Thus easy, thus delightful will be the Ways of God even in this Life: But when once we throw off these Bodies, and our Souls are *filled with all the Fulness of God*, Oh! what Heart can conceive, what Tongue can express, with what unspeakable Joy and Consolation we shall then look back on our past sincere and hearty Services, which have procured us so invaluable a Reward! Think you then, my dear Hearers, we shall repent we had done too much; or rather

ther think you not we shall be ashamed that we did no more; and blush we were so backward to give up all to God: When He intended hereafter to give us himself?

Let me therefore, to conclude, exhort you, my Brethren, to have always the unspeakable Reward of an entire Obedience set before you: And think withal that every Degree of Holiness you neglect, every Instance of Piety you pass by, is a Jewel taken out of your Crown, a Degree of Blessedness lost in the Vision of God. Oh! do but always think and act thus, and you will no longer be labouring to compound Matters between God and the World; but on the contrary, be daily endeavouring to give up yourselves more and more unto Him, you will be always Watching, always Praying, always aspiring after farther Degrees of Purity and Love, and so consequently always preparing yourselves for a fuller Light and Enjoyment of that God, in whose Presence there is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures for ever more. *Amen! Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

T H E

Extent and Reasonableness

O F

S E L F - D E N I A L

Proved from the Nature of a

CHRISTIAN'S LIFE;

The Motives to practice this Duty; and recommended from our Saviour's own Behaviour.

Therefore I take Pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake: For when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Cor. xii. 10.

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

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M D C C X X X I X .



S E R M O N III.

The *Extent* and *Reasonableness* of S E L F - D E N I A L .

L U K E ix. 25.

*And He said unto them all, If any Man
will come after me, let him deny himself.*



HOEVER reads the Gospel with a single Eye, and sincere Intention, will find that our Blessed Lord took all Opportunities of reminding his Disciples that his Kingdom was not of this World ; that his Doctrine was a Doctrine of the Cross ; and that their professing themselves to be his Followers would call them to a constant State of voluntary or *Self-suffering* and *Self-denial*.

The Words of the Text afford us one Instance, among many, of our Saviour's Behaviour in this Matter : For having in the preceding Verses revealed himself to *Peter*, and the other Apostles,
to

4 *The Extent and Reasonableness*

to be *The Christ of God*; lest they should be too much elated with such a peculiar Discovery of his Deity, or think that their Relation to so great a Personage would be attended with nothing but Pomp and Grandeur, He tells them, in the 22d Verse, that *the Son of Man was to suffer many things* in this World, though He was to be crowned with Eternal Glory and Honour in the next: And that if any of them or their Posterity would share in the same Honour, they must bear a Part with him in his Self-denial and Sufferings. For *He said unto them all, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.*

From which Words I shall consider these three Things:

- I. *First*, The Nature of the *Self-denial* recommended in the Text; and in how many Respects we must deny ourselves, in order to come after *Jesus Christ*.
- II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to prove the Universality and Reasonableness of this Duty of *Self-denial*.
- III. *Thirdly* and *lastly*, I shall offer some Considerations, which may serve as so many Motives to reconcile us to, and quicken us in the Practice of this Doctrine of *Self-denial*.

I. And *first* then, I am to shew the Nature of the *Self-denial* recommended in the Text; or in how many Respects we must deny ourselves in order to follow *Jesus Christ*.

Now, as the Faculties of the Soul are distinguished by the Understanding, Will, and Affections;

tions ; so in all these must each of us *deny himself*. We must not *lean to our own Understanding*, being *wise in our own Eyes*, and *prudent in our own Sight* ; but we must submit our short-sighted Reason to the Light of Divine Revelation : For there are Mysteries in Religion, which are above, though not contrary to, our natural Reason : And therefore we shall never become *Christians* unless we cast down *Imaginations*, and every high *Thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God*, and bring into *Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ*. It is in this Respect as well as others, that we must *become Fools for Christ's Sake*, and acknowledge we know nothing without Revelation, as we ought to know. We must then, with all Humility and Reverence, embrace the mysterious Truths revealed to us *in the Holy Scriptures* ; for thus only can we become truly *Wise*, even *Wise unto Salvation*. It was Matter of our Blessed Lord's Thanksgiving to his Heavenly Father, that he had *hid these things from the Wise and Prudent*, and had revealed them unto *Babes*. And in this respect also we must *be converted and become as little Children*, teachable, and willing to follow the Lamb into what soever Mysteries he shall be pleased to lead us ; and believe and practice all divine Truths, not because we can demonstrate them, but because God, *who cannot lye*, has revealed them to us.

Hence then we may trace Infidelity to its Fountain Head : For it is nothing else but a Pride of the Understanding, an Unwillingness to submit to the *Truth of God*, that makes so many, professing themselves *Wise*, to become such Fools



S E R M O N III.

The *Extent* and *Reasonableness* of S E L F - D E N I A L.

L U K E ix. 25.

And He said unto them all, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.



HOWEVER reads the Gospel with a single Eye, and sincere Intention, will find that our Blessed Lord took all Opportunities of reminding his Disciples that his Kingdom was not of this World ; that his Doctrine was a Doctrine of the Cross ; and that their professing themselves to be his Followers would call them to a constant State of voluntary or *Self-suffering* and *Self-denial*.

The Words of the Text afford us one Instance, among many, of our Saviour's Behaviour in this Matter : For having in the preceding Verses revealed himself to *Peter*, and the other Apostles,
to

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to be *The Christ of God*; lest they should be too much elated with such a peculiar Discovery of his Deity, or think that their Relation to so great a Personage would be attended with nothing but Pomp and Grandeur, He tells them, in the 22d Verse, that *the Son of Man was to suffer many things* in this World, though He was to be crowned with Eternal Glory and Honour in the next; And that if any of them or their Posterity would share in the same Honour, they must bear a Part with him in his Self-denial and Sufferings. For *He said unto them all, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.*

From which Words I shall consider these three Things:

- I. *First*, The Nature of the *Self-denial* recommended in the Text; and in how many Respects we must deny ourselves, in order to come after *Jesus Christ*.
- II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to prove the Universality and Reasonableness of this Duty of *Self-denial*.
- III. *Thirdly* and *lastly*, I shall offer some Considerations, which may serve as so many Motives to reconcile us to, and quicken us in the Practice of this Doctrine of *Self-denial*.

I. And *first* then, I am to shew the Nature of the *Self-denial* recommended in the Text; or in how many Respects we must deny ourselves in order to follow *Jesus Christ*.

Now, as the Faculties of the Soul are distinguished by the Understanding, Will, and Affections;

tions ; so in all these must each of us *deny himself*. We must not *lean to our own Understanding*, being *wise in our own Eyes*, and *prudent in our own Sight* ; but we must submit our short-sighted Reason to the Light of Divine Revelation : For there are Mysteries in Religion, which are above, though not contrary to, our natural Reason : And therefore we shall never become *Christians* unless we cast down *Imaginations*, and every high Thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ. It is in this Respect as well as others, that we must become *Fools for Christ's Sake*, and acknowledge we know nothing without Revelation, as we ought to know. We must then, with all Humility and Reverence, embrace the mysterious Truths revealed to us *in the Holy Scriptures* ; for thus only can we become truly Wise, even *Wise unto Salvation*. It was Matter of our Blessed Lord's Thanksgiving to his heavenly Father, that he had *hid these things from the Wise and Prudent*, and had revealed them unto *Babes*. And in this respect also we must be converted and become as little Children, teachable, and willing to follow the Lamb into what soever Mysteries he shall be pleased to lead us ; and believe and practice all divine Truths, not because we can demonstrate them, but because God, *who cannot lye*, has revealed them to us.

Hence then we may trace Infidelity to its Fountain Head : For it is nothing else but a Pride of the Understanding, an Unwillingness to submit to the *Truth of God*, that makes so many, professing themselves Wise, to become such Fools

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as to *deny the Lord who has so dearly bought them*; and dispute the Divinity of that Eternal Word, *in whom they live, and move, and have their Being*: Whereby, it is justly to be feared, they will bring upon themselves sure, if not swift, Destruction.

But to return: As we must deny ourselves in our Understandings, so must we deny, or, as it might be more properly rendered, renounce our Wills: That is, we must make our own Wills no Principle of Action, but *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all, not merely to please ourselves, but to the Glory of God*. Not that we are therefore to imagine we are to have no Pleasure in any Thing we do, (*Wisdom's Ways are Ways of Pleasantness*) but pleasing ourselves must not be the principal, but only the subordinate End of our Actions.

And I cannot but particularly press this Doctrine upon you, because it is the Grand Secret of our Holy Religion. It is this, my Brethren, that distinguishes the true *Christian* from the mere Moralist and formal Professor; and which alone can render any of our Actions acceptable in God's Sight: For *if thine Eye be single*, says our Blessed Lord, *Matth. vi. 22.* that is, if thou aimest simply to please God, without any regard to thy own Will, *thy whole Body*, that is, all thy Actions, *will be full of Light*; agreeable to the Gospel, which is called *Light*: But *if thine Eye be evil*, if thine Intention be diverted any other Way, *thy whole Body*, all thy Actions, *will be full of Darkness*, unprofitable, and capable of no Reward.

ward. For we must not only do the Will of God, but do it *because* it is his Will; since we pray that God's *Will may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*. And, no doubt, the blessed Angels, not only do every Thing that God willeth, but do it chearfully, out of this Principle, because God willeth it: And if we would live as we pray, we must *go and do likewise*.

But farther; as we must renounce our own Wills in *doing*, so likewise must we renounce them in *suffering* the Will of God. Whatsoever befalls us, we must say with good old *Eli*, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*; or with one that was infinitely greater than *Eli*, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done* — O *Jesu*, thine was an innocent Will, and yet thou renouncest it: Teach us, even us also, O our Saviour! to submit our Wills to thine, in all *the Evils* which shall be *brought upon us*; and *in every thing* enable us to *give Thanks*, since it is thy blessed *Will concerning us*!

Thirdly and lastly, we must deny ourselves, as in our Understandings and Wills, so likewise in our Affections. More particularly we must deny ourselves the pleasurable Indulgence and Self-Enjoyment of Riches: *If any Man will come after me*, says our Blessed Lord, *he must forsake all and follow me*. And again (to shew the utter Inconsistency of the Love of the Things of this World with the Love of the Father) he tells us, that *unless a Man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple*.

Far be it from me to think that these Texts are to be taken in a literal Sense, as though they

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obliged rich Persons to go sell all that they have, and give to the Poor, (for that would put it out of their Power to be serviceable to the Poor for the future) but however they certainly imply thus much, That we are to sit loose to, sell and forsake all in Affection, and be willing to part with every thing, when God shall require it at your Hands: That is, as the Apostle observes, we must *use the World as though we used it not*; and though we are *in the World*, we must not be *of it*. We must look upon ourselves as Stewards and not Proprietors of the manifold Gifts of God; provide first what is necessary for ourselves and for our Households, and expend the rest, not in Indulgence and superfluous Ornaments, forbidden by the Apostle, but in cloathing, feeding, and relieving the naked, hungry, distressed Disciples of *Jesus Christ*. This is what our Blessed Lord would have us understand by *forsaking all*, and in this Sense must each of us *deny himself*.

I am sensible that this will seem *an hard Saying* to many, who will be offended because they are covetous, and *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*: But if I yet pleased such Men, I should not be the *Servant of Christ*. No, we must not like *Ahab's* false Prophets, have a *lying Spirit in our Mouths*, nor fail to *declare* (with *St. Paul*) *the whole Will of God*; and like honest *Micaiah*, out of Piety and Compassion, tell Men the Truth, though they may falsely think *we prophecy not Good, but Evil concerning them*.

But to proceed: As we must renounce our Affection for Riches, so likewise our Affections for our Relations, when they stand in Opposi-
tion

tion to our Love of, and Duty to God: For thus saith the Saviour of the World: *If any Man will come after me, and hateth not his Father and Mother, his Children and Brethren and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be a Disciple*—— Strange Doctrine this! What, hate our own Flesh! What, hate the Father that begat us, the Mother that bare us! *How can these Things be?* Can God contradict himself? Has he not bid us honour our Father and Mother? And yet we are commanded to hate them. How must these Truths be reconciled? Why, by interpreting the Word *hate*, not in a rigorous and absolute Sense, but *comparatively*: Not as implying a total Alienation, but a less Degree of Affection. For thus our Blessed Saviour himself, (the best and surest Expositor of his own Meaning) explains it in a parallel Text, *Matth. x. 37. He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me: He that loveth Son or Daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* So that when the Persuasions of our Friends (as for our Trial they may be permitted to be) are contrary to the Will of God, we must say with *Levi, we have not known them*; or, agreeably to our Blessed Lord's Rebuke to *Peter, Get you behind me, my Adversaries, for you favour not the Things that be of God, but the things that are of Men.*

To conclude this Head: We must *deny ourselves* in Things indifferent: For it might easily be shewn that as many, if not more, perish by an immoderate Use of Things in themselves indifferent as by any gross Sin whatever. A prudent *Christian* therefore will consider not only what is *lawful* but

what is *expedient* also: Not so much what Degrees of *Self-denial* best suit his Inclinations here, as what will most effectually break his Will, and fit him for greater Degrees of Glory hereafter.

But is this the Doctrine of *Christianity*? And is not the *Christian* World then asleep? If not, whence the Self-indulgence, whence the reigning Love of Riches which we every where meet with? Above all, whence that predominant Greediness of sensual Pleasure, that has so over-run this sinful Nation, that, was a pious Stranger to come amongst us, he would be tempted to think some Heathen *Venus* was worshipped here, and that the Temples were dedicated to her Service. But we have the Authority of an inspired Apostle to affirm that *they who live in such a Round of Pleasure are dead while they live*: Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, *Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee Light*: But the Power of raising the spiritual Dead belongeth only unto God.—— Do Thou therefore, O Holy *Jesus*, who by thy Almighty Word commandest *Lazarus* to come forth, though he had lain in the Grave *so many Days*, speak also as effectually to these spiritually dead Souls, whom *Satan* for these many Years has so fast bound by sensual Pleasures, that they are not so much as able to lift up their Eyes or Hearts to Heaven.

II. But I pass on to the *Second* general Thing proposed, *viz.* to consider the universal Obligation, and Reasonableness of this Doctrine of *Self-Denial*.

When

When our Blessed Master had been discoursing publickly concerning the Watchfulness of the *faithful and wise Steward*, his Disciples asked him, *Speakest thou this Parable to all, or only to us?* The same Question I am aware has been, and will be put concerning the foregoing Doctrine: For too many, unwilling to take Christ's easy Yoke upon them, in order to evade the Force of the Gospel Precepts, would pretend that all those Commands concerning *Self-Denial*, renouncing ourselves and the World, belonged only to our Lord's first and immediate Followers, and not *to us or to our Children*. But such Persons greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of Godliness in their Hearts. For the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, like his blessed Self, is *the same Yesterday, To Day, and for ever*. What he said unto *one*, he said unto *all*, even unto the Ends of the World; *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself*. And in the Text it is particularly mentioned that *He said unto them all*. And lest we should still absurdly imagine that this Word *all* was to be confined to his Apostles, with whom he was then discoursing, it is said in another Place, that *Jesus* turned unto the Multitude and said, *If any Man will come after me, and hate not his Father and Mother, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple*. "When
 " our blessed Lord had spoken a certain Parable,
 " it is said, *the Scribes and Pharisees were offended,*
 " *for they knew the Parable was spoken against*
 " *them*: And if Christians can now read these
 " plain and positive Texts of Scriptures, and at
 " the same time not think they are spoken of them,
 " they

“ they are more hardened than *Jews*, and more
 “ insincere than *Pharisees*.*.

In the former Part of this Discourse I observed that the Precepts concerning *forsaking* and *selling all* did not oblige us in a literal Sense, because the State of the Church does not demand it of us, as it did of the Primitive *Christians*; but still the same Deadness to the World, the same abstemious Use of, and Readiness to part with our Goods for *Christ's* sake, it is absolutely necessary for, and as obligatory on us, as it was on them. For though the Church may differ as to the outward State of it, in different Ages, yet as to the Purity of its inward State, it was, is, and always will be invariably the same. And all the Commands which we meet with in the *Epistles*, about mortifying our Members, which are upon the Earth, of setting our Affections on things above, and of not being conformed to this World; are but so many incontestable Proofs that the same Holiness, Heavenly-mindedness, and Deadness to the World, is as necessary for us as for our Lord's immediate Followers.

But farther, as such an Objection argues an Ignorance of the Scriptures, so it is a manifest Proof that such as make it are Strangers to *the Power of Godliness in their Hearts*. For since the Sum and Substance of Religion consists in our Recovery from our fallen Estate in *Adam*, by a *New Birth* in *Christ Jesus*, there is an absolute Necessity for us to embrace and practise the *Self-denial* before recommended. Because we have not only a new House to build, but an old one first to pull down;

we

* *Law's Christian Perfection.*

we must necessarily therefore be dead to the World, before we can *live unto God*. In short, all Things belonging to the *Old Man* must die in us, before the Things belonging to the *Spirit* can live and grow in us.

When *Jesus Christ* was *about* to make his publick Appearance, and to preach the glad Tidings of Salvation to a benighted World, his Harbinger *John Baptist* was sent to *prepare his Way before him*. In like Manner, when this same *Jesus* is about to take Possession of a converted Sinner's Heart, *Self-denial*, like *John the Baptist*, must prepare the Way before him: For we must *mourn* before we are capable of being *comforted*, we must undergo the *Spirit of Bondage*, in order to be made meet to receive *the Spirit of Adoption*.

Were we indeed in a State of Innocence, and had we, like *Adam* before his Fall, the Divine Image fully stamped upon our Souls, we then should have no need of *Self-denial*; but since we are fallen, sickly, disordered Creatures, and this *Self-suffering*, this *Self-renunciation*, is the *indispensible Means* of recovering our primitive Glory; methinks in that Case, to endeavour to shake off the Difficulty attending it at first, is but too like the Obstinacy of a perverse sick Child, who nauseates and refuses the Potion reached out to it by a skilful Physician or tender Parent, because it is a little ungrateful to the Taste.

Had any of us seen *Lazarus* when he lay full of Sores at the Rich Man's Gate; or *Job*, when he was smitten with Ulcers, from the Crown of his Head to the Sole of his Foot: And had we at the same Time prescribed to them some healing *Medicines*

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cines, which, because they would put them to Pain, they would not apply to their *Wounds*, should we not most justly think, that they were either fond of a distemper'd Body, or were not sensible of their Distempers? But our Souls, by Nature, are in an infinitely more deplorable Condition than the Bodies of *Job* or *Lazarus*, when full of *Uicers* and *Boils*: For, alas! *our whole Head is sick, and our whole Heart faint*; from the *Crown of the Head to the Sole of the Foot*, we are full of *Wounds and Bruises and putrifying Sores, and there is no Health in us*. And *Jesus Christ*, like a good Physician, in the Gospel Doctrine of *Self-denial*, presents us with a spiritual *Medicine to heal our Sickness*: But if we will neither receive nor apply it, it is a Sign we are not sensible of the *Wretchedness* of our State, or else that we are *unwilling to be made whole*.

Even *Naaman's* Servants could say, when he refused, pursuant to *Elijah's* Orders, to wash in the *River Jordan*, that he might cure his Leprosy, *Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great Things, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?* And may not I very properly address myself to you in the same Manner, my Brethren? — If *Jesus Christ*, our great Prophet, had bid you to do some great and very difficult Thing, would you not have done it? Much more then should you do it, when he only bids you *deny yourselves* what would certainly hurt you if enjoyed, and behold, you shall be *made perfectly whole*.

But to illustrate this by another Comparison: In the 12th Chapter of the *Acts*, we read, that St. *Peter*

Peter was kept in Prison, and was sleeping between two Soldiers, bound with two Chains: And behold an Angel of the Lord came upon him, and smote Peter on the Side, saying, Arise up quickly: And his Chains fell off from his Hands. But had this great Apostle, instead of rising up quickly, and doing as the blessed Angel commanded him, hugged his Chains and begged that they might not be let fall from his Hands, would not any one think that he was in love with Slavery, and deserved to be *executed* next Morning? And does not the Person who refuses to *deny himself*, act as inconsistently as this Apostle would have done if he had neglected the Means of his Deliverance? For our Souls by Nature, are in a spiritual Dungeon, sleeping and fast bound between the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, not with Two but Ten Thousand Chains of Lusts and Corruptions. Now Jesus Christ, like St. Peter's good Angel, by his Gospel comes and opens the Prison Door, prescribes *Self-denial*, *Mortification*, and *Renunciation of ourselves and the World*, as so many spiritual Keys which will unlock our *Shackles*, make them fall off from our Hearts, and so restore us to *the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*. But if we will not arise quickly, gird up the Loins of our Mind, and *deny ourselves*, as he has commanded, are we not in love with Bondage, and deserve never to be delivered from it.

Indeed I will not affirm that this Doctrine of *Self-denial* appears in this just Light to every one. No, I am sensible that to the *Natural Men* it is *Foolishness*; and to the *young Convert* an *hard Saying*. But what says our Saviour? *If any Man*
will

will do my Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. This, my dear Friends, is the best, the only Way of Conviction: Let us up and be doing; let us arise quickly and *deny ourselves*, and the Lord Jesus will remove those Scales from the Eyes of our Minds, which now like so many Veils, hinder us from seeing clearly the Reasonableness, Necessity, and inexpressible Advantage of the Doctrine that has been now delivered. Let us but once thus *show ourselves Men*, and then the Spirit of God will move on the Face of our Souls, as he did once upon the Face of the great Deep; and cause them to emerge out of that confused Chaos, in which they are most certainly now involved, if we are Strangers and Enemies to *Self-denial* and *the Cross of Christ*.

But notwithstanding this Doctrine of *Self-denial* is, when rightly understood, so reasonable and beneficial; yet many, it is to be feared, like the young Man in the Gospel, are ready to go away sorrowful.

III. Proceed we therefore now to the *Third* and *last* general Thing proposed; viz. To offer some Considerations, which may serve as so many Motives to reconcile us to, and *quicken us* in the Practice of this Duty of *Self-denial*.

2. And the first Means I shall recommend to you, in order to reconcile you to this Doctrine is, to meditate frequently on the Life of our blessed Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Oh! may we *often* think on Him our grand Exemplar! Fol-
low

low him from his Cradle to the Cross, and see what a *self-denying Life* He led! And shall not we drink of the Cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the Baptism that He was baptized with? Or think we that *Jesus Christ* did and suffered every thing in order to have us excused, and exempted from Sufferings? No, far be it from any sincere *Christian* to judge after this Manner: For *St. Peter* tells us, *He suffered for us leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps.* Had *Christ*, indeed, like those that sat in *Moses's Chair*, laid heavy Burthens of *Self-denial* upon us, (supposing they were heavy, which they are not) and refused to touch them himself with one of his *Fingers*; we might have had some Pretence to complain: But since He has enjoined us nothing but what he has first put in Practice himself, *Thou art inexcusable, O Disciple, whoever thou art, who wouldst be above thy persecuted self-denying Master: And thou art no good and faithful Servant, who art unwilling to suffer and sympathize with thy mortified, heavenly-minded Lord.*

2. Next to the Pattern of our Blessed Master, think often on the Lives of the glorious Company of the *Apostles*, the goodly Fellowship of the *Prophets*, and the noble Army of *Martyrs*; who by a constant looking to the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*, have fought the good Fight, and are gone before us to inherit the Promises. View again and again, how holily, how self-denyingly, how unblameably they lived: And if *Self-denial* was necessary for them, why not for us also? Are we not Men of like Passions with them? Do we not live in the same wicked World as they did? Have

we not the same good Spirit to assist, support, and purify us, as they had? And is not the same eternal Inheritance reached out, as a Reward of our *Self-denial* and *the Renunciation of the World*, as was offered to them? And if we have the same Nature to change, the same wicked World to withstand, the same good Spirit to help, and the same Eternal Crown to reward our Obedience; why should not we lead the same Lives as they did? Do we think they did Works of Supererogation? If not, why don't we do as they did? Or why does the Church set a-part Festivals to commemorate the Deaths and Sufferings of the Saints, but in order to excite us *to follow them as they did Christ?*

3. *Thirdly*, Think often on the Pains of Hell: Consider, whether it is not better to cut off a Right Hand or Foot, and pull out a Right Eye, if they offend us (or cause us to sin) *rather than to be cast into Hell, into the Fire that never shall be quenched; where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.* Think how many thousands there are now *reserved* with damned Spirits in *Chains of Darkness unto the Judgment of the Great Day*, for not complying with the Precept in the Text. And think withal that This, this must be our own Case shortly, unless we are wise in Time, and submit to those easy Conditions our Saviour has prescribed us, in order to avoid it. Think you they now imagine *Jesus Christ* to be an hard Master; or rather think you not they would give ten thousand times ten thousand Worlds, could they but return to Life again, and take *Christ's* easy Yoke upon them? and can *we* dwell with everlasting

ing Burnings more than *they*? No; if we cannot bear this Precept, *Come, deny yourselves, take up your Crosses*; how shall we bear this irrevocable Sentence, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels?* But I hope those, amongst whom I am now preaching the Kingdom of God, are not so disingenuous as to need to be driven to their Duty by the Terrors of the Lord, but rather desire to be drawn by the Cords of Love.

Lastly, therefore, and to conclude, — often meditate on the Joys of Heaven: Think, think with what unspeakable Glory those happy Souls are now incircled, who when on Earth were called to *deny themselves* as well as we, and were not disobedient to that Call: Lift up your Hearts frequently towards the Mansions of eternal Bliss, and with an Eye of Faith, like the great *St. Stephen*, see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man with his glorious Retinue of departed Saints sitting and solacing themselves in eternal Joys, and with unspeakable Comfort looking back on their past *Sufferings* and *Self-denials*, as so many glorious Means which exalted them to *such a Crown*. Hark! methinks I hear them chanting forth their everlasting *Hallelujahs*, and spending an eternal Day in ecchoing forth triumphant Songs of Joy. And do you not long, my Brethren, to join this heavenly Choir? Do not your Hearts burn within you? *As the Hart panteth after the Water Brooks*, do not your Souls *so long after* the blessed Company of these *Sons of God*? Behold then a heavenly Ladder reached down to you, by which you may climb to this Holy Hill. *If any Man will come*
after

after them, let him deny himself and follow them. It was this, my Brethren, exalted the Holy Jesus himself, as Man, to sit at the Right Hand of his adorable Father. By this alone every Saint that ever lived ascended into the Joy of their Lord: And by this we, even we also may be lifted up into the same most blisful Regions, there to enjoy an eternal Rest with the People of God, and join with them in singing Doxologies and Songs of Praise, to the Everlasting, Blessed, All-glorious, most Adorable Trinity, for ever and ever.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N I V.

T H E

Neceffity and Benefits

O F

R E L I G I O U S S O C I E T Y ;

O R,

S O C I A L R E L I G I O N

Recommended

From Scripture, Reason, and the Advan-
tages of it to C H R I S T I A N S.

*Heb. x. 25. Not forsaking the assembling of our-
selves together, as the Manner of some is ; but ex-
horting one another, and so much the more as ye
see the Day approaching.*

By *GEORGE WHITEFIELD*, A.B.
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford.*

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M D C C X X X I X



S E R M O N I V.

The *Necessity* and *Benefits* of R E - L I G I O U S S O C I E T Y.

ECCLES. iv. 9, 10, 11, 12.

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

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

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

*And if One prevail against him, Two shall with-
stand him ; and a Threefold Cord is not quickly
broken.*



A M O N G the many Reasons assign-
nable for the sad Decay of *True*
Christianity, perhaps the neglecting
to *assemble ourselves together*, in *Reli-
gious Societies*, may not be one of the
least. That I may therefore do my
Endeavour towards promoting so excellent a
Means of Piety, I have selected a Passage of
A 2 Scripture

Scripture drawn from the Experience of the wisest Men; which being enlarged on and illustrated, will fully answer my present Design; that being to shew, in the best Manner I can, the *Necessity* and *Benefits* of *Society* in general, and of *Religious Society* in particular.

Two are better than One, &c.

From which Words I shall take Occasion to prove,

First, The Truth of the Wise Man's Assertion, viz. *Two are better than One*, and that in Reference to *Society* in general, and *Religious Society* in particular.

Secondly, To assign some Reasons why *Two are better than One*; especially as to the last Particular. 1. Because Men can raise up one another when they chance to slip: *For if they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow.* 2. Because they can impart Heat to each other: *Again, if Two lie together, then they have Heat; but how can One be warm alone?* 3. Because they can secure each other from those that do oppose them: *And if one prevail against him, Two shall withstand him; and a Threefold Cord is not quickly broken.* From hence,

Thirdly, I shall take Occasion to shew the Duty incumbent on every Member of a *Religious Society*.

Fourthly and *lastly*, I shall draw an Inference or two from what shall have been said; and then conclude with a Word or two of Exhortation from the Whole.

First,

First then, I am to prove the Truth of the Wise Man's Assertion, viz. that *Two are better than One*, and that in Reference to Society in particular.

And how can this be done better than by shewing that it is absolutely necessary for the Welfare both of the Bodies and Souls of Men? Indeed, if we look upon Man as he came out of the Hands of his Maker, we imagine him to be *perfect, entire, lacking nothing*. But God, whose *Thoughts are not as our Thoughts*, saw something still wanting to make *Adam* happy. And what was that? Why, an *Help* meet for him. For thus speaketh the Scripture: *And the Lord said, It is not good that the Man should be alone, I will make an Help meet for him.*

Observe, God said, *It is not good*, thereby implying that the Creation would have been imperfect, *in some Sort*, unless an *Help* was found out for *Adam*. And if this was the Case of Man before the Fall; if an *Help* was *meet* for him in a State of Perfection; surely since the Fall, when we come naked and helpless out of our Mother's Womb, when our Wants increase with our Years, and we can scarcely subsist a Day without the mutual Assistance of each other, well may we say, *It is not good for Man to be alone.*

Society then, we see, is absolutely necessary in respect to our *bodily* and *personal* Wants. If we carry our View farther, and consider Mankind as divided into different Cities, Countries, and Nations, the Necessity of it will appear yet more evident. For how can Communities be kept up, or Commerce carried on, without *Society*? Certainly not at all, since Providence seems wisely to

have assigned a particular Product to almost each particular Country, on Purpose, as it were, to oblige us to be social; and hath so admirably mingled the Parts of the whole Body of Mankind together, *that the Eye cannot say to the Hand, I have no Need of Thee; nor again, the Hand to the Foot, I have no Need of Thee.*

Many other Instances might be given of the *Necessity of Society*, in reference to our *bodily, personal, and national Wants*. But what are all these when *weighed in the Ballance of the Sanctuary*, in Comparison of the infinite greater Need of it, with respect to the *Soul*? It was chiefly in regard to this better Part, no doubt, that God said, *It is not good for the Man to be alone.* For, let us suppose *Adam* to be as happy as may be, placed as the Lord of the Creation in the *Paradise of God*, and spending all his Hours in adoring and praising the Blessed Author of his Being; yet as his Soul was the very Copy of the *Divine Nature*, whose peculiar Property it is to be communicative, *without the Divine All-Sufficiency* he could not be compleatly happy, because he was alone and incommunicative, nor even Content in *Paradise* for want of a *Partner* in his Joys. God knew this, and therefore said, *It is not good that the Man shall be alone. I will make a Help meet for him.* And though this proved a fatal Means of his falling; yet that was not owing to any natural Consequence of *Society*; but partly to that cursed Apostate, who *craftily lies in wait to deceive*; partly to *Adam's* own Folly, in rather chusing to be miserable with one he loved, than trust in God to raise him up another Spouse.

If we reflect indeed on that familiar Intercourse our first Parents could carry on with Heaven, in a State of Innocence, we shall be apt to think he had as little Need of *Society*, as to his *Soul*, as before we supposed him to have, in respect to his *Body*. But yet, as God and the Holy Angels were so far above him on the one Hand, and the Beasts so far beneath him on the other, there was nothing like having one to converse with, who was *Bone of his Bone, and Flesh of his Flesh*.

Man, then, could not be fully happy, we see, even in *Paradise*, without a Companion of his own Species, much less now he is driven out. For, let us view him a little in his natural Estate now, since the Fall, as *having his Understanding darkened, his Mind alienated from the Life of God*; as no more able to see his Way wherein he should go, than a Blind Man to describe the Sun: That notwithstanding this, he must receive his Sight e're he can see God: And that if he never sees him, he never can be happy. Let us view him, I say, in this Light or rather this Darknes, and deny the *Necessity of Society* if we can. A Divine Revelation we find is absolutely necessary, we being by Nature as unable to know, as we are to do our Duty. And how shall we learn except one teach us? But was God to do this himself, how should we, with *Moses*, exceedingly quake and fear? Nor would the Ministry of Angels in this Affair be without too much Terror. It is necessary, therefore (at least God's Dealing with us hath shewed it to be so) that we should be *drawn with the Cords of a Man*. And that a Divine Revelation being granted, we should use one another's Assistance, under God, to instruct each other in the Knowledge

ledge, and to exhort one another to the Practice of those Things which belong to our everlasting Peace. This undoubtedly is the great End of Society intended by God since the Fall, and a strong Argument it is, why *Two are better than One*, and why we should *not forsake the assembling ourselves together*.

But farther, let us consider ourselves as *Christians*, as having this natural Veil, in some measure, taken off from our Eyes by the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and so enabled to see what he requires of us. Let us suppose ourselves in some Degree to have *tasted the good Word of Life*, and to have felt the Powers of the World to come, influencing and moulding our Souls into a religious Frame: To be fully and heartily convinced that we are *Soldiers* lifted under the *Banner of Christ*, and have proclaimed open War at our *Baptism against the World, the Flesh and the Devil*; and have, perhaps, frequently renewed our Obligations so to do, by partaking of the *Lord's Supper*: That we are surrounded with Millions of Foes without and infested with a Legion of Enemies within: That we are commanded to shine as Lights in the World, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation: That we are travelling to a long Eternity, and need all imaginable Helps to shew us, and encourage us in our Way thither. Let us, I say reflect on all this, and then how shall each of us cry out, Brethren, what a necessary Thing it is to meet together in *Religious Societies*?

The Primitive *Christians* were fully sensible of this, and therefore we find them continually keeping up Communion with each other: For what says the Scripture? *They continued stedfastly in the Doctrine*

Doctrine and Fellowship, Acts ii. 42. Peter and John were no sooner dismissed by the Great Council, than they haste away to their Companions. And being set at Liberty, says the Text, they came to their own, and told them all these Things which the High Priest had said unto them, Acts iv. 23. Paul, as soon as converted, tarried three Days with the Disciples that were at Damascus, Acts ix. 19. And Peter afterwards, when released from Prison, immediately goes to the House of Mary, where there were great Multitudes assembled, praying, Acts xii. 12. And it is reported of Christians in After-Ages, that they used to assemble together before Day-light, to sing a Psalm to Christ as God. So precious was the Communion of Saints in those Days.

If it be asked, what Advantage we shall reap from such a Procedure now? I answer, much every Way. *Two are better than One, because they have a good Reward for their Labour; For if they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow; but Woe be to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lye together, then they have Heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, Two shall withstand him; and a Three-fold Cord is not quickly broken.*

Which directly leads me to my Second general Head, under which I was to assign some Reasons why *Two are better than One*, especially in *Religious Society*.

1. As Man in his present Condition cannot always stand upright, but by Reason of the Frailty of
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of his Nature cannot but fail; one eminent Reason why *Two are better than One*, or, in other Words, one great Advantage of *Religious Society* is, *That when they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow.*

And an excellent Reason this; indeed! For alas! When we reflect how prone we are to be drawn into Error in our Judgments, and into Vice in our Practice; and how unable; at least how very unwilling, to espy or correct our own Miscarriages; when we consider how apt the World is to flatter us in our Faults; and how few there are so kind as to tell us the Truth; what an inestimable Privilege must it be to have a Set of true, judicious, hearty Friends about us, continually watching over our Souls, to inform us where we have fallen, and warn us that we fall not again for the future. Surely it is such a Privilege that (to use the Words of an *eminent Christian*) we shall never know the Value of, till we come to Glory.

But this is not all; for supposing that we could always stand upright, yet whosoever reflects on the Difficulties of Religion in general, and his own Propensity to Lukewarmness and Indifference in particular, will find that he must be *zealous* as well as *steady*, if ever he expects to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Here then, the Wise Man points out to us another excellent Reason why *Two are better than One*. Again, says he, *If Two lye together, then they have Heat; but how can One be warm alone?*

Which was the next Thing to be considered under the Second General Head, *viz.* to assign a second Reason why *Two are better than One*, because they can impart *Heat* to each other.

It is an Observation no less true than common, That kindled Coals, if placed asunder, soon go out, but if heaped together, quicken and enliven each other, and afford a lasting Heat. The same will hold good in the Case now before us. If *Christians*, kindled by the Grace of God, unite, they will quicken and enliven each other; but if they separate and keep asunder, no marvel if they soon grow cool or tepid. If *Two* or *Three* meet together in *Christ's Name*, they will have Heat; but how can *One* be warm alone?

Observe, *How can one be warm alone?* The Wise Man's expressing himself by way of Question, implies an Impossibility, at least a very great Difficulty, to be warm in Religion without Company, where it may be had. Behold here, then, another excellent Benefit flowing from *Religious Society*; it will keep us *zealous*, as well as *steady*, in the Ways of Godliness.

But to illustrate this a little farther by a Comparison or two. Let us look upon ourselves (as was above hinted) as *Soldiers* lifted under *Christ's Banner*; as going out with *Ten thousand* to meet *One that cometh against us with twenty thousand*; as Persons that are to *wrestle not only with Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, and spiritual Wickednesses in High Places*. And then tell me, all ye that fear God, if it be not an Invaluable Privilege to have a Company of *Fellow Soldiers* continually about us, animating and exhorting each other to stand our Ground, to keep our Ranks, and manfully to follow the *Captain of our Salvation*, though it be through a Sea of Blood?

Lastly, Let us consider ourselves in another View before mentioned, *viz.* as Persons travelling to a *long Eternity*; as rescued by the *free Grace of God*,

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in some Measure, from our natural *Egyptian Bondage*, and marching under the Conduct of our *Spiritual Joshua*, through the *Wilderness of this World*, to the Land of our *Heavenly Canaan*. Let us farther reflect how apt we are to startle at every Difficulty; to cry, *There are Lions! There are Lions in the Way! There are the Sons of Anak* to be grappled with, e're we can possess the *promised Land*: How prone we are, with *Lot's Wife*, to look wishfully back on our *Spiritual Sodom*; or, with the foolish *Israelites*, to long again for the *Flesh-Pots of Egypt*, and to return to our former natural State of Bondage and Slavery. Consider this, my Brethren, and see what a blessed Privilege it will be to have a Set of *Israelites indeed* about us, always reminding us of the Folly of any such cowardly Design, and of the intolerable Misery we shall run into, if we fall in the least short of the *promised Land*.

More might be said on this Particular, did not the Limits of a Discourse of this Nature, oblige me to hasten.

3. To give a Third Reason, mentioned by the Wise Man in the Text, why *Two are better than One*; namely, because they can secure each other from Enemies without. *And if one prevail against him, yet Two shall withstand him; and a Threefold Cord is not quickly broken.*

Hitherto we have considered the Advantage of *Religious Societies*, as a great Preservative against falling (at least dangerously falling) into Sin and Lukewarmness, and that too from our own Corruptions. But what says the Wise Son of *Sirach*? *My Son, when thou goest to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation*: And that not only from inward, but outward Foes; particularly from

from those two grand Adversaries, the *World* and the *Devil*: For no sooner will thine Eye be bent Heavenward, but the former will be immediately diverting it another Way, telling thee thou needest not be *singular* in order to be *religious*; that one may be a *Christian* without going so much out of the *Common Road*.

Nor will the *Devil* be wanting in his *artful* Insinuations; or *impious* Suggestions, to divert or terrify thee from pressing forward, *that thou mayest lay hold on the Crown of Life*. And if he cannot prevail this Way, he will try another undiscerned, but withal more successful, he will employ, perhaps, some of the nearest Relatives, or most powerful Friends, (as he set *Peter* on our *blessed Master*) who will always be bidding thee *spare thyself*; telling thee thou needest not take so much Pains; that it is not so difficult a Matter to get to Heaven as some People would make of it, nor the Way so narrow as others imagine it to be.

But see here the Advantage of Religious Company; for supposing thou findest thyself thus surrounded on every Side, and unable to withstand such *horrid* (though seemingly *friendly*) Counsels, *haste* away to thy Companions, and they will teach thee a truer and better Lesson; they will tell thee, that thou must be *singular* if thou wilt be *religious*; and that it is as impossible for a *Christian*, as for a City set upon a Hill, to be hid: That if thou wilt be an *almost Christian* (and as good be none at all) thou mayest live in the same idle, indifferent Manner, as thou seest most other People do: But if thou wilt be not only *almost*, but *altogether a Christian*, they will inform thee thou must go a great deal further: That thou must not only *faithfully seek*, but *earnestly strive to enter in at the strait Gate*:

Gate: That there is but *One Way* now to Heaven as formerly, *viz.* through the narrow Passage of of a *sound Conversion*: And that in order to bring about this mighty Work, thou must undergo a constant, but necessary Discipline of Fasting, Watching, and Prayer. And that therefore, the only Reason why these Friends give thee such Advice, is, because they are not willing to take so much Pains themselves; or, as our Saviour told *Peter* on a like Occasion, because they *savour not the Things that be of God, but the Things that be of Men.*

This then, is another excellent Blessing arising from *Religious Society*, that Friends can hereby secure each other from those that oppose them. The *Devil* is fully sensible of this, and therefore he has always done his utmost to suppress, and put a Stop to the *Communion of Saints*. This was his grand Artifice at the first planting of the *Gospel*; to persecute the Professors of it, in order to separate them. Which, though God, as he always will, over-ruled for the better; yet, it shews, what an Enmity he has against *Christians assembling themselves together*. Nor has he yet left off his old Stratagem; it being his usual Way to entice us *by ourselves*, in order to tempt us; where, by being destitute of one another's Helps, he hopes to lead us *captive at his Will.*

But, on the contrary, knowing his own Interest is strengthened by *Society*, he would first persuade us to neglect the *Communion of Saints*, and then bid us *stand in the Way of Sinners*, hoping thereby to put us into *the Seat of the Scornful*. *Judas* and *Peter* are melancholy Instances of this. The former had no sooner left his Company at Supper, but he went out and betrayed his Master: And the

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dismal Downfal of the latter, when he would venture himself amongst a Company of Enemies, plainly shews us what the *Devil* will endeavour to do, when he gets us by ourselves. Had *Peter* kept his own Company, he might have kept his Integrity; but a *single Cord*, alas, how quickly was it broken? Our *Blessed Saviour* knew him full well, and therefore it is very observable, that he always sent out his *Disciples Two by Two*.

And now, after so many Advantages to be reaped from *Religious Society*, may we not very justly cry out with the Wise Man in my Text, *Woe be to him that is alone; for when he falleth, he hath not another to lift him up? When he is cold, he hath not a Friend to warm him; when he is assaulted, he hath not a Second to help him to withstand his Enemy.*

III. I now come to my *Third* general Head, under which was to be shewn the several Duties incumbent on every Member of a *Religious Society*, as such, which are three. 1. *Mutual Reproof*; 2. *Mutual Exhortation*; 3. *Mutual assisting and defending each other.*

1. *Mutual Reproof. Two are better than One; for when they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow.*

Now, Reproof may be taken either in a more extensive Sense, and then it signifies our raising a Brother by the gentlest Means, when he falls into Sin and Error; or in a more restrained Signification, as reaching no farther than those little Mis-carriages, which unavoidably happen in the most holy Men living.

The Wise Man in the Text, supposes all of us subject to both: *For when they fall* (says he, there-
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by implying that each of us may fall) *the One will lift up his Fellow*. From whence we may infer, that *when any Brother is overtaken with a Fault, he that is spiritual* (that is, regenerate, and knows the Corruption and Weakness of Human Nature) *ought to restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness*. And why he should do so, the Apostle subjoins a Reason, *considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted; i. e. considering thy own Frailty, lest thou also fall by the like Temptation*.

We are all frail unstable Creatures; and it is merely owing to the *Free Grace and good Providence of God* that we *run not into the same Excess of Riot* with other Men. Every offending Brother, therefore, claims our *Pity* rather than our *Resentment*; and each Member should strive who should be most forward, as well as most gentle, in restoring him to his former State.

But supposing a Person not to be *overtaken*, but to fall *wilfully* into a Crime; yet who art thou that deniest Forgiveness to thy offending Brother? *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall*. Take ye, Brethren, the holy Apostles as eminent Examples for you to learn by, how you ought to behave in this Matter. Consider how quickly they joined the *Right Hand of Fellowship* with Peter, who had so wilfully denied his Master: For we find John and him together but two Days after, *John xx. 2*. And *ver. 19*. we find him assembled with the rest. So soon did they forgive, so soon associate with their sinful, yet relenting Brother — *Let us go and do likewise*.

But there is another kind of Reproof incumbent on every Member of a *Religious Society*; namely, *a gentle Rebuke for some Miscarriages or other, which, though not actually sinful, yet may become*
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the Occasion of Sin. This indeed seems a more easy, but perhaps will be found a more difficult Point than the former: For when a Person has really sinned, he cannot but own his Brethrens Reproof to be just; whereas, when it was only for some little Misconduct, the Pride that is in our Natures, will scarce suffer us to brook it. But however ungrateful this Pill may be to our Brother, yet if we have any Concern for his Welfare, it must be administred by some friendly Hand or other. By all Means then let it be applied; only, like a skilful Physician, *gild* over the ungrateful Medicine, and endeavour, if possible, to *deceive* thy Brother into Health and Soundness. *Let all Bitterness and Wrath, and Malice, and Evil speaking, be put away* from it. Let the Patient know his Recovery is the only Thing aimed at, that thou delightest not *causelessly* to grieve thy Brother; and then thou canst not want Success.

2. *Mutual Exhortation* is the second Duty resulting from the Words of the Text — *Again, if Two lye together, then they have Heat.*

Observe here again, the Wise Man supposes it as impossible for religious Persons to meet together, and not to be the warmer for each other's Company, as for two Persons to lye in the same Bed, and yet freeze with Cold. But now, how is it possible to communicate Heat to each other, without mutually *stirring up the Gift of God* which is in us, by Brotherly Exhortation? Let every Member then of a *Religious Society* write that zealous Apostle's Advice on the Tables of his Heart; *See that ye exhort, and provoke one another to Love, and to good Works; and so much the more as you see the Day of the Lord approaching.* Believe me, Brethren, we have

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Need of Exhortation to rouse up our sleepy Souls, to set us upon our Watch against the Temptations of the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*; to excite us to renounce ourselves, to take up our Crosses, and follow our Blessed Master, and the glorious Company of Saints and Martyrs, *who through Faith have fought the Fight, and are gone before us to inherit the Promises.* A third Part, therefore, of the Time wherein a *Religious Society* meets, seems necessary to be spent in this important Duty: For what avails it to have our Understandings enlightened by pious Reading, unless our Wills are at the same Time inclined, and inflamed by mutual Exhortations, to put it in Practice? Add to this, that this is the Way both to receive and impart Light, and the only Means to preserve and increase that Warmth and Heat which each Person first brought with him; God so ordering this, as all other spiritual Gifts, that *to him that hath, i. e. improves and communicates what he hath, shall be given; but him that hath it not, i. e. does not improve the Heat he hath, shall be taken away even that which he seemed to have.* So needful, so essentially necessary, is Exhortation to the Good of *Society.*

3. Thirdly and lastly, The Text points out another Duty incumbent on every Member of a *Religious Society*, viz. to defend each other from those that do oppose them. *And if one prevail against him, Yet two shall withstand him; and a threefold Cord is not quickly broken.*

Here the Wise Man takes it for granted, that *Offences will come*, nay, and that they *may prevail* too. And this is no more than our *Blessed Master* has long since told us. Not indeed, that there is
any

any Thing in *Christianity itself* that has the least Tendency to give Rise to, or promote such Offences: No, on the contrary, it breathes nothing but Unity and Love.

But so it is, that ever since the fatal Sentence pronounced by God, after our first Parents Fall, *viz I will put Enmity between thy Seed and her Seed; He that is born after the Flesh*, that is, the unregenerate unconverted Sinner, has in all Ages persecuted him that is born after the Spirit: And so it always will be. Accordingly we find an early Proof given of this in the Instance of *Cain and Abel*; and of *Ishmael and Isaac*; of *Jacob and Esau* afterwards. And, indeed, the whole *Bible* contains little else but an History of the great and continued Opposition between the Children of this World and the Children of God. The first *Christians* were remarkable Examples of this; and though those troublesome Times, blessed be God, are now over, yet the Apostle has laid it down as a general Rule, and all that are sincere can experimentally prove the Truth of it. That *they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must (to the End of of the World, in some Degree or other) suffer Persecution*. That therefore this may not make us desert our Blessed Master's Cause, every Member should unite their Forces, in order to stand against it. And for the better effecting this, each would do well, from Time to Time, to communicate his Experiences, Grievances, and Temptations, and beg his Companions (first asking God's Assistance, without which all is nothing) to administer Reproof, Exhortation, or Comfort, as his Case requires: So that if *One cannot prevail against it, yet Two shall withstand it; and a Threefold (much less a many-fold) Cord will not be quickly broken*.

IV. But it is Time for me to proceed to the *Fourth* general Thing proposed, *viz.* to draw an Inference or two from what has been said.

1. And first then, if *Two are better than One*, and the Advantages of *Religious Society* are so many and so great, then it is the Duty of every true *Christian* to set on Foot, establish and promote, as much as in him lyes, *Societies* of this Nature. And I believe we may venture to affirm, that if ever a Spirit of true *Christianity* is revived in the World, it must be brought about by some such Means as this. Motives, surely, cannot be wanting, to stir us up to this commendable and necessary Undertaking: For, granting all hitherto advanced to be of no Force, yet methinks the single Consideration that great Part of our Happiness in Heaven will consist in the *Communion of Saints*; or that the Interest as well as Piety of those Sectarists that differ from us, is strengthened and supported by nothing more than their frequent Meetings; either of these Considerations, I say, one would think, should induce us to do our utmost to copy after their good Example, and settle a lasting and pious *Communion of the Saints* on Earth. Add to this, that we find the Kingdom of Darkness established daily by such like Means; and shall not the Kingdom of *Christ* be set in Opposition against it? Shall the Children of *Belial* assemble and strengthen each other in Wickedness; and shall not the Children of God unite, and strengthen themselves in Piety? Shall *Societies* on *Societies* be countenanced for midnight Revellings, and the promoting of *Nice*, and scarcely one be found intended for the Propagation of Virtue? — Be astonished, O Heavens at this!

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2. But this leads me to a second Inference; namely, to warn Persons of the great Danger those are in, who either by their Subscriptions, Presence, or Approbation, promote *Societies* of a quite opposite Nature to Religion.

And here I would not be understood to mean only those Publick Meetings which are designed manifestly for nothing else but Revellings and Banquetings, for Chambering and Wantonness, and at which a modest *Heathen* would blush to be present; but also those seemingly *innocent* Entertainments and Meetings which the *politer* Part of the World are so very fond of, and spend so much Time in: But which notwithstanding, keep as many Persons out of a Sense of *True Religion*, as Intemperance, Debauchery, or any other Crime whatever. Indeed, whilst we are in this World, we must have proper Relaxations, to fit us both for the Business of our Profession, and Religion. But then, for Persons who call themselves *Christians*, that have solemnly vowed at their *Baptism*, to renounce the *Vanities of this sinful World*; that are commanded in Scripture to abstain from all Appearance of Evil, and to have their Conversation in *Heaven*. For such Persons as these to support Meetings, that (to say no worse of them) are vain and trifling, and have a natural Tendency to draw off our Minds from God, is absurd, ridiculous, and sinful. Surely *Two are not better than One* in this Case: No; it is to be wished there was not *one* to be found concerned in it. The sooner we forsake the *assembling ourselves together* in such a Manner, the better; and no matter how quickly the Cord that holds such *Societies* (was it a Thousand-fold) is broken.

But you, Brethren, have not so learnt *Christ*: But, on the contrary, like true Disciples of your Lord and Master, have by the Blessing of God (as this Evening's Solemnity abundantly testifies) happily formed yourselves into such *Societies*, which if duly attended on, and improved, cannot but strengthen you in your Christian Warfare, and *make you fruitful in every good Word and Work*.

What remains for me to do, but, as was proposed, in the last Place, to close up what has been said, in a Word or two, by Way of Exhortation from the whole, and to beseech you, in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to go on in the Way you have begun; and by a constant conscientious Attendance on your respective *Societies*, to discountenance Vice, encourage Virtue, and *build each other up in the Knowledge and Fear of God*.

Only permit me to *stir up your pure Minds*, by way of Remembrance, and to exhort you, *if there be any Consolation in Christ, any Fellowship of the Spirit*, again and again to consider, that as all *Christians* in general, so all Members of *Religious Societies* in particular, are in an especial Manner, as Houses built upon an Hill; and that therefore it highly concerns you to *walk circumspectly* towards those that are without, and to *take heed to yourselves*, that your *Conversation*, in common Life, be as becometh such an open and peculiar Profession of *the Gospel of Christ*: Knowing that the Eyes of all Men are upon you, narrowly to inspect every Circumstance of your Behaviour; and that every notorious wilful Miscarriage of any single Member will, in some Measure redound to the Scandal and Dishonour of your Fraternity.

Labour, therefore, my beloved Brethren to let your Practice correspond to your Profession: And think not that it will be sufficient for you to plead at the last Day, Lord have we not assembled ourselves together *in thy Name*, and enlivened each other, by *singing Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs?* For verily, I say unto you, notwithstanding this, our Blessed Lord will bid you *depart from him*; nay, that you shall *receive a greater Damnation*, if, in the midst of these great Pretensions, you are found to be *Workers of Iniquity*.

But God forbid that any such Evil should befall you; that there should be ever a *Judas*, ever a Traitor amongst such distinguished Followers of our *Common Master*. No, on the contrary, the Excellency of your Rules, the Regularity of your Meetings, and more especially your pious Zeal in assembling in such a publick and solemn Manner so frequently in the Year, persuade me to think, that you are willing, not barely to *seem*, but to *be in Reality, Christians*; and hope to be found at the *Last-Day*, what you would be esteemed *now, viz. holy, sincere Disciples of a Crucified Redeemer*.

Oh, may you always continue thus minded! and make it your daily, constant Endeavour, both by Precept and Example, to turn all you converse with, more especially those of your own *Societies*, into the same most blessed Spirit and Temper. Thus will you adorn the Gospel of our *Lord Jesus Christ* in all Things: Thus will you anticipate the Happiness of a future State; and by attending on, and improving *the Communion of Saints* on Earth, make yourselves meet to join the Communion

nion, and Fellowship of the Spirits of just Men made perfect, of the Holy Angels, nay of the ever Blessed and Eternal God in Heaven.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, and One Eternal God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour and Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and for ever.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V.

I N T E R C E S S I O N

E V E R Y

C H R I S T I A N ' S D U T Y :

O R,

P R A Y E R and S U P P L I C A T I O N
for Others, as well as Ourselves,

A n E S S E N T I A L P A R T

O F T H E

C H R I S T I A N R E L I G I O N.

Rom. i. 9. For God is my Witness, whom I serve with my Spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make Mention of you always in my Prayers.

By *GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.*
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford.*

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M D C C X X X I X.



S E R M O N V.

INTERCESSION every *Christian's* DUTY.

I T H E S S. V. 25.

Brethren, Pray for us.



If we enquire, why there is so little *Love* to be found among *Christians*, why the very Characteristick, by which every one should know that we are Disciples of the Holy *Jesus*, is almost banished out of the *Christian World* — We shall find it, in a great Measure, owing to a Neglect or superficial Performance of the most Godlike Part of secret Prayer *Intercession*, or imploring the Grace or Mercy of God in behalf of others.

Some forget this Duty of Praying for others, because they seldom remember to pray for themselves: And even good People, who are constant in Praying to their Father which is in Heaven, are often

often so constrained and selfish in their Addresses to the Throne of Grace, that they do not enlarge their Petitions for the Welfare of their Fellow *Christians* as they ought; and thereby fall short of attaining that *Christian Charity*, that unfeigned Love of their Brethren, which their sacred Profession obliges them to aspire after, and without which, though they would *bestow all their Goods to feed the Poor; and even give their Bodies to be burned; yet it would profit them nothing.*

Since then these Things are so, I shall from the Words of the Text (though originally intended to be more confined) endeavour to shew,

- I. *First*, That it is every *Christian's* Duty to pray for Others, as well as for himself.
- II. *Secondly*, Who are Those that we ought to pray for; and in what Manner we should do it. And,
- III. *Thirdly*, I shall offer some Motives to excite all *Christians* to abound in this great Duty of *Intercession.*

- I. *First* then, I shall endeavour to shew, That it is every *Christian's* Duty to pray for Others; as well as for Himself.

Now *Prayer* is a Duty founded on Natural Religion; the very *Heathens* never neglected it, though many *Christian Heathens* amongst us do—: And it is so essential to *Christianity*, that you might as reasonably expect to find a living Man without Breath, as a true *Christian* without the Spirit of Prayer and Supplication — Thus, no
sooner

sooner was *St. Paul* converted, but *behold he prayeth*, saith the Lord Almighty. And thus will it be with every Child of God, as soon as he becomes such: Prayer being truly called, *The natural Cry of the New-born Soul*.

For in the Heart of every True Believer there is a Heavenly Tendency, a Divine Attraction, which as sensibly draws him to converse with God, as the Load-stone attracts the Needle.

A deep Sense of their own Weakness, and of *Christ's* Fulness; a strong Conviction of their Natural Corruption, and of the Necessity of renewing Grace; will not let them *rest from crying Day and Night* to their Almighty Redeemer, that the Divine Image, which they lost in *Adam*, may through His All-powerful Mediation, and the sanctifying Operations of his blessed Spirit, be begun, carried on, and fully perfected both in their Souls and Bodies.

Thus earnest, thus importunate, are all sincere *Christians* in praying for themselves: But then, not having so lively, lasting, and deep a Sense of the Wants of their *Christian* Brethren, they are for the most Part too remiss and defective in their Prayers for *them*—Whereas, was the *Love of God* shed abroad in our Hearts, and did we love our Neighbour in that Manner in which the Son of God our Saviour *loveth us*, and according to his Command and Example, we could not but be as importunate for their Spiritual and Temporal Welfare, as for their own; and as earnestly desire and endeavour that others should share in the Benefits of the Death and Passion of *Jesus Christ* as we ourselves.

Let not any one think, that this is an uncommon Degree of Charity; an high Pitch of Perfection, which every one cannot attain unto; since it is no such Thing. — For if we are all commanded to *Love our Neighbour* (that is every Man) even *as ourselves*, nay to *Lay down our Lives for the Brethren*; then it is the Duty of *all* to pray for their Neighbours as much as for themselves, and by all possible Acts and Expressions of Love and Affection towards them, at all Times, to shew their Readiness even to lay down their Lives for them, if ever it should please God to call them to it.

Our Blessed Saviour as He hath set us an Example, that we should follow his Steps in every Thing else, so hath he more especially in This. — For in that most Divine, that most Perfect and inimitable Prayer (recorded in the 17th of St. *John*) which he put up just before His Passion, we find but *few* Petitions for His own, though *many* for his Disciples Welfare: And in that most perfect Form which He has been pleased to prescribe us, we are taught to say, — not *My*, but *Our Father*, — Thereby to put us in mind, that whenever we approach the Throne of Grace, we ought to pray, — not in our own Name alone, but in the Name of all our Brethren in *Christ*.

Intercession then is certainly a Duty incumbent upon all *Christians*.

II. Whom we are to intercede for, and how this Duty is to be performed, comes next to be considered, — under my *Second General Head*.

I. And

Every CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. 7

1. And first, our *Intercession* must be universal — *I will*, says the Apostle, *that Prayers, Supplications, and Intercession, be made for All Men.* For as God's Mercy is over *All his Works*, as Jesus Christ died to redeem a People out of all Nations and Languages; so, we should pray, that *All Men may come to the Knowledge of the Truth, and be saved.* Many precious Promises are made in Holy Writ, that *the Gospel shall be published through the whole World, that the Earth shall be covered with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.* And therefore it is our Duty not to confine our Petitions to our own Nation, but to pray that all those Nations, who now sit in *Darkness and in the Shadow of Death*, may have the glorious Gospel shine out upon Them, as well as upon Us. But you need not that any Man should teach you This, since Ye yourselves are taught of God, even of Jesus Christ himself, to pray, that *His Kingdom may come*; Part of the Meaning of which Petition is, That God's Ways may be known upon Earth, and His Saving Health among all Nations.

2. Next to the Praying for all Men, we should, according to St. Paul's Rule, pray for Kings; particularly, for our present Sovereign King GEORGE, and all that are put in Authority under Him: That we may lead *quiet Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty* — For, if we consider how heavy the Burden of Government is, and how much the Welfare of any People depends on the Zeal and godly Conversation of Those that have the Rule over them: If we set before us the many Dan-
A 2 gers

gers and Difficulties, to which Governors by their Station are exposed, and the continual Temptations they lye under to Luxury and Self-Indulgence; we shall not only pity, but pray for Them, ——— That He who preserved *Esther*, *David*, and *Josiab*, *unspotted from the World*, amidst the Grandeur of a Court, and gave Success to their Designs, would also preserve them Holy and Unblameable, and prosper all the Works of their Hands upon them.

3. But, *Thirdly*, You ought, in a more especial Manner, to pray for those; whom the *Holy Ghost hath made Overseers over You*. This is what *St. Paul* begs, again and again, of the Churches to whom he writes: ——— *Brethren*, says he in the Text, *Pray for Us*, and again, in his Epistle to the *Ephesians* ——— *Praying always*, says he, *with all Manner of Supplication; and for me also, that I may open my Mouth boldly, to declare the Mystery of the Gospel*. And in another Place, to express his Earnestness in this Request, and the great Importance of their Prayers to Him ——— He bids the Church *strive*, (or, as the original Word signifies, *Be in an Agony*) *together with Him in their Prayers*. And surely, it the great *St. Paul*, that Chosen Vessel, that Favourite of Heaven, needed the most importunate Prayers of his *Christian Converts*; ——— much more do the ordinary Ministers of the Gospel stand in Need of the *Intercession* of their respective Flocks.

And I cannot but in a more especial Manner insist upon this Branch of your Duty; because it is a Matter of such Importance: For no doubt,
 much

much Good is frequently with-held from many, by Reason of their neglecting to pray for their Ministers, which they would have received had they prayed for them as they ought. Not to mention, the People often complain of the want of diligent and faithful Pastors. — But how do they deserve Good Pastors, who will not earnestly pray to God for *such*?

The Church has set a-part Four Seasons in the Year for this Purpose, and to call down a Blessing on those who are to be ordained to any Holy Function: But by how very few are the *Ember Days* observed! And if we will not *Pray to the Lord of the Harvest*, can it be expected, *He will send forth Labourers into his Harvest*?

Besides, What Ingratitude is it, not to pray for your Ministers! For shall They watch and labour in the Word of Doctrine for you, and for your Salvation, and shall not you pray for Them in Return? If *any* bestow Favours on your Bodies, you think it right, meet and your bounden Duty, to pray for them; and shall not they be remembered in your Prayers, who daily feed and nourish your Souls? Add to all this, that Praying for your Ministers, will be a manifest Proof of your believing — That though *Paul* plant, and *Apollos* Water, yet it is God alone who giveth the Increase. And you will also find it the best Means you can use, to promote your own Welfare: Because God, in Answer to your Prayers, may impart a double Portion of his Holy Spirit to them, whereby they will be qualified to deal out to you larger Measures of Knowledge in Spiritual Things, and

be enabled more skilfully *to divide the Word of Truth.*

Would Men but constantly observe this Direction, and when their Ministers are praying in their Name to God, — humbly beseech Him to perform all their Petitions: Or, when They are speaking in God's Name to them, ——— Pray that *the Holy Ghost may fall on them that bear the Word;* we should *then* find a more visible good Effect of their Doctrine, and a greater mutual Love between Ministers and their People. For Ministers Hands would *then* be held up, by the People's Intercession, and the People will never dare to vilify or traduce Those who are the constant Subjects of their Prayers.

4. Next to our Ministers, our *Friends* claim a Place in our *Intercession*; but then we should not content ourselves with Praying in general Terms for them, but suit our Prayers to their particular Circumstances. When *Miriam* was afflicted with a Leprosy from God, *Moses* cried and said, *Lord heal her*: And when the Nobleman came to apply to *Jesus Christ*, in behalf of his child, he said, *Lord, my little Daughter lyeth at the Point of Death. I pray Thee come and heal her.* In like Manner, when any of our Friends are under any afflicting Circumstances, we should endeavour to pray for Them, with a particular Regard to those Circumstances. For Instance, Is a Friend sick? We should pray, That if it be God's good Pleasure, it may not be unto Death; but if otherwise, That he would give him Grace to take his Visitation, that, after this painful Life ended, he may dwell with him in Life everlasting. Is a Friend in Doubt in a
Matter?

Matter? We should lay his Case before God; as *Moses* did that of the Daughters of *Zelophehad*, and pray, that God's Holy Spirit may lead Him unto all Truth. Is he in Want? We should pray, That his Faith may never fail, and that in God's due Time he may be relieved. And in all other Cases, we should not pray for our Friends only *in Generals*, but suit our Petitions to Their *particular Sufferings and Afflictions*; for otherwise, we may never ask perhaps for the Things our Friends *most want*.

It must be confessed, that such a Procedure will oblige us sometimes to break from the Forms we use; but if we accustom ourselves to it, and have a deep Sense of what we ask for, the most illiterate *Christians* will not want Words to express themselves.

We have many noble Instances in Holy Scripture of the Success of this Kind of *particular Intercession*; but none more remarkable than That of *Abraham's* Servant in the Book of *Genesis*—— who being sent to seek a Wife for his Son *Isaac*, prays in a most particular Manner in his Behalf.—— And the Sequel of the Story informs us how remarkably his Prayer was answered. And did *Christians* now pray for their Friends in the same particular Manner, and with the same Faith as *Abraham's* Servant did for his Master: they would, no doubt, in many Instances, receive as visible Answers, and have as much Reason to bless God for Them as He had.

5. But farther, as we ought thus to intercede for our Friends, so in like Manner must we also pray for our *Enemies*. *Bless them that curse you,*
says

says *Jesus Christ, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you*: Which Commands he enforced in the strongest Manner by His own Example, when in the very Agonies and Pangs of Death, He prayed even for his *Murderers, — Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* — This, it must needs be confessed, is a difficult Duty, yet not impracticable to those, who have renounced the Things of this present Life, (from an inordinate Love of which alone all Enmities arise) and who knowing the terrible *Woes* denounced against Those who offend Christ's *Little Ones*, can, out of real Pity, and a Sense of their Danger, pray for those by whom such Offences come.

6. Lastly, to conclude this Head, — We should *intercede* for All that are any Ways afflicted in Mind, Body, or Estate; — for All who desire, and stand in need of our Prayers: — And for All who do not pray for themselves.

And Oh! that All who hear me, would set apart some Time every Day for the due Performance of this most necessary Duty! In Order to which,

I shall now proceed to the *Third General Thing* proposed; namely,

III. To shew the Advantages, and offer some Considerations to excite you to the Practice of *Daily Intercession*.

1. And *First*, it will fill your Hearts with *Love to one another*. — He that every Day intercedes at the Throne of Grace for all Mankind, cannot

cannot but in a short Time be filled with Love and Charity to *all*: And the frequent Exercise of his Love in this Manner, will insensibly enlarge his Heart, and make him Partaker of that exceeding Abundance of it which is in *Christ Jesus* our Lord! Envy, Malice, Revenge, and such like hellish Tempers, can never long harbour in a gracious Intercessor's Breast; — But he will be filled with Joy, Peace, Meekness, Long-suffering, and all other Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit. By frequently laying his Neighbour's Wants before God, he will be touched with a Fellow-feeling of them; — He will rejoice with those that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep. — Every Blessing bestowed on Others, instead of exciting Envy in him, will be looked on as an Answer to his particular Intercession, and fill his Soul with *Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*.

Indeed I will not affirm, that this Blessed Temper of Mind can be acquired all at once: No, — as other Graces, so must this *Christian Love* be obtained by Degrees. But do you abound in Acts of general and particular Intercessions; and when you hear of your Neighbour's Faults, instead of relating them to, and exposing them before others, — Lay them in secret before God, and beg of him to correct and amend them. When you hear of a notorious Sinner, instead of thinking, *You do well to be angry*; beg of *Jesus Christ* to convert and make him a Monument of his free Grace: And you cannot imagine what a Blessed Alteration this Practice will make in your Heart, and how much you will increase Day by Day in
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the Spirit of Love and Meekness towards all Mankind!

But farther to excite you to the constant Practice of this *Duty of Intercession*; consider the many Instances given us in Holy Scripture, of the Power and Efficacy of it. Great and Excellent Things are there recorded as the Effects of this Divine Employ. It has stopt Plagues, it has opened and shut Heaven; and has frequently turned away God's Fury from his People. How was *Abimelech's* House freed from the Disease God sent amongst them, at the *Intercession* of *Abraham*; and when *Phineas* stood up and prayed, how soon did the Plague cease! When *Daniel* humbled and afflicted his Soul, and interceded for the Lord's Inheritance, how quickly was an Angel dispatched to tell him, *His Prayer was heard!* And, to mention but one Instance more. How does God own Himself as it were quite overcome with the Importunity of *Moses*, when he was interceding for his idolatrous People, *Let me alone*, says God!

This sufficiently shews, I could almost say, the Omnipotency of *Intercession*, and how we may, like *Jacob*, wrestle with God, and by an holy Violence prevail both for Ourselves and Others. And no doubt 'tis owing to the secret and prevailing *Intercessions* of the few Righteous Souls who still remain among us, that God has yet spared this miserable sinful Nation: For were there not some such Faithful ones, like *Moses*, left to stand in the Gap, — We should soon be destroyed even as was *Sodom*, and reduced to Ashes like unto *Gomorra*.

But, to stir you up yet farther to this Godlike Exercise of *Intercession*, consider that, in all probability, it is the frequent Employment even of the Glorified Saints: For though they are delivered from the Burthen of the Flesh, and restored to the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God; yet as their Happiness cannot be perfectly consummated 'till the Resurrection of the Last Day, when all their Brethren will be glorified with them — We cannot but think they are often importunate in beseeching our Heavenly Father, shortly to accomplish the Number of his Elect, and to hasten his Kingdom. And shall not we, who are on Earth, be often exercised in this Divine Employ with the Glorious Company of *the Spirits of Just Men made perfect*? Since our Happiness is so much to consist in the Communion of Saints in the Church Triumphant *above*, shall we not frequently *intercede* for the Church Militant *here below*; and earnestly beg, that we may all be One, even as the Holy *Jesus* and his Father are One, that we may also be made perfect in One?

To provoke you to this Great Work and Labour of Love, — Remember, that it is the never-ceasing Employments of the Holy and Highly exalted *Jesus* Himself, who sits at the Right Hand of God to hear all our Prayers, and to make continual *Intercession* for us! So that He who is constantly employed in *interceding* for Others, is doing *that* on Earth, which the Eternal Son of God is always doing in Heaven.

Imagine therefore, when you are lifting up Holy Hands in Prayer for one another, — That you see the Heavens opened, and the Son of God in all His Glory, as the Great High Priest of your
 Salvation

Salvation, offering up and pleading for you the All-sufficient Merit of his Sacrifice before the Throne of his Heavenly Father! — Join then Your *Intercession* with His, and beseech Him that *they* may through Him come up as Incense, and be received as a Sweet-smelling Savour, acceptable in the Sight of God! This Imagination will strengthen your Faith, excite a holy Earnestness in your Prayers, and make you wrestle with God, as *Jacob* did, when he saw Him Face to Face and his Life was preserved; as *Abraham*, when he pleaded for *Sodom*; and as *Jesus Christ* himself, when He prayed, being in an Agony, so much the more earnestly the Night before his bitter Passion!

And now, Brethren, What shall I say more, since *You are taught of Jesus Christ Himself to abound in Love*, and in this *Good Work of praying* for one another! — However, I cannot but recommend to you one general Means in order to make your *Intercession* more effectual, that is, — To lead such Lives, as may make your Prayers *accepted in the Beloved*. *The effectual fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much*, saith St. James. *You shall go to my Servant Job, says God, and He shall pray for You*. It is This, it is This, my Brethren, must make your *Intercessions* pierce the Clouds! For *the Prayers of the Wicked are an Abomination to the Lord*. Would you therefore prevail with God for Others, *Be Holy, even as God is Holy* yourselves: Labour daily after fresh Degrees of Grace, and your *Intercessions* will acquire fresh Degrees of Acceptance and Efficacy in Heaven.

Do

Do but walk as becometh the Gospel of Jesus Christ; be but in earnest about *Working out your own eternal Salvation*; and your *Intercessions* will Then come forth as *Incense before God*, and the *lifting up of your Hands* be as an *Evening Sacrifice* — Though ever so mean, though as poor as *Lazarus*, you will then become *Benefactors* to all Mankind; Thousands, and Twenty times Ten Thousands, will then be *Blessed for your Sakes!* And after you have employed a few Years in this *Divine Exercise here*, you will be translated to that *Happy Place*, where you have so often wished others might be advanced; and be exalted to sit at the *Right Hand* of our *All-powerful, All-prevailing Intercessor*, in the *Kingdom of his Heavenly Father hereafter*.

However, I cannot but in an especial Manner press This upon you *now*, because all ye, amongst whom I have now been Preaching, in all Probability, will see me no more — For I am now going (I trust under the Conduct of God's most Holy Spirit) from you, knowing not what shall befall me: I need therefore your most importunate *Intercessions*, that nothing may move me from my *Duty*, and that I may not count even my *Life* dear unto myself, so that I may finish my *Course* with *Joy*, and the *Ministry* I have received of the *Lord Jesus*, to testify the *Gospel of the Grace of God*.

Whilst I have been here, to the best of my *Knowledge*, I have not failed to declare unto you the *whole Will of God*. — and though my *Preaching* may have been a *Savour of Death*
unto

unto Death to some; yet I trust it has been also *a Savour of Life unto Life* to others: And therefore I earnestly hope that those will not fail to remember me in their Prayers. As for my own Part, the many unmerited Kindnesses I have received from you, will not suffer me to forget you: Out of the Deep therefore, I trust, shall my Cry come unto God; and whilst the Winds and Storms are blowing over me, unto the Lord will I make my Supplication for you. For it is but a little while, and *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ*; where I must give a strict Account of the Doctrine I have preached, and You of your Improvement under it. And Oh! that I may never be called out as a swift Witness, against any of those my dear Brethren in *Christ*, for whose Salvation I have sincerely, though too faintly, longed and laboured!

It is true, I have been censured by some, as acting out of sinister and selfish Views: *But it is a small Matter with me not to be judged by Man's Judgment*; I hope my Eye is single; but I beseech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of God in *Christ Jesus*, pray that it may be more so! and that I may increase with the Increase of Grace in the Knowledge and Love of God, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

And now, Brethren, what shall I say more? I could wish to continue my Discourse much longer: For I can never fully express the Desire of my Soul towards you! — Finally therefore, Brethren, *Whatsoever Things are Holy, whatsoever Things are Pure, whatsoever Things are*
Honest,

Every CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. 19

Honest, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Hopes of our appearing to the Comfort of each other at the awful Tribunal of Jesus Christ, — Think of the Things that you have heard, and of those which your Pastors have declared; and will yet declare unto you; and continue under their Ministry to work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling: So that whether I should never see you any more, or whether it shall please God to bring me back again at any Time, I may always have the Satisfaction of knowing that your Conversation is such as becometh the Gospel of Christ.

I almost persuade myself, that I could willingly suffer *all Things*, so that it might any ways promote the Salvation of your precious and immortal Souls; and I beseech you, as my last Request, *Obey them that have the Rule over you in the Lord*; and be always ready to attend on their Ministry, as it is your bounden Duty. Think not that I desire to have myself exalted at the Expence of another's Character, but rather think this, *Not to have any Man's Person too much, in Admiration; but esteem all your Ministers highly in Love, as they justly deserve, for their Work's Sake.*

And now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His Grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an Inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified. May God reward you for all your *Works of Faith, and Labour of Love*; and make you to abound more and more in every good *Word and Work* towards all Men. May he

he truly convert all that have been convinced, and awaken all that are *Dead in Trespasses and Sins!* May he confirm all that are wavering! And may you all go on from one Degree of Grace unto another, till you arrive unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of *Christ*; and thereby be made meet to stand before that God, *in whose Presence is the Fulness of Joy, at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures for ever more!*

Amen! Amen!

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VI.

T H E

Great D U T Y

O F

F A M I L Y R E L I G I O N :

O R,

J O S H U A ' s Resolution worthy
the Imitation of every Master of
a F A M I L Y .

Job. i. 5. And it was so, when the Days of their Feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the Morning, and offered Burnt-Offerings according to the Number of them all; for Job said, It may be that my Sons have sinned, and cursed God in their Hearts. Thus did Job continually.

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A. B.,
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

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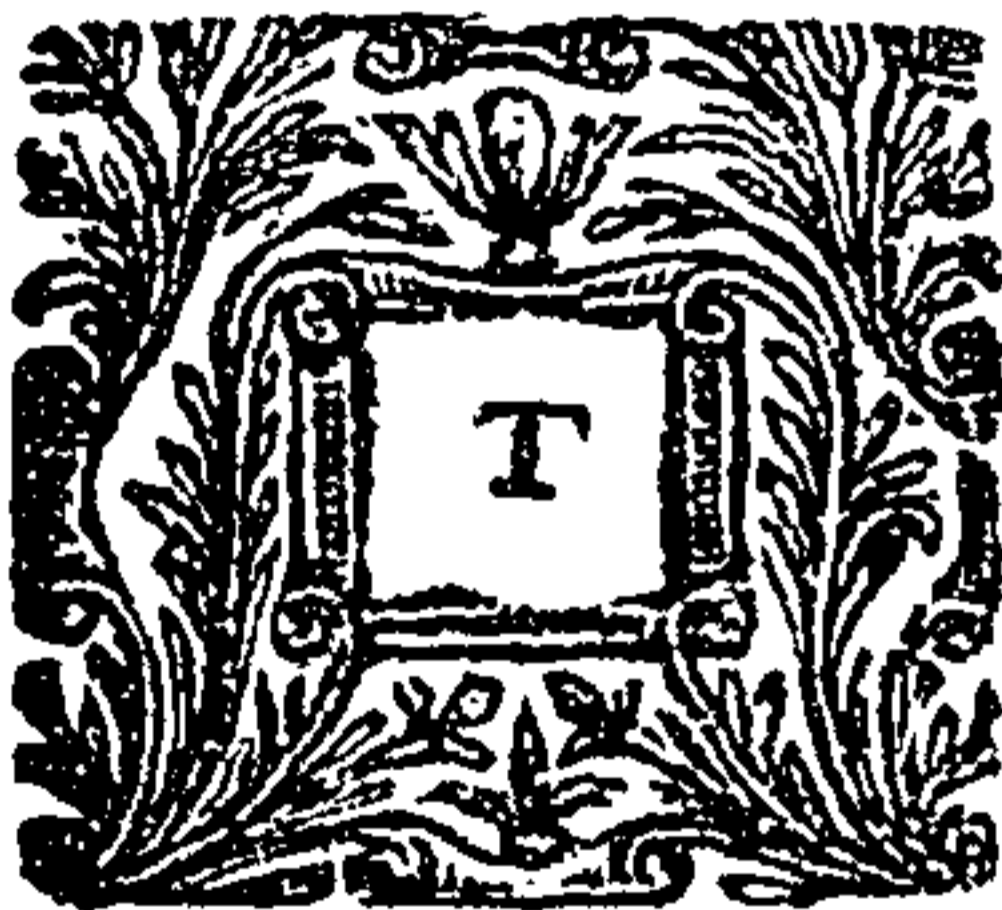


S E R M O N VI.

The great Duty of FAMILY-RELIGION.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15

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



THESE Words contain the holy Resolution of pious *Joshua*, who having in a most moving affectionate Discourse recounted to the *Israelites* what great Things God had done for them, in the Verse immediately going before the Text, comes to draw a proper Inference from what he had been delivering; and acquaints them, in the most pressing Terms, that since God had been so exceeding gracious unto them, they could do no less than, out of Gratitude for such uncommon Favours and Mercies, dedicate both themselves and Families to his Service. *Now therefore,* says he, Verse 14. *fear the Lord, and serve him in Sincerity and Truth, and put away the Gods which your Fathers served on the other Side of the Flood.* And by the same engaging Motive does the

the

the Prophet *Samuel* afterwards enforce their Obedience to the Commandment of God, 1 *Sam.* xii. 24. *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in Truth, with all your Heart; for consider (says he) how great Things he hath done for you.* But then, that they might not excuse themselves (as too many might be apt to do) by his giving them a bad Example, or think he was laying heavy Burdens upon them, whilst he himself touched them not with one of his Fingers, he tells them in the Verse out of which the Text is taken, that whatever Regard they might pay to the Doctrine he had been preaching, yet he (as all Ministers ought to do) was resolved to live up to and practise it himself: *Chuse you therefore, says he, whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your Fathers served, or the Gods of the Amorites, in whose Land ye dwell: But as for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

A Resolution this worthy of *Joshua*, and no less becoming, no less necessary for every true Son of *Joshua*, that is intrusted with the Care and Government of a Family in our Day: And, if it was ever seasonable for Ministers to preach up, or People to put in Practice *Family Religion*, it was never more so than in the present Age; since it is greatly to be feared, that out of those many Households that call themselves *Christians*, there are but few that serve God in their respective Families as they ought.

It is true indeed, visit our Churches, and you may perhaps see something of the *Form of Godliness* still subsisting among us; but even that is scarcely to be met with in private Houses. So that were the blessed Angels to come, as in the patriarchal Age, and observe our spiritual Oeconomy

at Home, would they not be tempted to say as *Abraham* said to *Abimelech*, *Surely, the Fear of God is not in this Place?* Gen. xx. 12.

How such a general Neglect of *Family-Religion* first began to overspread the *Christian World*, is difficult to determine. As for the primitive *Christians*, I am positive it was not so with them: No, they had not so learned *Christ*, as falsely to imagine Religion was to be confined solely to their Assemblies for publick Worship; but, on the contrary, behaved with such Piety and exemplary Holiness in their private Families, that *St. Paul* often styles their House a Church. *Salute such a one, says he, and the Church which is in his House.* And, I believe, we must for ever despair of seeing a primitive Spirit of Piety revived in the World, till we are so happy as to see a Revival of primitive *Family-Religion*; and Persons unanimously resolving with good old *Josua*, in the Words of the Text, *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

From which Words I shall beg Leave to insist on these Three Things.

I. *First*, That it is the Duty of every Governor of a Family to take Care, that not only he himself, but also that those committed to his Charge, *serve the Lord.*

II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to shew after what Manner a Governor and his Household ought to *serve the Lord.*

III. *Thirdly*, and *lastly*, I shall offer some Motives in order to excite all Governors, with their respective Households, to *serve the Lord* in the Manner that shall be recommended.

And *First*, I am to shew that it is the Duty of every Governor of a Family to take Care.

that not only he himself, but also, that those committed to his Charge, should *serve the Lord.*

And this will appear, if we consider that every Governor of a Family ought to look upon himself as obliged to act in three Capacities: As a Prophet, to instruct; as a Priest, to pray for and with; as a King, to govern, direct, and provide for them. It is true indeed the latter of these, *viz.* their kingly Office, they are not so frequently deficient in, (nay in this they are generally solicitous;) but as for the two former, *viz.* their priestly and prophetick Office, like *Gallio*, they care for no such Things. But however indifferent some Governors may be about it, yet they may be assured, that God will require a due Discharge of these Offices at their Hands. For if, as the Apostle argues, *He that does not provide for his own House, in temporal Things, has denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel;* to what greater Degree of Apostasy! must he have arrived, who takes no Thought to provide for the spiritual Welfare of his Family!

But farther, Persons are generally very liberal of their Invectives against the Clergy, and think they justly blame the Conduct of that Minister who does not take heed to and watch over the Flock, of which the *Holy Ghost* has made him Overseer: But may not every Governor of a Family be in a lower Degree liable to the same Censure, who takes no Thought for those Souls that are committed to his Charge? For every House is as it were a little Parish, every Governor (as was before observed) a Priest, every Family a Flock: And if any of them perish through the Go-

Governor's Neglect, their Blood will God require at their Hands.

Was a Minister to disregard teaching his People publicly, and from House to House, and to excuse himself by saying, that he had enough to do to work out his own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, without concerning himself with that of others; would not any one be apt to think such a Minister to be like the unjust Judge, *One that neither feared God, nor regarded Man?* And yet, odious as such a Character would be, it is no worse than that Governor of a Family deserves, who thinks himself obliged only to save his own Soul, without paying any regard to the Souls of his Household. For (as was above hinted) every House is as it were a Parish, and every Master is concerned to secure, as much as in him lies, the Spiritual Prosperity of every one under his Roof, as any Minister whatever is obliged to look to the Spiritual Welfare of every individual Person under his Charge.

What Precedents Men, who neglect their Duty in this Particular, can plead for such Omission, I cannot tell: Doubtless not the Example of holy *Job*, who was so far from imagining that he had no Concern, as Governor of a Family, with any one's Soul but his own, that the Scripture acquaints us, *When the Days of his Children's Feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and offered Burnt-Offerings according to the Number of them all; for Job said, it may be that my Sons have sinned and cursed God in their Hearts: Thus did Job continually.* Nor can they plead the Practice of good old *Joshua*, whom, in the Text, we find as much concerned for his Household's Welfare as his own. Nor lastly, that of *Cornelius*, who feared

God, not only himself, but with all his House: And were Christians but of the same Spirit of Job, Joshua, and the Gentile Centurion, they would act as Job, Joshua, and Cornelius did.

But, alas! if this be the Case, and all Governors of Families ought not only to serve the Lord themselves, but likewise to see that their respective Households do so too; what will then become of those who do not only neglect serving God themselves, but also make it their Business to ridicule and scoff at any of their House that do? Who are not content with *not entering into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves; but those also that are willing to enter in they hinder.* Surely such Men are Factors for the Devil indeed. Surely their Damnation slumbereth not: For although God, in his good Providence, may suffer such Stumbling-blocks to be put in his Children's Ways, and suffer their greatest Enemies to be those of their own Households, for a Trial of their Sincerity, and Improvement of their Faith; yet we cannot but pronounce a *Woe* against those Masters *by whom such Offences come.* For if those that only take Care of their own Souls can scarcely be saved, where will such monstrous profane and wicked Governors appear?

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

II. *Second Thing* proposed, *viz.* To shew after what Manner a Governor and his Household ought to *serve the Lord.*

1. And the *first Thing* I shall mention is reading the Word of God. This is a Duty incumbent on every private Person. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, is a Precept*

cept given by our Blessed Lord indifferently to all: But much more so ought every Governor of a Family to think it in a peculiar Manner spoken to himself, because (as hath been already proved) he ought to look upon himself as a Prophet, and therefore, agreeable to such a Character, as bound to instruct those under his Charge in the Knowledge of the Word of God.

This we find was the Order God gave his peculiar People of *Israel*: For thus spake his Representative *Moses*, *Deuteronomy* vi. 6, 7. *These Words, that is, the Scripture Words, which I command thee this Day, shall be in thy Heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children, that is, as it is generally explained, Servants, as well as Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy House.* From whence we may infer, that the only Reason, why so many neglect to read the Words of Scripture diligently to their Children is, because the Words of Scripture are not in their Hearts: For if they were, out of the Abundance of the Heart their Mouth will speak.

Besides, Servants as well as Children are, for the Generality, very ignorant, and mere Novices in the Laws of God: And how shall they know, unless some one teach them? And what more proper to teach them by, than the lively Oracles of God, *which are able make them wise unto Salvation?* And who more proper to instruct them by these lively Oracles, than Parents and Masters, who (as hath been more than once observed) are as much concerned to feed them with spiritual as with bodily Bread, Day by Day.

But if these Things be so, what a miserable Condition are those unhappy Governors in, who are so far from feeding those committed to their Care with the sincere Milk of the Word, to the

Intent they may grow thereby, that they neither search the Scripture themselves, nor are careful to explain them to others? Such Families must be in a happy Way indeed to do their Master's Will, who take such prodigious Pains to know it! Would one not imagine that they had turned Converts to the Church of *Rome*; that they thought *Ignorance* the Mother of *Devotion*; that those were to be condemned as Hereticks who read their *Bibles*? And yet how few Families are there amongst us, who do not act after this unseemly Manner! But *shall I praise them in this? I praise them not: Brethren, the Thing ought not so to be.*

2. Pass we on now to the second Means whereby every Governor, and his Household ought to serve the Lord, *viz. Family Prayer.*

This is a Duty, though as much neglected, yet as absolutely necessary as the former. *Reading* is a good Preparative for *Prayer*, as *Prayer* is an excellent Means to render *Reading* effectual. And the Reason why every Governor of a Family should join both these Exercises together is plain, because a Governor of a Family cannot perform his *Priestly Office* (which we before observed, he is in some Degree invested with) without performing this Duty of *Family Prayer.*

We find it therefore remarked, when Mention is made of *Cain* and *Abel's* offering Sacrifices, that they brought them. But to whom did they bring them? Why, in all Probability to their Father *Adam*, who as Priest of the Family, was to offer Sacrifice in their Names. And so likewise ought every spiritual Son of the second *Adam*, who is intrusted with the Care of an Household, to offer up the spiritual Sacrifices of Supplications and Thanksgivings, acceptable to God through *Jesus Christ,*

Christ, in the Presence and Name of all who wait upon, or eat Meat at his Table.

Thus we read our Blessed Lord behaved, when he tabernacled amongst us: For it is said often, that *he was alone* praying with his twelve Disciples, which was then his little Family. And he himself has promised a particular Blessing to joint Supplications: *For wheresoever, says he, two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* And again, *if two or three are agreed touching any Thing they shall ask, it shall be given them.* Add to this, that we are commanded by the Apostle to *pray always, with all Manner of Supplications,* which doubtless includes *Family Prayer.* And holy *Josua*, when he set up the good Resolution in the Text, that he and his Household would *serve the Lord*, certainly resolved withal to pray with his Family, which is one of the best Testimonies they could give of their serving him.

Besides, there are no Families but what have some common Blessings, of which they have been all Partakers, to give Thanks for; some common Crosses and Afflictions, which they are to pray against, some common Sins which they are all to lament, and bewail: But how can this be done without joining together in one common Act of Humiliation, Supplication, and Thanksgiving, is difficult to devise.

From all which Considerations put together, it is evident, that *Family Prayer* is a great and necessary Duty; and consequently, those Governors that neglect it are certainly without Excuse. And it is much, if they live without *Family Prayer*, they live without *God in the World.*

And yet such an hateful Character as this is, it is to be feared, that, was God to find out an Angel to destroy us, as he did once to destroy the *Egyptian* First-born, and withal give him a Commission, *as then*, to spare no Houses but where they saw the Blood of the Lintel sprinkled on the Door-post, so *now* to let no Families escape but those that called upon him in Morning and Evening Prayer; few would remain unhurt by his avenging Sword. *Christians* shall I term such Families, or *Heathens*? Doubtless they deserve not the Name of *Christians*; and *Heathens* will surely rise up in Judgment against such profane Families of this Generation: For they had always their Household Gods, whom they worshipped, and whose Assistance they frequently invoked. And a pretty Pass those Families surely are arrived at, who must be sent to School to *Pagans*. But will not the Lord be avenged on such profane Households as these? Will he not pour out his Fury upon those that call not upon his Name?

3. But it is Time for me to hasten to the third and last Means I shall recommend, whereby every Governor ought with his Household to *serve the Lord*, viz. by *catechizing* and *instructing* their Children and Servants, and bringing them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.

That this, as well as the two former, is a Duty incumbent on every Governor of an House, appears from that famous Encomium or Commendation God gives of *Abraham*. *I know*, says the most High, *that he will command his Children and his Household after him to keep the Way of the Lord, to do justice and Judgment*. And indeed scarce any thing is more frequently pressed upon us in Holy Writ, than this Duty of *Catechizing*. Thus
says

says God in a Passage before cited, *Thou shalt teach these Words diligently unto thy Children.* And Parents are commanded in the *New Testament* to *breed up their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.* The Holy Psalmist acquaints us, that one great End why God did so great Wonders for his People was, *to the Intent that when they grew up they should shew their Children, or Servants, the same.* And in *Deuteronomy*, Chap. vi. at the 20th and following Verses, God strictly commands his People to instruct their Children in the true Nature of the ceremonial Worship, when they should enquire about it, as he supposed they would do, in Time to come. And if Servants and Children were to be instructed in the Nature of *Jewish Rites*, much more ought they *now* to be initiated and grounded in the Doctrines and first Principles of the Gospel of *Christ*: Not only because it is of a Revelation, which has brought Life and Immortality to a fuller and clearer Light, but also because many Seducers are gone abroad into the World, who do their utmost Endeavour to destroy not only the Superstructure, but likewise to sap the very Foundation of our most Holy Religion.

Would then the present Generation have their Posterity be true Lovers and Honourers of God, Masters and Parents must take *Solomon's* good Advice, and train up and catechize their respective Households in the Way wherein they should go.

I am aware but of one Objection that can, with any Shew of Reason, be urged against what has been advanced; which is, that such a Procedure as this will take up too much Time, and hinder Families too long from their worldly Business. But it is much to be questioned whether Persons that
start

start such an Objection are not of the same hypocritical Spirit as the Traytor *Judas*, who had Indignation against devout *Mary*, for being so profuse of her Ointment, in anointing our blessed Lord, and asked why it might not be sold for two hundred Pence, and given to the Poor. For has God given us so much Time to work for ourselves, and shall we not allow some small Pittance of it, Morning and Evening, to be devoted to his more immediate Worship and Service? Have not People read, that it is God who gives Men Power to get Wealth, and therefore that the best Way to prosper in the World is to secure his Favour? And has not our blessed Lord himself promised, that if we seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, all outward Necessaries shall be added unto us?

Abraham, no doubt, was a Man of as great Business as such Objectors may be; but yet he would find Time to command his Household to serve the Lord. Nay, *David* was a King, and consequently had a great deal of Business upon his Hands; yet notwithstanding, he professes that he would walk in his House with a perfect Heart. And, to instance but one more, holy *Joshua* was a Person certainly engaged very much in temporal Affairs; and yet he solemnly declares before all *Israel*, that as for him and his Household, they would serve the Lord. And did Persons but redeem their Time, as *Abraham*, *David*, or *Joshua* did, they would no longer complain that Family Duties kept them too long from the Business of the World.

III. But my Third and last general Head, under which I was to offer some Motives, in order to excite all Governors, with their respective Households, to serve the Lord in the
Manner

Manner before recommended, I hope, will serve instead of a thousand Arguments, to prove the Weakness and Folly of any such Objection.

1. And the first Motive I shall mention is the Duty of Gratitude, you that are Governors of Families owe to God.—Your Lot, every one must confess, is cast into a fair Ground! Providence hath given you a goodly Heritage, above many of your fellow Creatures, and therefore, out of a Principle of Gratitude, you ought to endeavour, as much as in you lies, to 'make every Person of your respective Household to call upon him as long as they live: Not to mention that the Authority, with which God has invested you as Parents and Governors of Families, is a Talent committed to your Trust, and which you are bound to improve to your Master's Honour. In other Things we find Governors and Parents can exercise Lordship over their Children and Servants readily, and frequently enough can say to one, *Go*, and he goeth; and to another *Come*, and he cometh; to a third, *Do this*, and he doeth it. And shall this Power be so often employed in your own Affairs, and never exerted in the Things of God? Be astonished, O Heaven, at this!

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

2. But *Secondly*, if *Gratitude* to God will not, methinks, *Love* and *Pity* to your Children should
 move

move you, with your respective Families, to *serve the Lord*.

Most People express a great Fondness for their Children: Nay so great, that very often their own Lives are wrapped up in those of their Offspring. *Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb?* says God by his Prophet *Isaiab*. He speaks of it as a monstrous Thing, and scarce credible. But the Words immediately following affirm it to be possible, *Yea, they may forget*; and Experience also assures us they may. *Father and Mother may both forsake their Children*: For what greater Degree of Forgetfulness can they express towards them, than to neglect the Improvement of their Part, and not bring them up in the Knowledge and Fear of God?

It is true indeed, Parents seldom forget to provide for their Childrens Bodies, (though it is to be feared, some Men are so far sunk beneath the Beasts that perish, as to neglect even that) but then how often do they forget, or rather, when do they remember to secure the Salvation of their immortal Souls? But is this their Way of expressing their Fondness for the Fruit of their Bodies? is this the best Testimony they can give of their Affection to the Darling of their Hearts? Then was *Delilah* fond of *Sampson*, when she delivered him up into the Hands of the *Philistines*: Then were these Ruffians well affected to *Daniel*, when they threw him into a Den of Lions.

3. But *Thirdly*, if neither *Gratitude* to God, nor *Love* and *Pity* to your Children, will prevail on you; yet let a Principle of common *Honesty* and *Justice* move you to set up the Holy Resolution in the Text.

This

This is a Principle which all Men would be thought to act upon. But certainly, if any may be truly censured for their Injustice, none can be more liable to such Censure than those who think themselves injured if their Servants withdraw themselves from their bodily Work, and yet they in Return take no Care of their inestimable Souls. For is it just that Servants should spend their Time and Strength in their Master's Service, and Masters not at the same Time give them what is just and equal for their Service?

It is true, some Men may think they have Time enough when they give unto their Servants Food and Raiment, and say, Did not I bargain with thee for so much a Year? But if they give them no other than this, what do they less for their very Beasts? But are not Servants better than they? Doubtless, they are! And however Masters may put off their Convictions for the present, they will find a Time will come, when they shall know they ought to have given them some spiritual as well as temporal Wages, and the Cry of those that have mowed down their Fields, will enter into the Ears of the Lord of *Sabaoth*.

4. But *Fourthly*, if neither *Gratitude* to God, *Pity* to Children, nor a Principle of common *Justice* to Servants, are sufficient to balance all Objections; yet let that darling, that prevailing Motive of *Self-Interest* turn the Scale, and engage you with your respective Households to *serve the Lord*.

This weighs greatly with you in other Matters: Be then persuaded to let it have a due and full Influence on you in this: And if it has, if you have but Faith as a Grain of Mustard-Seed, how can you avoid believing that promoting *Family Religion* would be the best Means to promote your own
temporal

'temporal as well as eternal Welfare? For *Godliness has the Promise of the Life that now is, as well as that which is to come.*

Besides, you all, doubtless, wish for honest Servants, and pious Children: And to have them prove otherwise, would be as great a Grief to you as it was to *Elijah* to have a treacherous *Gebazi*, or *David* to be troubled with a rebellious *Absalom*. But how can it be expected they should learn their Duty, except those set over them take Care to teach it them? Is it not as reasonable to expect you should reap where you had not sown, or gather where you had not sowed?

Did *Christianity*, indeed, give any Countenance to Children and Servants to disregard their *Parents and Masters according to the Flesh*, or represent their Duty to them as inconsistent with their entire Obedience to their *Father and Master which is in Heaven*, there might then be some Pretence to neglect instructing them in the Principles of such a Religion. But since the Precepts of this pure and undefiled Religion are all of them Holy, Just and Good; and the more they are taught their Duty to God, the better they will perform their Duties to you; methinks then to neglect the Improvement of their Souls, out of a Dread of spending too much Time in religious Duties, is acting quite contrary to your own Interest as well as Duty.

5. *Fifthly* and lastly, If neither *Gratitude* to God, *Love* to your Children, common *Justice* to your Servants, nor even that most prevailing Motive *Self-Interest*, will excite; yet let a Consideration of the *Terrors of the Lord* persuade you to put in Practice the pious Resolution in the Text. Remember the Time will come, and that perhaps very shortly, when we must all appear before the
Judgment

Judgment Seat of *Christ*; where we must give a solemn and strict Account how we have had our Conversation, in our respective Families in this World. How will you endure to see your Children and Servants (who ought to be your Joy and Crown of Rejoicing in the Day of our Lord *Jesus Christ*) coming out as so many swift Witnesses against you; cursing the Father that begot them, the Womb that bore them, the Paps which they have sucked, and the Day they ever entered into your Houses? Think you not the Damnation which Men must endure for their own Sins will be sufficient, that they need load themselves with the additional Guilt of being accessory to the Damnation of others also? Oh consider this, all ye that forget to serve the Lord with your respective Households, *lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you!*

But God forbid, Brethren, that any such Evil should befall you: No, rather will I hope that you have been, in some Measure, convinced by what has been said of the great Importance of *Family Religion*; and therefore are ready to cry out, in the Words immediately following the Text, *God forbid that I should forsake the Lord*; and again, Verse 11. *Nay, but we will, with our several Households, serve the Lord.*

And that there may be always such a Heart in you, let me, to conclude, exhort all Governors of Families, in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, often to reflect on the inestimable Worth of their own Souls, and the infinite Ransom, even the precious Blood of *Jesus Christ*, which has been paid down for them. Remember, I beseech you remember, that you are fallen Creatures, that you are by
Nature

Nature lost to and estranged from God; and that you can never be restored to your primitive Happiness, till by being born again of the Holy Ghost, you arrive at your primitive State of Purity, have the Image of God re-instamped upon your Souls, and are thereby made meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance with the Saints in Light. Do, I say, but seriously and frequently reflect on, and act as Persons that believe such important Truths, and you will no more neglect your Family's Spiritual Welfare than your own. No, the *Love of God*, which will then be *shed abroad in your Hearts*, will *constrain you* to do your utmost to preserve them: And the deep Sense of God's free Grace in *Christ Jesus*, (which you will then have) in calling you, will excite you to do your utmost to save others, especially those of your own Household. And though, after all your pious Endeavours, some may continue unreformed; yet you will have this comfortable Reflection to make, that you did what you could to make your Families *religious*: And therefore may rest assured of sitting down in the Kingdom of Heaven with *Abraham, Joshua, and Cornelius*, and all the godly Householders, who in their several Generations shone forth as so many Lights in their respective Households upon Earth.

S E R M O N V I I .

T H E H E I N O U S S I N O F P R O F A N E

Curſing and Swearing :

O R,

The C O M M O N S W E A R E R
deteftable in the Sight of G O D
and Man.

*Thou ſhalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God
in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs
that taketh his Name in vain. Third Com-
mandment.*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A. B
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M D C C X X X I X .



S E R M O N VII.

The Heinous Sin of Profane CURSING and SWEARING.

M A T T H. V. 34.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all!



A M O N G the many heinous Sins for which this Nation is grown infamous, perhaps there is none more crying, but withal more common, than the abominable Custom of *profane Swearing and Cursing*. Our Streets abound with Persons of all Degrees and Qualities, who are continually provoking the Holy One of *Israel* to Anger by their detestable Oaths and Blasphemies: And our very Children, *out of whose Mouths*, the Psalmist observes in his Days, *was perfected Praise*, are now grown remarkable for the quite opposite ill Quality of *Cursing and Swearing*.

Swearing. This cannot but be a melancholy Prospect for every sincere and honest Minister of *Jesus Christ*, to view his Fellow *Christians* in; and such as will put him on contriving some Means to prevent the spreading at least of so growing an Evil; knowing that the Lord (without Repentance) will assuredly visit for these Things. But alas! what can he do? Publick Animadversions are so neglected amongst us, that where shall we find a common Swearer punished as the Laws direct? And as for private Admonition, Men are now so *hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin*, that to give them sober and pious Advice, and to shew them the Evil of their Doings, is but like *casting Pearls before Swine, they only turn again and rent you.* Since Matters then are come to this Pass, all that we can do is this, that as we are appointed Watchmen and Ambassadors of the Lord, it is our Duty from Time to Time to *shew the People their Transgression, and warn them of their Sin*; so that *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we however may deliver our own Souls.* That I therefore may discharge my Duty in this Particular, give me Leave, in the Name of God, humbly to offer to your most serious Consideration some few Observations on the Words of the Text, in order to shew the Heinousness of *profane Cursing and Swearing.*

But before I proceed directly to the Prosecution of this Point, it will be proper to clear this Precept of our Lord from a Misinterpretation that has been put on it by a Set of Men, who heedlessly infer from hence that our Saviour prohibits *Swear-*
ing

CURSING *and* SWEARING. 5

ing before a Magistrate, when required, on a solemn and proper Occasion. But that all *Swearing* is not absolutely unlawful for a *Christian*, is evident from the Writings of *St. Paul*, whom we often find upon some solemn Occasions using several Forms of Imprecation and Swearing, as, *I call God to Witness, — God is my Judge, — By your rejoicing in Christ Jesus*, and such like. And that our Saviour does by no Means forbid *Swearing* before a Magistrate. in the Words now before us, is plain, if we consider the Scope and Design he had in View, when he gave his Disciples this Command. Permit me to observe to you then, that our Blessed Master had set himself, from the 27th Verse of this Chapter, out of which the Text is taken, to vindicate and clear the Moral Law from the corrupt Glosses and Misconstruction of the *Pharisees*, who then sat in *Moses's* Chair, but without were notoriously faulty in adhering too closely to the literal Expression of the Law, without ever considering the due Extent and spiritual Meaning of it. Accordingly they imagined, that because God had said, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, that therefore, supposing a Person was not guilty of the very Act of *Adultery*, he was not chargeable with the Breach of the Seventh Comandment. And likewise in the Matter of *Swearing*, because God had forbidden his People in the Book of *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy*, to take his Name in vain, or to *Swear falsely* by his Name; they therefore judged it lawful to *Swear* by any Creature in Common Discourse, supposing they did not directly mention the Name of God. Our Blessed Saviour therefore, in the

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ing before a Magistrate, when required on a solemn and proper Occasion. But that all *Swearing* is not absolutely unlawful for a *Christian*, is evident from the Writings of *St. Paul*, whom we often find upon some solemn Occasions using several Forms of Imprecation and Swearing, as, *I call God to Witness, ——— God is my Judge, ——— By your rejoicing in Christ Jesus*, and such like. And that our Saviour does by no Means forbid *Swearing* before a Magistrate. in the Words now before us, is plain, if we consider the Scope and Design he had in View, when he gave his Disciples this Command. Permit me to observe to you then, that our Blessed Master had set himself, from the 27th Verse of this Chapter, out of which the Text is taken, to vindicate and clear the Moral Law from the corrupt Glosses and Misconstruction of the *Pharisees*, who then sat in *Moses's* Chair, but without were notoriously faulty in adhering too closely to the literal Expression of the Law, without ever considering the due Extent and spiritual Meaning of it. Accordingly they imagined, that because God had said, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, that therefore, supposing a Person was not guilty of the very Act of *Adultery*, he was not chargeable with the Breach of the Seventh Comandment. And likewise in the Matter of *Swearing*, because God had forbidden his People in the Book of *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy*, to take his Name in vain, or to *Swear falsely* by his Name; they therefore judged it lawful to *Swear* by any Creature in Common Discourse, supposing they did not directly mention the Name of God. Our Blessed Saviour therefore, in the

Words

Words now before us, rectifies this their Mistake about *Swearing*, as he had done in the Verses immediately foregoing that concerning *Adultery*, and tells the People, that whatever Allowance the *Pharisees* might give to *Swear* by any Creature, yet he pronounced it absolutely unlawful for any of his Followers to do so. *To have heard*, says he, *that it has been said by them of old Time*, (namely by the *Pharisees* and Teachers of the *Jewish Law*) *Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but perform unto the Lord thine Oaths: But I say unto you*, (I who am appointed by the Father to be the great Prophet and true Law-giver of his Church) *Swear not at all*, in your common Conversation, *neither by Heaven for it is God's Throne*; and therefore to swear by That, it is to swear by Him that sits thereon; *neither by the Earth, for it is his Footstool*; *nor by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the Great King*; *neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black: But let your Communications* (which plainly shews that *Christ* is here speaking of *Swearing*, not before a Magistrate, but in common Conversation) *let your Communication*, says he, *be Yea, yea; Nay, nay*, a strong Affirmation or Negation at the most; *for whatever is more than this cometh of Evil*; that is, cometh from an evil Principle, from the Evil One, the Devil, the Author of all Evil.

Which by the way, methinks should be a Caution to all such Persons, who, though not guilty of *Swearing* in the gross Sense of the Word, yet attest the Truth of what they are speaking of, though ever so trifling, by saying,
Upon

CURSING and SWEARING. 7

Upon my Life, — As I live, — By my Faith, — By the Heavens, and such like: Which Expressions, however harmless and innocent they may be esteemed by some sorts of People, yet are the very Oaths which our Blessed Lord condemns in the Words immediately following the Text; and Persons who use such unwarrantable Forms of speaking, must expect to be convicted and condemned as *Swearers*, at our Saviour's second Coming to judge the World.

But to return: It appears then from the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Discourse, that in the Words of the Text he does by no Means disannul or forbid *Swearing* before a Magistrate (which, as might be easily shewn, is both lawful and necessary) but only *profane Swearing* in common Conversation; the Heinousness and Sinfulness of which I come now, as was above proposed, more immediately to lay before you.

And here, not to mention that it is a direct Breach of our Blessed Master's and great Lawgiver's Command in the Words of the Text, as likewise of the third Commandment, wherein God positively declares, he *will not hold him Guiltless*, (that is, will assuredly punish him) *that taketh his Name in vain*: Not to mention that it is the greatest Abuse of that noble Faculty of Speech, whereby we are distinguished from the Brute Creation; and the great Hazard the *common Swearer* runs, of being perjured some Time or other: Not to mention these Reasons against it, I say, which of themselves would abundantly prove the Folly and Sinfulness of *Swearing*: — I shall at this Time content myself with instancing

ing in four Particulars, which highly aggravate the Crime of *profane Swearing*; and those are such as follow.

- I. *First*, Because there is no Temptation in Nature to the Sin, nor does the Commission of it afford the Offender the least Pleasure or Satisfaction.
- II. *Secondly*, Because it is a Sin which may be so often repeated.
- III. *Thirdly*, Because it hardens Infidels against the *Christian Religion*, and must give great Offence, and occasion much Sorrow and Concern to every true Disciple of *Jesus Christ*.
- IV. *Fourthly*, Because it is an Extremity of Sin, which can only be matched in Hell.

I. The *First* Reason then, why *Swearing* in common Conversation is so heinous in God's Sight, and why we should not swear at all, is, because it has no Temptation in Nature; nor does the Commission of it, unless a Man be a Devil incarnate, afford the Offender the least Pleasure or Satisfaction.

Now here, I presume, we may lay it down as a Maxim universally agreed on, that the Guilt of any Crime is increased or lessened in Proportion to the Weakness or Strength of the Temptation by which a Person is carried out to the Commission of it. It was this Consideration that exculpated and diminished the Guilt of *Saul's* taking him to offer Sacrifice before the Prophet *Samuel*

CURSING and SWEARING. 9

Samuel came, and of *Uzza's* touching the Ark, because it was in Danger of falling: As, on the contrary, what so highly aggravated the Disobedience of our first Parents and *Lot's* Wife was, because the former had so little Reason to eat the forbidden Fruit, and the latter so small a Temptation to look back on *Sodom*.

And now if this be granted, surely the common *Swearer* must of all Sinners be the most without Excuse, since there is no Manner of Temptation in Nature to the Commission of this Crime. In most of the other Commands, Persons perhaps may plead the Force of Natural Inclination in Excuse for their Breach of them: One, for Instance, may alledge his strong Propensity to Anger, to excuse his breaking of the Sixth: Another, his Proneness to Lust, for his Violation of the Seventh. But now surely the *common Swearer* has nothing of this kind to urge in his Behalf: For though he may have a natural Inclination to this or that Crime, yet no Man, it is to be presumed, can say, he is born of a *swearing* Constitution.

But farther, as there is no Temptation to it, so there is no Pleasure or Profit to be reaped from the Commission of it. Ask the Drunkard why he rises up early to follow strong Drink, and he will tell you, because it affords his sensual Appetite some kind of Pleasure and Gratification, though it be no higher an one than that of a Brute. Enquire of the covetous Worldling, why he defrauds and over-reaches his Neighbour, and he has an Answer ready, — To enrich himself, and to lay up Goods for many Years. But it must certainly

tainly puzzle the *profane Swearer* himself, to inform you what Pleasure he reaps from *Swearing*: For alas! it is a fruitless, tasteless Thing, that he sells his Soul for. But indeed he does not sell it at all: In this Case he prodigally gives it away (without Repentance) to the Devil; and parts with a blessed Eternity, and runs into everlasting Torment, merely for nothing!

II. But *Secondly*, what increases the Heinousness of *profane Swearing*, is, that it is a Sin which may so often be repeated.

This is another Consideration which always serves to lessen or increase the Guilt and Malignity of any Sin. It was some Excuse for the Drunkenness of *Noah*, and the Adultery of *David*, that they committed these Crimes but once: As, on the contrary, of the Patriarch *Abraham's* Distrust of God, that he repeated the dissembling of *Sarah* to be his Wife two several Times. And if this be admitted as an Aggravation of other Persons Crimes, surely much more so of the Guilt of *common Swearing*, because it is a Sin which may be and is, for the generality, often repeated: In many other gross Sins it cannot be so: If a Man be overcome in Drink, there must be a considerable Time e're he can recover his Debauch, and return to his Cups again: Or if he be accustomed to profane the Sabbath, he cannot do it every Day, but only one in seven. But alas! the *profane Swearer* is ready for another Oath almost before the Sound of the first is out of our Ears: Yea, some double and treble them in one Sentence

CURSING and SWEARING. 11

Sentence, even so as to confound the Sense of what they say, by an horrid Din of Blasphemy! Now if the great and terrible *Jehovah* has expressly declared that he *will not hold him guiltless, that is, will assuredly punish him, that taketh his Name but once in vain*: What a vast Heap of these heinous Sins lies at every *common Swearer's Door*! It would be apt to sink him into an intolerable Despair, did he but see the whole Sum of them. And Oh! what a seared Conscience must that Wretch have, that does not feel this prodigious Weight.

III. But *Thirdly*, what makes the Sin of *profane Swearing* appear yet more exceeding sinful, is, that it hardens Infidels against the *Christian Religion*.

It is the Apostle St. *Peter's* Advice to the married Persons of his Time, that they should walk as become the Gospel of *Christ*, that those that were without might be won to embrace the *Christian Religion*, by seeing and observing their pious Conversation coupled together with Fear. And what the Apostle presses on married Persons we find elsewhere enjoined each particular Member of the Church. Accordingly we are commanded by our Blessed Lord to *let our Light so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven*. And the Apostle St. *Paul* bids us *walk circumspectly towards them that are without, redeeming the Time, that is, embracing all Opportunities to do them good, because the Days are evil*. But alas! in what a direct

direct Contradiction does the *profane Swearer* live to this and such Precepts, who instead of gaining Profelytes to *Christ* from the unbelieving Part of the World, does all he can to oppose it! For how can it be expected that Infidels should honour our God, when *Christians* themselves despise him; or that any should embrace our Religion, when the Professors of it themselves make so light of one of its strictest Commands? No, to our Grief and Shame be it spoken, it is by reason of such Impieties as these that our holy Religion (the best and purest in itself) is become a By-word among the Heathen; that the sacred Authority of the Holy *Jesus* and his Doctrine is despised; and *God's Name*, as it is written, *blasphemed among the Gentiles*.

These cannot but be sad Blocks and Offences in the way of our Brethren's Conversion: *But woe be to those Men by whom such Offences come: We may say to them, as our blessed Lord did of Judas, It had been better for such Men that they had never been born: Or, as he threatens in another Place, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for such Sinners.*

But this is not all; as *profane Swearing* must undoubtedly harden those in their Infidelity that are without, so must it no less grieve and give great Offence to those honest and sincere Persons that are within the Church. We hear of *David's* complaining and crying out, *Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my Habitation amongst the Tents of Kedar: That is, that he was obliged to live and converse with a People exceedingly wicked and profane.* And
St.

St. Peter tells us, that *Lot's righteous Soul was grieved day by day, whilst he saw and observed the ungodly Conversation of the Wicked.* And no doubt it was one great Part of our blessed Master's Sufferings whilst on Earth, that he was compelled to converse with a wicked and perverse Generation, and to hear his heavenly Father's sacred Name profaned and scoffed at by unrighteous and wicked Men. And surely it cannot but pierce the Heart of every true and sincere *Christian*, of every one that does in any measure partake of the Spirit of his Master to hear the Multitude of Oaths and Curses which proceed daily and hourly out of the Mouths of many People, and those too whose liberal Education and seeming Regard for the Welfare of Religion, one would think, should teach them a more becoming Behaviour. To hear the great and terrible Name of God polluted by Men, which is adored by Angels; and to consider how often that sacred Name is profaned in common Discourse, which we are not worthy to mention in our Prayers: This, I say, cannot but make each of them cry out with holy *David*, *Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my Habitation amongst the Tents of Kedar.* And though the Blasphemies and profane Discourses of others will not be imputed to sincere Persons for Sin, so long as they have no Fellowship with such *hellish Fruits of Darkness*, but rather reprove them; nay, rather will be imputed to them for Righteousness, for thus lamenting the *Wickedness of Sion*: yet it will greatly enhance the present Guilt, and sadly increase the future Punishment of every *profane Swearer*, by whom such Offences

ces come. For if, as our Saviour tells us, *it had been better for a Man to have a Mill-stone tied about his Neck, than that he should offend one of his little ones*, that is, the weakest of his Disciples, *how much severer Punishment will they be thought worthy of*, who not only cause God's Name to be blasphemed among the *Gentiles*, and the Religion of our dear Redeemer to be abhorred; but who make his Saints to weep and mourn, and *vex their righteous Souls from day to day*, by their ungodly, profane, and blasphemous Conversation? Surely as God will put the Tears of *one* into his Bottle, and recompence them with eternal Glory at the great Day of Retribution, so it will be just in him to punish the *other* with eternal Sorrow for all their ungodly and hard Speeches, and cast them into a Lake of Fire and Brimstone where they shall be glad of a Drop of Water to cool those Tongues with which they have so often blasphemed the Lord of Hosts, and grieved the People of our God.

IV. But it is time for me to proceed to give my *Fourth* and last Reason, why *common Swearing* is so exceeding sinful. And that is, because it is such an Extremity of Sin, that can only be matched in Hell, where all are desperate, and without Hope of Mercy.

The damned Devils and damned Souls of Men in Hell may be supposed to rave and blaspheme in their Torments, because they know that the Chains wherein they are held can never be knocked off: But for Men that swim in the Ri-
ver

ver of God's Goodness, whose Mercies are renewed to them every Morning, and who are visited with fresh Tokens of his infinite unmerited Loving-kindness every Moment: For these favourite Creatures to set their Mouths against Heaven, and to blaspheme a gracious, patient, all-bountiful God; is a Height of Sin which exceeds the Blackness and Impiety of Devils and Hell itself.

And now, after what has been here offered, to shew the Heinousness of *profane Cursing* and *Swearing* in common Conversation, may I not very justly address myself to you in the Words of the Text, *Therefore I say unto you, swear not at all*; since it is a Sin that has no Temptation in Nature, nor brings any Pleasure or Profit to the Committer of it; since it hardens Infidels in their Infidelity, and affords sad Causes of Grief and Lamentation to every honest *Christian*; since it is a Sin that generally grows into a Habit; and lastly, such a Sin that can only be matched in Hell.

1. And first then, if these Things be so, and the Sin of *profane Swearing*, as hath been in some Measure shewn, is so exceeding sinful, what shall we say to such unhappy Men, who think it not only allowable, but fashionable, and polite to *take the Name of God in vain*; who imagine that *Swearing* makes them look big amongst their Companions, and really think it a Piece of Honour to abound in it? But alas! little do they think that such a Behaviour argues the greatest Degeneracy of Mind and Fool-hardiness that can possibly be thought of: For what can be more base than one Hour to pretend to adore God in publick Worship, and the very next Moment to blaspheme his Name!

Name! Indeed such a Behaviour from Persons who deny the Being of a God (if any such Fools there be) is not altogether so much to be wondered at: But for Men, who not only subscribe to the Belief of a Deity, but likewise acknowledge him to be a God of infinite Majesty and Power; for such Men, I say, to blaspheme his holy Name by *profane Cursing and Swearing*, and at the same Time confess that this very God has expressly declared he *will not hold him guiltless*, that is, will certainly and eternally punish (without Repentance) him *that taketh his Name in vain*; is such an Instance of Fool-hardiness, as well as Baseness, that can scarcely be paralleled. This is what they presume not to do in other Cases of less Danger: They dare not revile a General at the Head of his Army, nor rouse a sleeping Lion when within reach of his Paw. And is the Almighty God, the great *Jehovah*, the everlasting King, who can consume them by the Breath of his Nostrils, and frown them to Hell in an Instant; is he, I say, the only contemptible Being in their Account that may be provoked without Fear, and offended without Punishment? No, tho' God bear long, he will not bear always: Time will come, and that too perhaps much sooner than such Persons may expect, when God will vindicate his injured Honour, when he will lay bare his Almighty Arm, and make those Wretches feel the eternal Smart of his Justice, whose Power and Name they have so often vilified and blasphemed. Alas! what will become of all their Bravery then? Will they then wantonly sport with the Name of their Maker, and call upon the

King

King of all the Earth to damn them any more in Jest! No, their Note will then be changed: Indeed they shall call, but, alas! it will be for *the Rocks to fall on them, and the Hills to cover them from the Wrath of him that sitteth upon the Throne, and from the Lamb for ever.* It is true, Time was when they prayed, though without Thought perhaps, for Damnation, both for themselves and others. And now they will find their Prayers answered, — *They delighted in Cursing, therefore shall it happen unto them; they loved not Blessing, there shall it be far from them; they cloathed themselves with Cursing like as with a Garment, and it shall come into their Bowels like Water, and like Oil into their Bones.*

2. But farther, if the Sin of *Swearing* is so exceeding heinous, and withal so common, then it is every particular Person's Duty, especially those that are in Authority, to do their utmost towards discountenancing and suppressing so malignant a Crime. The Duty we owe both to God and our Neighbour requires this at our Hands. By the one we are obliged to assert our Maker's Honour; by the other to prevent our Neighbour's Ruin: Not to mention that it is the greatest Proof we can give of our undissembled Love to our Master, and is but *doing as we would be done by*, and as we ourselves act in Cases of lesser Consequence. Were we to hear either our own or our Friend's good Name vilified and traduced, we think it our bounden Duty to vindicate the wronged Reputation of each: And shall the great, terrible, and holy Name of our best and only Friend, our King, our Father, nay our God; shall this, I
 say,

say, be daily, nay every Moment, defied and blasphemed, and will no one dare to stand up in Defence of his Honour and Holiness? *Be astonish- ed, O Heavens,* at this! No, let us scorn all such base and treacherous Treatment: Let us, for once at least, resolve to support the Cause of Religion, and with a becoming prudent Courage manifest our Zeal for the Honour of the Lord of Hosts. Men in Authority have double the Advantages of ordinary *Christians*: Their very Office shews they are intended for the Punishment of Evil-doers: And such is the Degeneracy of Mankind, that the generality of them will be more influenced by the Power of Persons in Authority, than by the most laboured Exhortations from the Pulpit. To such therefore, if there are any here present, I humbly address myself, beseeching them in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to do their utmost to put a Stop to, and restrain *profane Cursing and Swearing*. And though it must be confessed that this is a Work which requires a great deal of Courage and Pains, yet they would do well to consider it is for God they undertake it, who certainly will support and bear them up in a due Execution of their Office here, and reward them with an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, hereafter. But it is Time to draw towards a Conclusion.

4. Let me therefore once more address myself to every Person here present, in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; and if any amongst them have been any way guilty of this notorious Sin of *Swearing*, let me intreat them by all that is near and dear to them, that they would neither give the Magi-
strate

strate the Trouble to punish, nor their Friends any Reason for the future to warn them against committing the Crime; but keep a constant and careful *Watch over the Door of their Lips*, and withal implore the Divine Assistance (without which all is nothing) that *they offend no more so scandalously with their Tongues*. Let them seriously lay to Heart what with great Plainness and Simplicity has here been delivered: And if they have any Regard for themselves as Men, or their Reputation as *Christians*; if they would not be a publick Scandal to their Profession, or a Grief to all that know or converse with them: In short, if they would not be Devils incarnate here, and provoke God to punish them eternally hereafter,—— I say unto them in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, *Swear not at all*.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

THANKFULNESS

FOR

MERCIES *received*

A

Necessary DUTY.

A Discourse delivered to the Ship's
Company on their Arrival in
GEORGIA.

*Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, amongst the Gods?
who is like Thee, glorious in Holiness, fearful in
Praise, doing Wonders! Exod. xv. 11.*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N:

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M DCC XXXIX.



SERMON VIII.

Thankfulness for Mercies received
a necessary DUTY.

PSALM cvii. 30, 31.

*Then are they glad, because they are at Rest, and
so he bringeth them unto the Haven where they
would be.*

*O that Men would therefore praise the Lord for his
Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he doeth
for the Children of Men!*



U N D E R L E S S Marks does
Man bear in his Soul, that he is
fallen and estranged from God ;
but no one gives a greater Proof
of it, than that Backwardness,
which every one finds within
himself, to the Duty of Praise and

Thanksgiving.

When God placed the first Man in Paradise his
Soul, no doubt, was so filled with a Sense of the
Riches of the Divine Love, that he was continually
employing that *Breath of Life* the Almighty had
not

Thankfulness for Mercies received

not long before *breathed* into him, in blessing and magnifying that all bountiful, all gracious God, in whom he lived, moved, and had his Being.

And the brightest Idea we can form of the Angelical Hierarchy above, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, is, that they are continually standing round the Throne of God, and cease not Day and Night, saying, *Worthy art thou, O Lamb, that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing, Rev. v. 12.*

That then, which was Man's Perfection when Time first began, and will be his Employment when Death is swallowed up in Victory, and Time shall be no more, without Controversy, is part of our Perfection, and ought to be our frequent Exercise on Earth: And I doubt not but those blessed Spirits, who are sent forth to minister to them who shall be Heirs of Salvation, often stand astonished when they encamp around us, to find our Hearts so rarely enlarged, and our Mouths so seldom opened, to shew forth the loving Kindness of the Lord, or to speak of all his Praise.

Matter for Praise and Adoration can never be wanting to Creatures redeemed by the Blood of the Son of God; and who have such continual Scenes of his infinite Goodness presented to their View, that were their Souls duly affected with a Sense of his universal Love, they could not but be continually calling on Heaven and Earth, Men and Angels, to join with them in praising and blessing that high and lofty One, who inhabiteth Eternity, who maketh his Sun to shine on the Evil and on the Good, and daily pours down his Blessings on the whole Race of Mankind.

But few are arrived to such a Degree of Charity,

as to rejoice with those that do rejoice, and to be as thankful for others Mercies as their own. This Part of *Christian* Perfection, though begun on Earth, will be consummated only in Heaven; where our Hearts will glow with such fervent Love towards God and one another, that every fresh Degree of Glory communicated to our Neighbours, will also communicate to us a fresh Degree of Thankfulness and Joy.

That which has a greater Tendency to excite the Generality of us fallen Men to Praise and Thanksgiving, is a Sense of God's private Mercies and peculiar Benefits bestowed upon ourselves. For as these come nearer our own Hearts, so they must be more affecting; and as they are peculiar Proofs, whereby we may know that God does in a more especial Manner favour us above others, so they cannot but sensibly touch us; and if our Hearts are not quite frozen, like Coals of a Refiner's Fire, must melt us down into Thankfulness and Love. It was a Consideration of the distinguishing Favours God had shewn to his chosen People *Israel*, and the frequent and remarkable Deliverances wrought by him in Behalf of *those who went down to the Sea in Ships, and occupy their Business in great Waters*, that made the holy Psalmist break out so frequently as he does in this Psalm, into this moving, pathetic Exclamation, *Oh that Men would therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he doeth for the Children of M.n!*

His expressing himself in so passionate, fervent a Manner, implies both the Importance and Neglect of the Duty. As when *Moses* on another Occasion cried out, *Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would practically consider their latter End!* Deut. xxxii. 29.

I say, Importance and Neglect of the Duty; for out of those many thousands that receive Blessings from the Lord, how few give Thanks in Remembrance of his Holiness? The Account given us of the ungrateful Lepers, is but too lively a Representation of the Ingratitude of Mankind in general; who, like them, perhaps, when under any humbling Providence, can cry, *Jesus, Master, have Mercy on us*, Luke xvi. 13. but when healed of their Sickness, or deliver'd from their Distress, scarce one in ten can be found returning to give Thanks to God.

And yet as common as this Sin of Ingratitude is, there is nothing we ought more earnestly to pray against. For what is more absolutely condemned in Holy Scripture than Ingratitude? Or what more peremptorily required than the contrary Temper! Thus says the Apostle, *Rejoice evermore, in every Thing give Thanks*, 1 Thes. v. 16—18. *Be careful for nothing: But in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God*, Phil. iv. 6.

On the contrary, the Apostle mentions it as one of the highest Crimes of the *Gentiles*, that they were not *thankful*. *Neither were they thankful*, says he, Rom. i. 21. As also in another Place, he numbers the *Unthankful*, 2 Tim. iii. 2. amongst those *unholy*, profane Persons who are to have their Portions in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone.

As for our Sins, God puts them behind his Back; but his Mercies he will have acknowledged. There is *Virtue gone out of me*, says *Jesus Christ*, Luke viii. 46. And the Woman who was cured of her bloody Issue, must *confess* it: And we generally find, when God sent any remarkable Punishment upon

upon any particular Person, he reminded him of the Favours he had received, as so many Aggravations of his Ingratitude. Thus when God was about to visit *Eli's* House, he thus exhortates with him by his Prophet, *Did I plainly appear unto the House of thy Fathers, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's House? And did I chuse him out of all the Tribes of Israel, to be my Priest, to offer upon my Altar, to burn Incense, and to wear an Ephod before me? Wherefore kick ye at my Sacrifice, and at mine Offering which I have commanded in my Habitation, and honourest thy Sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the Offerings of Israel my People? Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy House, and the House of thy Father should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me, for them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* i Sam. ii. 27, 28, 29, 30.

It was this and such like Instances of God's Severity against the Unthankful, that inclined me to chuse the Words of the Text as the most proper Subject I could discourse on at this Time.

For these four Months, my good Friends we have now been upon the Sea in this Ship, and have occupied our Business in the great Waters. At God Almighty's Word, we have seen the stormy Wind arise, which hath lifted up the Waves thereof. We have been carried up to the Heaven and down again to the Deep, and some of our Souls melted away, because of the Trouble; but I trust we cried earnestly unto the Lord, and he delivered us out of our Distress. For he made the Storm to cease; so that the Waves thereof were still. And now we are glad, because we are at Rest, for God hath brought us to

the Haven where we would be. Oh that you would therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he hath done for us, the unworthiest of the Sons of Men.

Thus *Moses*, thus *Joshua* behaved. For when they were about to take their Leaves of the Children of *Israel*, they recounted to them, as the best Arguments and Motives they could urge to engage them to Obedience. And how can I copy after better Examples? What fitter, what more noble Motives to Holiness and Purity of living can I lay before you than they did?

Indeed I cannot say, that we have seen a *Pillar of a Cloud by Day*, or a *Pillar of Fire by Night*, going visibly before us to guide our Course; but this I can say, that the same God who was in that Pillar of a Cloud, and Pillar of Fire, which departed not from the *Israelites*, and who has made the Sun to rule the Day, and the Moon to rule the Night, has by his good Providence directed us in our right Way, or else the Pilot had steered us in vain.

Neither can I say, that we have seen the *Sun stand still*, as the Children of *Israel* did in the Days of *Joshua*. But surely God, during part of our Voyage, has caused it to with-hold some of that Heat, which it usually sends forth in these warmer Climates, or else it had not failed but some of you must have perished in the Sickness that has been, and does yet continue among us.

We have not seen the Waters stand purposely on a Heap, that we might pass through, neither have we been pursued by *Pharaoh* and his Host, and delivered out of their Hands; but we have been led through the Sea as through a Wilderness, and were once remarkably preserved from being

run down by another Ship ; which, had God permitted, the Waters, in all Probability, would immediately have overwhelmed us, and like *Pharaoh* and his Host, we should have sunk as Stones into the Sea.

We may indeed, Atheist like, ascribe all these Things to natural Causes, and say, our own Skill and Foresight has brought us hither in Safety. But as certainly as *Jesus Christ*, that Angel of the Covenant, in the Days of his Flesh walked upon the Water, and said to his sinking *Disciples*, *Be not afraid, it is I*, so surely has the same everlasting *I am, who decketh himself with Light like a Garment, who spreadeth out the Heaven like a Curtain, who claspeth the Winds in his Fist, who holdeth the Waters in the Hollow of his Hands, and guided the wise Men by a Star in the East* ; so surely, I say, has he spoken, and at his Command the Winds have blown us where we are now arrived. For his Providence ruleth all Things, *Winds and Storms obey his Word* ; he saith to it at one Time go, and it goeth ; at another, come, and it cometh, and at a third Time blow this Way, and it bloweth.

It is he, my Brethren, and not we ourselves, that has of late sent us such prosperous Gales, and made us ride, as it were, on the Wings of the Wind, into the Haven where we would be.

O that you would therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and by your Lives declare that you are truly thankful for the Wonders he hath shewn to us, who are less than the least of the Sons of Men.

I say, declare it by your Lives. For to give him Thanks barely with your Lips, while your Hearts are far from him, is but a mock Sacrifice, nay, an Abomination unto the Lord.

This was the End, the royal Psalmist says, God had in view, when he shewed such Wonders from Time to Time to the People of *Israel* that they might keep his Statutes and observe his Laws. Psal. cv. 44. and then, my good Friends, is the End God would have accomplished in us, and the only Return he desires us to make him, for all the Benefits he hath conferred upon us.

O then, let me beseech you, give God your Hearts, your whole Hearts, and suffer yourselves to be drawn by the Cords of infinite Love to honour and obey him.

Affure yourselves you never can serve a better Master; for his Service is perfect Freedom, his Yoke, when worn a little while, exceeding easy, his Burthen light; and in keeping his Commandments there is great Reward, Love, Peace, Joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away hereafter.

You may indeed let other Lords have Dominion over you, and Satan may promise to give you all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them, if you will fall down and worship him; but he is a Liar, and was so from the Beginning; and has not so much to give you, as you may tread on with the Sole of your Foot; or could he give you the whole World, yet that could not make you happy without God. It is God alone, my Brethren, whose we are, in whose Name I now speak, and who has of late shewed us such Mercies in the Deep, that can give solid lasting Happiness to your Souls; and he for this Reason only desires your Hearts, because without him you must be miserable.

Suffer me not then to go away without my Errand ; as it is the last Time I shall speak to you, let me not speak in vain ; but let a Sense of the Divine Goodness lead you to Repentance.

Even *Saul*, that abandoned Wretch, when *David* shewed him his Skirt, which he had cut off, when he might have taken his Life, was so melted down with his Kindness, that he lifted up his Voice and wept. And we must have Hearts harder than *Saul's*, nay harder than the nether Millstone, if a Sense of God's late loving Kindnesses, notwithstanding he might so often have destroyed us, does not even compel us to lay down our Arms against him, and become his faithful Servants and Soldiers unto our Lives End.

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

But God forbid that any of these should ever suffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire, amongst whom I have for these four Months been preaching the Gospel of *Christ*, but yet thus must it be, if you do not improve the Divine Mercies ; and instead of your being my Crown of Rejoicing in the Day of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, I must appear as a swift Witness against you.

But, Brethren, I am persuaded better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation, though I thus speak.

Blessed be God, some Marks of a partial Reformation at least, have been visible amongst all you that are Soldiers. And my weak, tho' sincere Endeavours to build you up in the Knowledge and

Fear of God, have not been altogether in vain in the Lord.

Swearing, I hope, is in a great Measure abated with you; and God I trust has blessed his late Visitations by making them the Means of awakening your Consciences, to a more solicitous Enquiry about the Things which belong to your everlasting Peace.

Fulfil you then my Joy, by continuing thus minded, and labour to go on to Perfection. For I shall have no greater Pleasure than to see, or hear, that you walk in the Truth.

Consider, my good Friends, you are now, as it were entering on a new World, where you will be surrounded with Multitudes of Heathens; and if you take not heed to *have your Conversation honest amongst them, and to walk worthy the Holy Vocation wherewith you are called*, you will act the Hellish Part of Herod's Soldiers over again; and curse Christ's Religion, as they did his Person, to be had in Derision of those that are round about you.

Consider farther, what peculiar Privileges you have enjoyed above many others that are entering on the same Land. They have had, as it were, a Famine of the Word, but you have rather been in Danger of being surfeited with your Spiritual *Manna*. And therefore, as more Instructions have been given you, so from you Men will most justly expect the greater Improvement in Goodness.

Indeed I cannot say I have discharged my Duty towards you as I ought. No, I am sensible of many Faults which I have been guilty of in my ministerial Office, and for which I have not failed, nor I hope, ever shall fail to humble myself in secret before God. However, this I can say, that ex-

cept a few Days that have been spent necessarily on other Persons, whom God immediately called me to write and minister unto, and the two last Weeks wherein I have been confined by Sickness, all the while I have been aboard, I have been either actually engaged in, or preparing myself for instructing you. And though you are now to be committed to the Care of another (whose Labours I heartily beseech God to bless amongst you) yet I trust I shall at all Seasons, if need be, willingly spend, and be spent, for the Good of your Souls, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I should be loved.

As for your military Affairs, I have nothing to do with them. Fear God, and you must honour the King. Nor am I better acquainted with the Nature of that Land which you are now come over to protect; only this I may venture to affirm in general, that you must necessarily expect upon your Arrival at a new Colony, to meet with many Difficulties. But your very Profession teaches you to endure Hardship; be not therefore faint-hearted, but quit yourselves like Men, and be strong, *Numb. xiv.* Be not like those cowardly Persons, who were affrighted at the Report of the false Spies, that came and said, that there were People tall as the *Anakims* to be grappled with; but be ye like unto *Caleb* and *Joshua*, all Heart; and say, we will act valiantly, for we shall be more than Conquerors over all Difficulties thro' *Jesus Christ* that loved us.----Above all Things, my Brethren, take heed and beware of murmuring, like the perverse *Israelites*, against those that are set over you; and learn, whatsoever State you shall be in, therewith to be content, *Phil. iv. 11.*

As I have spoken to you, I hope your Wives also will suffer the Word of Exhortation.

Your Behaviour on Shipboard, especially the first Part of the Voyage, I chuse to throw a Cloak over; for to use the mildest Terms, it was not such as *becomes the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. However of late, blessed be God, you have taken more Heed to your Ways, and some of you have walked all the while, as became *Women professing Godliness*. Let those accept my hearty Thanks, and permit me to intreat you all in general, as you are all now married, to remember the solemn Vow you made at your Entrance into the Marriage State; and see that you be *subject to your own Husbands, in every lawful Thing*: Beg of God to keep the Door of your Lips, that you offend not with your Tongue; and walk in Love, that your Prayers be not hindered. You that have Children, let it be your chief Concern to *breed them up in the Nurture and Monition of the Lord*. And live all of you so holy and unblameable, that you may not so much as be suspected to be unchaste; and as some of you have imitated *Mary Magdalene* in her Sin, strive to imitate her also in her Repentance.

As for you that are Sailors, what shall I say? How shall I address myself to you? How shall I do that which I so much long to do — touch your Hearts? Gratitude obliges me to wish thus well to you. For you have often taught me many instructive Lessons, and reminded me to put up many Prayers to God for you, that you might receive your Spiritual Sight.

When I have seen you preparing for a Storm, and raising your Sails to guard against it, how have I wished that you and I were both as careful to avoid that Storm of God's Wrath, which will certainly.

certainly, without Repentance, quickly overtake us? When I have observed you catch at every fair Gale, how have I secretly cried, Oh that we were as careful to know the Things that belong to our Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes! And when I have taken Notice how steadily you eyed your Compass, in order to steer aright, how have I wished, that we as steadily eyed the Word of God, which alone can preserve us from *making Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience?* In short, there is scarce any thing you do, which has not been a Lesson of Instruction to me; and therefore it would be ungrateful in me, did I not take this Opportunity of exhorting you in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to be as wise in the Things which concern your Soul, as I have observed you to be in the Affairs belonging to your Ship.

I am sensible that the Sea is reckoned but an ill School to learn *Christ* in: And to see a devout Sailor is esteemed as uncommon a Thing, as to see *Saul* amongst the Prophets. But whence this Wondering! Whence this looking upon a godly Sailor as a Man to be wondered at, as a speckled Bird upon the Earth? I am sure for the little Time I have come in and out amongst you, and as far as I can judge from the little Experiment I have had of Things, I scarce know any way of Life, that is capable of greater Improvements than yours.

The continual Danger you are in of being overwhelmed by the great Waters; the many Opportunities you have of beholding God's Wonders in the Deep; the happy Retirement you enjoy from worldly Temptations; and the daily Occasions that are offered you to endure Hardships, are
such

such noble Means of pronouncing the Spiritual Life, that were your Hearts bent towards God, you would account it your Happiness, that his Providence has called you, to *go down to the Sea in Ships, and to occupy your Business in the great Waters.*

The royal Psalmist knew this, and therefore in the Words of the Text, calls more especially on Men of your Employ, to *praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders, he doth for the Children of Men.*

And oh that you would be wise in Time, and hearken to his Voice to Day, *whilst it is called to Day*; for ye yourselves know how little is to be done on a sick Bed: And how God has in an especial Manner of late invited you to Repentance. Two of your Crew he has taken off by Death, and most of you he has mercifully visited with a grievous Sicknes. The Terrors of the Lord have been upon you, and when burnt with a scorching Fever, some of you have cried out, *What shall we do to be saved?* Remember then the Resolutions you made, when you thought God was about to take away your Souls. And see, that according to your Promises, to shew forth your Thankfulness not only with your Lips, but in your Lives. For though God may bear long, he will not forbear always; and if these signal Mercies and Judgments do not lead you to Repentance, assure yourselves there will at last come a fiery Tempest from the Presence of the Lord, and will sweep away you, and all other Adversaries of God.

I am positive neither you nor the Soldiers have wanted, nor will want any Manner of Encouragement

agement to Piety and Holiness of living from those two Persons who have here the Government over you ; for they have been such Helps to me in my Ministry, and have so readily concurred in every thing for your Good, that they may justly demand a publick Acknowledgment of Thanks both from you and me.

Permit me then, my honoured Friends, in the Name of both your People, to return you hearty Thanks for the Care and Tendernefs you have expressed for the Welfare of their better Parts.

As for the private Favours you have shewn my Person, I hope so deep a Sense of them is imprinted on my Heart, that I shall plead them before God in Prayer as long as I live.

But I have still stronger Obligations to intercede in your Behalf. For God, for ever adored be his free Grace in *Christ Jesus*, has set his Seal to my Ministry in your Hearts. Some distant Pangs of the *New Birth* I have observed to come upon you ; and God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, by ceasing to pray, that the good Work begun in your Souls, may be carried on till the Day of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

The Time of our Departure from each other is now at Hand, and you are going out into a World of Temptations. But though absent in Body, let us be present with each other in Spirit ; and God, I trust, will enable you to be singularly good, to be ready to be accounted Fools for *Christ's* Sake ; and then we shall meet never to part again in the Kingdom of our Father which is in Heaven.

To you my Companions and familiar Friends, who came over with me to sojourn in a strange Land, do I in the next Place address myself. For you I especially fear, as well as for myself; because as we take sweet Counsel together oftner than others, and as you are let into a more intimate Friendship with me in private Life, the Eyes of all Men will be upon you to note even the minutest Miscarriage — and therefore it highly concerns you to *walk circumspectly* towards those that are without. I hope nothing but a single Eye to God's Glory and the Salvation of your own Souls, brought you from your native Country. Remember then the End of your coming hither, and you can never do amiss. — Be Patterns of Industry, as well as Piety, to those who shall be around you; and above all Things let us have such a fervent Charity amongst ourselves, that it may be said of us, as of the Primitive Christians, See how the Christians love one another.

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

You have heard, my dear Friends, how I have been exhorting every one of you to shew forth your Thankfulness for the Divine Goodness, not only with your Lips, but in your Lives: But *Physician heal thy self*, may justly be retorted on me. For (without any false Pretences to Humility) I find my own Heart so little inclined to this Duty of Thanksgiving for the Benefits I have received, that I had need for sharing *Hezekiah's* Fate, who, because he was lifted up by, and not thankful enough for the great Things God had done for him, was given up a Prey to
the

the Pride of his own Heart. I need therefore, and beg your most importunate Petitions at the Throne of Grace, that no such Evil may befall me,——that the more God exalts me, the more I may debase myself,——and that, after I have preached to others, I myself may not be a Cast-away.

And now, Brethren, into God's Hands I commend your Spirits, who, I trust, through his infinite Mercies in *Christ Jesus*, will preserve you blameless, 'till his second Coming to judge the World.

Excuse my detaining you so long, it is the last Time I shall speak to you, perhaps; my Heart is full, and out of the Abundance of it, I could continue my Discourse 'till Midnight.——

But I must away to your new World——may God give you new Hearts, and enable you to put in Practice what you have heard from Time to Time to be your Duty; and I need not wish you any Thing better. For then God will so bless you, that *you will build you Cities to dwell in; then will you sow your Lands, and plant Vineyards, which will yield you Fruits of Increase, Ps. cvii. 36, 37. Then your Oxen shall be strong to labour, there shall be no leading into Captivity, and no Complaining in your Streets; then shall your Sons grow up as the young Plants, and your Daughters be as the polished Corners of the Temple: Then shall your Garners be full and plenteous with all Manner of Store, and your Sheep bring forth Thousands and Ten Thousands in your Streets, Psal. cxliv.* In short, then shall the Lord be your God; and as surely as he has now brought us to this Haven, where we would be, so surely, after

after we have passed through the Storms and Tempests of this troublesome World, will he bring us to the Haven of eternal Rest, where we shall have nothing to do, but to praise him for ever for his Goodness, and declare in never ceasing Songs of Praise, the Wonders he has done for us, and all the other Sons of Men.

*To which blessed Rest, GOD, of his infinite Mercy, bring us all, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever-more. Amen.
Amen.*

S E R M O N

SERMON IX.

THE

ETERNITY

OF

HELL-TORMENTS;

OR,

Eternal Damnation, the certain Portion of the Wicked, in the other World.

Asserted, and proved, both from Reason and Revelation.

Luke xvi, 26.—Between us and you there is a great Gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

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M DCC XXXIX.



S E R M O N IX.

The E T E R N I T Y of H E L L - T O R M E N T S.

M A T T H. xxv. 46.

*These shall go away into Everlasting
Punishment.*



H E Excellency of the Gospel Dispensation is evidenced by nothing more, than those Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments, which it offers to the Choice of all its Professors, in order to invite or compel them to be obedient to its Precepts.—For it promises no less than Eternal Happiness to the Good, and denounces no slighter a Punishment than Everlasting Misery against the Wicked. On the one Hand, *it is a Savour of Life unto Life*; on the other, *a Savour of Death unto Death*. And though one would imagine, the bare Mentioning of the former would be sufficient to draw Men to their Duty, yet Ministers in all Ages have found it necessary,

to remind their People of the latter, and to set before them the Terrors of the Lord, as so many powerful Diffuafives from Sin.

But whence is it that Men are so difingenuous? Why, the Reason seems to be this: The Promise of our Eternal Happiness on our Well-doing, is so agreeable to the Inclinations and Wishes of Mankind, that all that call themselves Christians, universally and willingly subscribe to the Belief of it. But then there is something so shocking in the Consideration of Eternal Torments, and, seemingly, such an infinite Disproportion between endless Duration of Pain, and a short Life spent in Pleasure, that Men (some at least of them) can scarcely be brought to confess it as an Article of their Faith, that an Eternity of Misery awaits the Wicked in a future State.

I shall therefore *at this Time beg Leave*, to insist on the Proof of this Part of one of the Articles of our Creed; and endeavour *to make good* what our Blessed Lord has here threatned in the Words of the Text, that *these*, that is, the *Wicked, shall go away into everlasting Punishment*.

Accordingly, without considering the Words as they stand in Relation to the Context, I shall resolve all I have to say into this general Proposition:
 ‘ That the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter, are eternal.’

But, before I proceed to make good this, I must inform you that I take it for granted,

All here present stedfastly believe, ‘ They have
 ‘ something within them, which we call a Soul, and
 ‘ which is capable of surviving the Dissolution of
 ‘ the Body, and of being miserable or happy to all
 ‘ Eternity.’

I take

I take it for granted farther, ‘ That you believe
 ‘ a Divine Revelation, that those Books, emphati-
 ‘ cally called *the Scriptures*, were written by the
 ‘ Inspiration of God, and that the Things therein
 ‘ contained, are founded upon Eternal Truth.’

I take it for granted, ‘ That you believe, that
 ‘ the Son of God came down to die for Sinners ;
 ‘ that there is but one Mediator between God and
 ‘ Man, even the Man *Christ Jesus*.’

These Things being granted, (and they were
 necessary to be premised) proceed we now *to make*
good the one general Proposition mentioned before,
 and asserted in the Text, that ‘ The Torments re-
 ‘ served for the Wicked hereafter are eternal.’
These, says our Blessed Lord, *shall go away into*
Everlasting Punishment.

The first Argument I shall advance to prove that
 the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter,
 are eternal, (for I have taken it for granted, that
 you believe those Books, emphatically called *the*
Scriptures, were written by the Inspiration of God,
 and that the Things contained therein are founded
 upon eternal Truth) is, That the Word of God
 himself assures us, Line upon Line, that it will be so.

To quote all the Texts that might be produced
 in Proof of this, would be endless.—Let it suffice
 to instance only a few. In the *Old Testament*, in the
 Book of *Daniel*, Chap. xii. ver. 2. we are told, that
Some shall awake to Everlasting Life, and others to
Everlasting Contempt. In the Book of *Isaiab*, it is
 said, that *The Worm of those that have transgressed*
God’s Law, shall not die, nor their Fire be quenched.
 And in another Place, the holy Prophet, struck,
 no Doubt, with Astonishment and Horror at the
 Prospect of the Continuance of the Torments of the

Damned, breaks out into this moving Expostulation, *Who can dwell with everlasting Burnings?*

The *New Testament* is still fuller as to this Point, it being a Revelation which brought this and such like Particulars to a clear Light. The Apostle *Jude* tells us of the profane Despisers of Dignities in his Days; that *for them was reserved the Blackness of Darkness for ever.* And in the Book of the *Revelations* it is written, that *The Smoke of the Torments of the Wicked ascendeth for ever and ever.* And if we believe the Witness of Men inspired, the Witness of the Son of God, who had the Spirit given him, as he was a Mediator without Measure, is still far greater. And he, in *St. Mark's Gospel*, repeats this solemn Declaration three several Times. *It is better for thee to enter into Life maimed; that is, it is better to forego the Gratification of thy Lust, or incur the Displeasure of a Friend, which may be so dear to thee as a Hand, or as useful as a Foot, than having two Hands and Feet, that is, for indulging the one, or disobeying God to oblige the other, to be cast into Hell, where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.*

And here again, in the Words of the Text, *These, that is, the Wicked, says he, shall go away into everlasting Punishment.*

I know it has been objected by some who have denied the Eternity of Hell Torments, 'That the Words *Everlasting* and *Ever and Ever*, are often used in the Holy Scriptures, (especially in the *Old Testament*) when they signify not an endless Duration, but a limited Term of Time.'

And this we readily grant. But then we reply, 'That when the Words are used with this Limitation, they either manifestly appear to be used so

' from

‘ from the Context,’ or are put in Opposition to ‘ some occasional Types, which God gave his People on some special Occasions, as when it is said, *it shall be a perpetual or everlasting Statute, or a Statute for ever,* that is, a standing Type, and not merely transient or occasional, as was the *Pillar of Cloud,* the *Manna,* or such like. Or lastly, they have a Relation to that Covenant God made with his spiritual *Israel,* which, if understood in a spiritual Sense, will be everlasting, though the ceremonial Dispensation be abolished.

Besides, it ought to be observed, that some of the Passages, just now referred to, have neither of these Words so much as mentioned in them, and cannot possibly be interpreted so as to denote only a limited Term of Years.

But let that be as it will, it is evident even to a Demonstration, that the Words of the Text however, will not admit of such a restrained Signification, as appears from their being directly opposed to the Words immediately following, *viz. That the Righteous shall go into Life eternal.* From which Words, all are ready to grant, that the Life promised to the Righteous will be eternal; and why the Punishment threatened to the Wicked should not be understood to be eternal likewise, when the very same Word in the Original, is used to express the Duration of each, no Shadow of a Reason can be given.

But, *Secondly,* There cannot be one Argument urged, why God should reward his Saints with everlasting Happiness, which will not equally prove that he ought to punish Sinners with eternal Misery.

For, since we know nothing (at least for a Certainty) how he will deal with either, but by a divine Revelation; and since, as was proved by the foregoing

going

going Argument, he hath as positively threatned, eternally to punish the Wicked, as to reward the Good; it follows that his Truth will be as much impeached and called in Question, did he not inflict his Punishments, as it would be, if he did not confer his Rewards.

To this also it has been objected, ‘ That though
 ‘ God is oblig’d by his Promise to give his Rewards,
 ‘ yet his Veracity could not be called in Question,
 ‘ supposing he should not execute his Threatnings,
 ‘ as he actually did not in the Case of *Nineveh*,
 ‘ which God expressly declared by his Prophet *Jonah*,
 ‘ *should be destroyed in forty Days*; notwithstanding the Sequel of the Story informs us, that
 ‘ *Nineveh* was spared.’

But in Answer to this Objection we affirm, ‘ That
 ‘ God’s Threatnings, as well as Promises, are without Repentance.’ And for this Reason, because they are both founded on the eternal Laws of right Reason. Accordingly we always find, that where the Conditions were not performed, on the Non-performance of which the Threatnings were denounced, God always executed the Punishment threatned. The Driving *Adam* out of *Eden*, the Destruction of the old World by a Deluge of Water, and the Overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, are, and will be always so many standing Monuments of God’s executing his Threatnings when denounced, though, to our weak Apprehensions, the Punishment may seem far to exceed the Crime.

It is true, God did spare *Nineveh*, and that because the Inhabitants did actually repent, and therefore performed the Conditions upon which it was supposed by the Prophet’s being sent to warn them, the threatned Punishment should be with-held.

And

And so likewise in Respect to Gospel Threatnings. If Men will so far consult their own Welfare, as to live up to the Gospel Terms, God certainly will not punish them; but on the contrary confer upon them his Rewards: But to affirm that He will not punish, and that eternally too, impenitent, obstinate Sinners, according as he hath threatned, if they do not perform the Terms of the Gospel; what is it, in Effect, but to make God like a Man, that he should lie, or the Son of Man, that he should repent?

But the Absurdity of such an Opinion will appear still more evident from

The next and *Third* Argument, I shall offer to prove, *that the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter, are eternal, viz. From the Nature of the Christian Covenant.*

And here I must again observe, that it was taken for granted at the Beginning of this Discourse, that,
 ‘ You believe the Son of God came down to save
 ‘ Sinners; that there is but one Mediator between
 ‘ God and Man, even the Man *Christ Jesus.*’

And here I take it for granted farther, (unless you believe the absurd and unwarrantable Doctrine of Purgatory) that you are fully persuaded, that this Life is the only Time allotted by Almighty God for working out our Salvation, and that after a few Years are passed over, there will remain no more Sacrifice for Sin.

And if this be granted, (and who dares deny it?) it follows that if a wicked Man dieth in his Wickedness, and under the Wrath of God, he must continue in that State to all Eternity. For, since there is no Possibility of his being delivered out of such a Condition but by and thro’ *Christ*; and since, at the Hour of Death, the Time of *Christ’s* Mediation
 and

and Intercession for him is irrecoverably gone; the same Reason that may be given, why God should punish a Sinner that dieth under the Guilt of his Sins for a single Day, will equally hold good, why he should continue to punish him for a Year, an Age, nay, to all Eternity.

But I hasten to the *Fourth* and last Argument, to prove, *That the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal, viz. Because the Devil's Punishment is to be so.*

That there is such a Being whom we call the *Devil*; that he was once an Angel of Light, but for his Pride and Rebellion against God was cast down from Heaven, and is now permitted with the rest of his spiritual Wickednesses, to walk to and fro, seeking whom they may devour. That there is a Place of Torment reserved for them, or, to use the Apostle's Words, *that they are reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness unto the Judgment of the Great Day*, are Truths all here present were supposed to be convinced of, when it was taken for granted under the second Proposition at the Beginning of this Discourse, that you believed the *Holy Scriptures* to be written by the Inspiration of God, wherein these Truths are delivered.

But then if we allow all this, and think it no Injustice in God to punish those glorious Spirits for their Rebellion, how can we think it unjust in him, to punish wicked Men, for Impenitency, to all Eternity?

You will say, perhaps, that they have sinned against greater Light, and therefore deserve a greater Punishment. And so we grant that the Punishment of the fallen Angels may be greater as to Degree, than that of wicked Men. But then we affirm, it will be equal as to the eternal Duration of it. For,
in

in that Day, as the lively Oracle of God informs us, shall the Son of Man say to them on his left Hand, *Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Where we find that impenitent Sinners are to be cast into the same *everlasting Fire*, with the *Devil* and his *Angels*; and that too very justly. For, though they may have sinned against greater Light, yet Christians sin against greater Mercy. Since *Christ* took not hold of, did not die for the fallen *Angels*, but for the Seed of *Abraham*, for Men and for our Salvation. So that if God spared not these excellent Beings; assure thyself, O obstinate Sinner, whoever thou art, he will by no Means spare thee.

From what then has been said it plainly appears, that verily *the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal.* And if so, Brethren, how holy ought we to be in all Manner of Conversation and Godliness, that we may be accounted worthy to escape this Wrath to come!

But before I proceed to a practical Exhortation, permit me to draw an Inference or two from what has been said.

And First, *If the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal*, what shall we say to those who make an open Profession in their Creed to believe a Life everlasting, *i. e.* a Life of Happiness as well as Misery, and yet dare to live in the actual Commission of those Sins which will unavoidably, without Repentance, bring them into that Place of Torment? Thou believest the Punishments of the impenitently *Wicked* in another Life, are eternal: Thou dost well, *The Devils also believe and tremble.* But know, O vain Man, unless this Belief doth influence thy Practice, and makes thee bid Adieu to thy Sins, every
Time

Time thou repeatest thy Creed, thou dost in Effect say, I believe I shall be undone for ever.

But, *Secondly*, if the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal, then let this serve as a Caution to such Persons, (and it is to be feared there are such) who go about to dissuade others from the Belief of such an important Truth. There can be no surer Way, in all Probability, to encourage and promote Infidelity and Prophaneness, than the broaching or maintaining such an unwarrantable Doctrine. For if the positive Threats of God concerning the Eternity of Hell-Torments are already found insufficient to deter Men from Sin, what a higher Pitch of Wickedness may we imagine they will quickly arrive at, when they are taught to entertain any Hopes of a future Recovery out of them, or, what is still worse, that their Souls are hereafter to be annihilated, and become like the Beasts that perish? But, Woe unto such blind Leaders of the Blind; no Wonder if they both fall into the Ditch. And let such Corrupters of God's Word know, that I testify unto every Man that heareth me this Day, that if any one should add unto, or take away from the Words that are written in the Book of God, God shall take his Part out of the Book of Life, and shall add unto him all the Plagues that are in that Book.

Thirdly and Lastly, if the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal, then this may serve as a Reproof for those who quarrel with God, and say it is inconsistent with his Justice, to punish a Person to all Eternity, only for enjoying the Pleasures of Sin for a Season. But such Men must be told, that it is not their thinking or calling God unjust, will make him so, no more than a condemned Prisoner's saying the Law or Judge is unjust, will render

der either duly chargeable with such an Imputation. But knowest thou, O Worm, what Blasphemy thou art guilty of, in charging God with Injustice? Shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? And wilt thou presume to arraign the Almighty at the Bar of thy shallow Reasoning, and call him unjust, for punishing thee eternally, only because thou wishest it may not be so? But hath God said it; and shall he not do it? He hath said it: And let God be true, tho' every Man be a Liar. *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Assuredly he will. And if Sinners will not own his Justice in his Threatnings here, they will be compelled e're long to own and feel them when tormented by him hereafter.

But to come to a more practical Application of what has been delivered.

You have heard, Brethren, the Eternity of Hell Torments plainly proved, from the express Declarations of Holy Scriptures, and Consequences naturally drawn from them. And now there seems to need no great Art of Rhetorick to persuade any understanding Person to avoid and abhor those Sins, which without Repentance will certainly plunge him into this eternal Gulph. The Disproportion between the Pleasure and the Pain, (if there be any Pleasure in Sin) is so infinitely great, that supposing it was only possible, tho' not certain, that the Wicked would be everlasting punished, no one that has the Reason of a Man, for the enjoying a little momentary Pleasure, would, one would imagine, run the Hazard of enduring eternal Pain. But since the Torments of the Damned are not only possible, but certain, (since God himself, who can not lye, has told us so) for Men, notwithstanding to persist in their Disobedience,

bedience, and then flatter themselves that God will not make good his Threatnings, is a most egregious Instance of Folly and Presumption.

Would we now and then draw off our Thoughts from sensible Objects, and by Faith meditate a While on the Miseries of the Damned, I doubt not but we should, as it were, hear many an unhappy Soul venting his fruitless Sorrows in some such piteous Moans as these.

O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from this Body of Death! O foolish Mortal that I was, thus to bring myself into these never-ceasing Tortures, for the transitory Enjoyment of a few short-lived Pleasures, which scarcely afforded me any Satisfaction, even when I most indulged myself in them. Alas! are these the Wages, these the Effects of Sin? Are all the Grand Deceiver's inviting Promises come to this? O damned Apostate! First to delude me with pretended Promises of Happiness, and after several Years Drudgery in his Service, thus to involve me in eternal Woe. Oh that I had never hearkened to his beguiling Insinuations! Oh that I had rejected his very first Suggestions with the utmost Detestation and Abhorrence! Oh that I had taken up my Cross and followed Christ! Oh that I had never ridiculed serious Godliness; and out of a false Politeness, contemned the truly Pious, as too Severe, Enthusiastick, or superstitious! For, I then had been happy indeed, happy beyond Expression, happy to all Eternity, yonder in those blessed Regions where they sit, cloathed with unspeakable Glory, and chanting forth their Seraphick Hallelujah's to the Lamb that sitteth upon the Throne, for ever. But, alas! these Reflections come now too late: These Wishes now are vain and fruitless. I have not suffered, and therefore must not reign with them.

them. I have in Effect denied the Lord that bought me, and therefore justly am I now denied by him.

But must I live for ever tormented in these Flames? Must this Body of mine, which not long since lay in State, was cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared sumptuously every Day, must this be here eternally confined, and made the Mockery of insulting Devils? Oh, Eternity! that Thought fills me with Despair. I cannot, will not, yet I must be miserable for ever.

Come then, all ye self-deluding, self-deluded Sinners, and imagine yourselves for once in the Place of that truly wretched Man I have been here describing. Think, I beseech you by the Mercies of God in Christ Jesus, think with yourselves, how racking, how insupportable the never dying Worm of a self-condemning Conscience will hereafter be for you to dwell with everlasting Burnings.

Come, all ye Christians of a lukewarm *Laodicean* Spirit, ye *Gallio's* in Religion, who care a little, but not enough for the Things of God, O think, think with yourselves how deplorable it will be to lose the Enjoyment of Heaven, and run into endless Torments, merely because you will be content to be almost, and will not strive to be altogether *Christians*. Consider, I beseech you, consider how you will rave, and curse that fatal Stupidity, that made you believe any thing less than a Life of strict Piety, Self-Denial, and Mortification, can keep you from those Torments, the Eternity of which I have been endeavouring to prove.

But I can no more--These Thoughts are too melancholy for me to dwell on, as well as for you to hear; and God knows, as punishing is his strange Work, so denouncing his Threatnings is mine. But
if

if the bare mentioning the Torments of the Damned is so shocking, Good God! terrible must the Enduring of them be!

And now, are not some of you ready to cry out, *These are hard Sayings, who can bear them?*

But let not sincere *Christians* be in the least terrified at what has been delivered. No, for you is reserved a Crown, a Kingdom, an eternal and exceeding Weight of Glory. *Christ* never said the Righteous, the Upright, the Sincere, but these Wicked, merciless, negatively good Professors before described shall go into everlasting Punishment. Take heed therefore, and beware that there be not in any of you a Root of Bitterness springing up of Unbelief. But, on the contrary, steadfastly and heartily rely on the many precious Promises reached out to you in the Gospel, knowing that he who hath promised is faithful, and therefore will perform.

But, let no obstinately wicked Professors dare to apply any of the Divine Promises to themselves. *For it is not meet to take the Children's Bread and give it unto Dogs.* No, to such the Terrors of the Lord only belong. And as certainly as *Christ* will say to his true Followers, *Come, ye blessed Children of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World,* so he will unalterably pronounce this dreadful Sentence against all that die in their Sins, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

From which unhappy State may God of his infinite Mercy deliver us all through *Jesus Christ*, to whom with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One Eternal God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, and for evermore.

F I N I S.

S E R M O N X.

DIRECTIONS

How to hear

S E R M O N S;

O R,

Preaching a Divine Ordinance, 'instituted by G O D for the Instruction of C H R I S T I A N S in the Mysteries of R E L I G I O N.

Mat. v. 2, 2. And seeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain, and when he was set his Discip!es came unto him, and he opensd his Mouth, and taught them.

By **GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B**
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford.*

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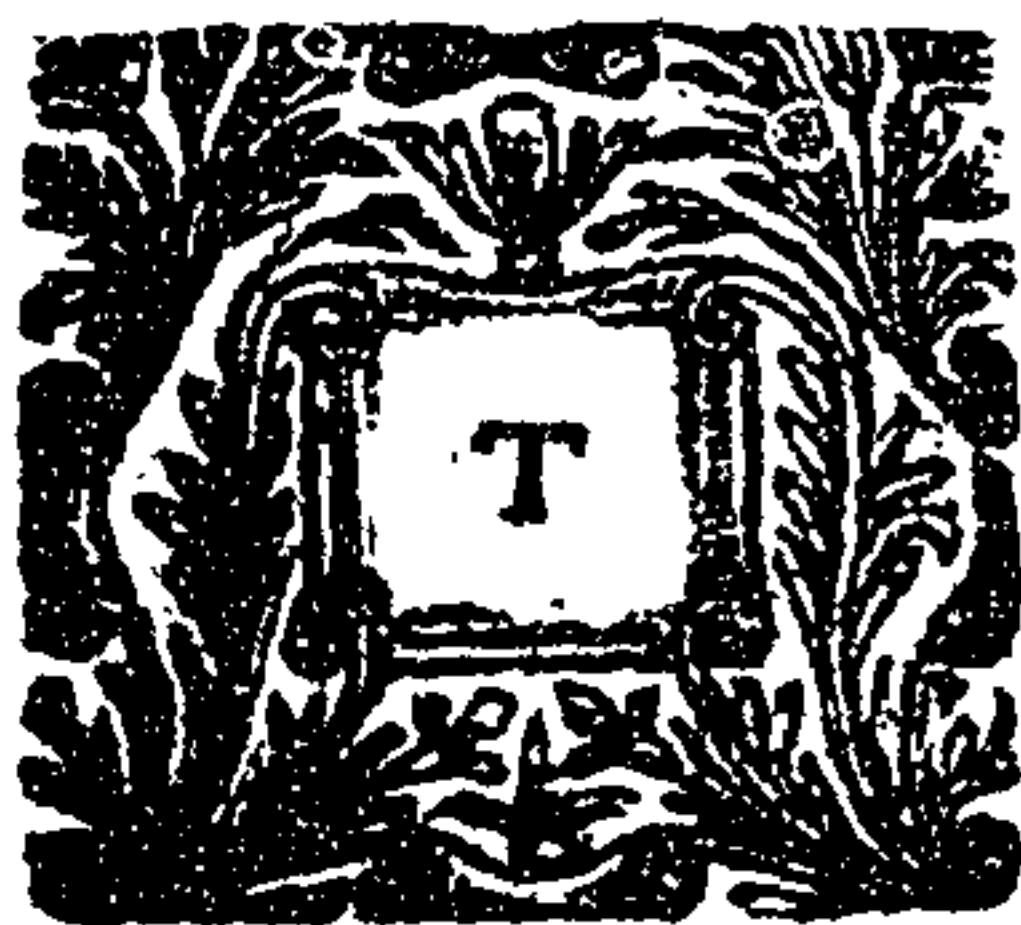


S E R M O N X.

DIRECTIONS how to hear S E R M O N S.

LUKE viii. 18.

Take heed therefore how you hear.



THE Occasion of our Lord's giving this Caution was this: Perceiving that much People were gathered together, to hear him out of every City, and knowing (for he is God, and knoweth all Things) that many, if not most of them, would be Hearers only, and not Doers of the Word, he spake to them by a Parable, wherein, under the Similitude of a Sower, that went out to sow his Seed, he plainly intimated how few there were amongst them who would receive any saving Benefit from his Doctrine, or bring forth Fruit unto Perfection.

The Application, one would imagine, should be plain and obvious: But the Disciples, as yet

unenlightened in any great Degree by the Holy Spirit, and therefore unable to see into the hidden Mysteries of the Kingdom of God, dealt with our Saviour, as People ought to deal with their Ministers — discoursed with him privately about the Meaning of what he had taught them in Publick, and with a sincere Desire of doing their Duty, asked for an Interpretation of the Parable.

Our blessed Lord, as he always was willing to instruct those that were teachable, (herein setting his Ministers an Example to be courteous and easy of Access,) freely told them the Signification of it. And withal, to make them more cautious and more attentive to his Doctrine for the future, he tells them, that they were in an especial Manner to be the Light of the World, and were to proclaim on the House-Top whatsoever he told them in Secret. And as their improving the Knowledge already imparted, was the only Condition upon which more was to be given them, it therefore highly concerned them to take heed how they heard.

From the Context then it appears, that the Words were primarily spoken to the Apostles themselves. But because they were the Representatives of the whole Church, and 'tis to be feared out of those many Thousands that flock to hear Sermons, but few comparatively speaking are effectually influenced by them; I cannot but think it very necessary to remind you of the Caution given by our Lord to his Disciples, and to exhort you with the utmost Earnestness to *take heed how you hear.*

In Prosecution of which Design I shall in the following Discourse,

I. *First*, Prove that every one ought to take all Opportunities of hearing Sermons. And

II. *Secondly*, I shall lay down some Cautions and Directions, in order to your hearing them with Profit and Advantage.

I. And, *First*, I am to prove that every one ought to take Opportunities of hearing Sermons.

That there have always been particular Reasons set apart by God to instruct and exhort his People to practice what he should require of them, is evident from many Passages of Scripture. — St. *Jude* tells us, that *Enoch* the seventh from *Adam* prophesied, or preached, concerning the Lord's coming with ten thousand of his Saints to Judgment. And *Noah*, who lived not long after, is stiled by St. *Peter*, a Preacher of Righteousness. And though in all the intermediate Space between the Flood and giving of the Law, we hear but of few Preachers, yet we may reasonably conclude, that God never left himself without Witnesses, but at sundry Times, and after divers Manners spoke to our Fathers by the Patriarchs and Prophets.

But however it was before, we are assured that after the Delivery of the Law, God has constantly separated to Himself a certain Order of Men to preach to, as well as pray for, his People; and commanded them to enquire their Duty at the Priests Mouths. And though the *Jews* were frequently led into Captivity, and for their Sins scattered abroad through the Face of the Earth, yet

unenlightened in any great Degree by the Holy Spirit, and therefore unable to see into the hidden Myſteries of the Kingdom of God, dealt with our Saviour, as People ought to deal with their Miniſters ——— diſcourſed with him privately about the Meaning of what he had taught them in Publick, and with a ſincere Deſire of doing their Duty, asked for an Interpretation of the Parable.

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he never utterly forsook his Church, but still kept up a Remnant of Prophets and Preachers, as *Ezekiel*, *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, and others, to reprove, instruct, and call them to Repentance.

Thus was it under the Law. Nor has the Church been worse, but infinitely better provided for under the Gospel: For when *Jesus Christ*, that great High Priest, had through the Eternal Spirit offered himself as a full, perfect, sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World, and after his Resurrection had all Power committed to him both in Heaven and Earth, he gave Commission to his Apostles, and in them to all succeeding Ministers, to go and preach the Gospel to every Creature; promising to be with them, to guide, assist, strengthen and comfort them “always, even to the End of the World.”

But if it be the Duty of Ministers to preach (and Woe be to them if they do not preach the Gospel, for a Necessity is laid upon them) no doubt, the People are obliged to attend to them; for otherwise, wherefore are Ministers sent?

And how can we here avoid admiring the Love and tender Care which our dear Redeemer has expressed for his Spouse the Church? Who, because he could not be always with us in Person, on account it was expedient he should go away, and as our Fore-runner take Possession of that Glory he had purchased by his precious Blood, yet would not leave us comfortless, but first settled, a sufficient Number of Pastors and Teachers; and afterwards, according to his Promise, actually did and will continue to send down the Holy Ghost to furnish them and their Successors with proper Gifts
and

and Graces for the Works of the Ministry, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of his Body in Love, till we all come in the Unity of the Spirit, to the Fulness of the Measure of the Stature of *Christ*.

Oh! how insensible are those of this unspeakable Gift, who do despite to the Spirit of Grace, who crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open Shame, by wilfully refusing to attend on so great a Means of their Salvation? How aggravating, that Light should come into the World, that the glad Tidings of Salvation should be so very frequently in this populous City, and that so many should loath this spiritual Manna, this Angels Food, and call it light Bread? How much more tolerable will it be for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, for *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, than for such Sinners? For better Men had never heard of a Saviour's being born, than after they have heard, not to give heed to the Ministry of those, who are employed as his Ambassadors, to transact Affairs between God and their Souls.

We may, though at a Distance, without a Spirit of Prophecy, foretell the eplorable Condition of such Men; and behold them cast into Hell, lifting up their Eyes, being in Torment, and crying out, How often would our Ministers have gathered us, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings! — But we would not. — Oh that we had known in that our Day, the Things that belonged to our everlasting Peace! — But now they are for ever hid from our Eyes.

Thus wretched, thus inconceivably miserable, will such be as slight and make a Mock at the publick preaching of the Gospel — But taking

it for granted, there are but few, if any, of this unhappy Stamp, who think it worth their while to tread the Courts of the Lord's House, I pass on now to the

II. *Second* general Thing proposed — To lay down some Cautions and Directions, in order to your hearing Sermons with Profit and Advantage.

And here, if we reflect on what has been already delivered, and consider that Preaching is an Ordinance of God, a Means appointed by *Jesus Christ* himself for promoting his Kingdom amongst Men, you cannot reasonably be offended, if, in order that you may hear Sermons with Profit and Advantage, I

First, direct or intreat you to come to hear them, not out of Curiosity, but from a sincere Desire to know and do your Duty.

Formality and Hypocrisy in any religious Exercise is an Abomination unto the Lord. And to enter his House merely to have our Ears entertained, and not our Hearts reformed, must certainly be highly displeasing to the Most High God, as well as unprofitable to ourselves.

Hence it is, that so many remain Unconverted, yea, Unaffected with the most Evangelical Preaching; so that like *St. Paul's* Companions, they only hear the Preacher's Voice with their outward Ears, but do not experience the Power of it inwardly in their Hearts. Or like the Ground near *Gideon's* Fleece, they remain untouched; whilst others that came to be fed with the sincere Milk of the Word, like the Fleece itself, are watered
by

by the Dew of God's Heavenly Blessing, and grow thereby.

Flee therefore, my Brethren, flee Curiosity; and prepare your Hearts by an humble Disposition to receive with Meekness the engrafted Word, and then it will be a Means, under God, to quicken, build up, purify, and save your Souls.

A *Second* Direction I shall lay down for the same Purpose, is, not only to prepare your Hearts before you hear, but also to give diligent heed to the Things that are spoken, whilst you are hearing the Word of God.

If an earthly King was to issue out a Royal Proclamation, on performing or not performing the Conditions wherein contained the Life or Death of his Subjects, entirely depended, how solicitous would they be to hear what those Conditions were? And shall we not pay the same Respect to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and lend an attentive Ear to his Ambassadors, when they are declaring in his Name on what Terms our Pardon, Peace, and Happiness may be secured?

When God descended on Mount *Sinai* in terrible Majesty, to give unto his People the Law, how attentive were they to his Servant *Moses*? And if they were so earnest to hear the Thundrings or Threatnings of the Law, shall not we be as solicitous to hear from the Ministers of *Christ*, the glad Tidings of the Gospel?

Whilst *Christ* was himself on Earth, it is said, that the People hang upon him to hear the gracious Words that proceeded out of his Mouth. And if we looked on Ministers as we ought, as the Repre-

Representatives of *Jesus Christ*, we should hang upon them to hear their Words also.

Besides, the sacred Truths that Gospel Ministers deliver are not dry insipid Lectures on Moral Philosophy, intended only to amuse us for a while; but the great Mysteries of Godliness, which therefore we are bound studiously to listen to, lest through our Negligence we should either not understand them, or by any other Means let them slip.

But how regardless are those of this Direction, who instead of hanging on the Preacher to hear him, doze or sleep whilst he is speaking to them from God? Unhappy Men! Can they not watch with our blessed Lord one Hour? What! have they never read how *Eutichus* fell down as he was sleeping, when *St. Paul* continued his Discourse till Midnight, and was taken up dead?

But to return. Though you may prepare your Hearts, as you may think, by a teachable Disposition, and be attentive whilst Discourses are delivering, yet this will profit you little, unless you observe a

Third Direction ----- not to entertain any the least Prejudice against the Minister.

For could a Preacher speak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, if his Audience was prejudiced against him, he would be but as a sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.

That was the Reason why *Jesus Christ* himself, the eternal Word, could not do many mighty Works, nor preach to any great Effect among those of his own Country; for they were offended at him. And was this same *Jesus*, this God Incarnate

nate again to bow the Heavens, and to come down speaking as never Man spake; yet if we were prejudiced against him, as the *Jews* were, we should harden our Hearts as the *Jews* did theirs.

Take heed therefore, my Brethren, and beware of entertaining any Dislike against those whom the Holy Ghost has made Overseers over you. Consider that the Clergy are Men of like Passions with yourselves. And though we should even hear a Person teaching others to do, what he has not taught himself; yet that is no sufficient Reason for rejecting his Doctrine. For Ministers speak not in their own, but *Christ's* Name. And we know who commanded the People to do whatsoever the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* should say unto them, though they said but did not.

But, *Fourthly*, as you ought not to be prejudiced against, so you should be careful not to depend too much on a Preacher, or think more highly of him than you ought to think. For enough this be an Extreme that People seldom run into; yet preferring one Teacher, in Opposition to another, has often been of ill Consequence to the Church of God.

That, we read, was a Fault which the great Apostle of the *Gentiles* condemned in the *Corinthians*: For whereas one said, I am of *Paul*; another, I am of *Apollos*: Are ye not Carnal, says he? For who is *Paul*, and who is *Apollos*, but Instruments in God's Hands, by whom you believed? And are not all Ministers sent forth to be ministring Ambassadors, to those who shall be Heirs of Salvation? And are they not all therefore greatly to be esteemed for their Work's Sake?

The

The Apostle, it is true, commands us to pay double Honour to those who labour in the Word and Doctrine. But then to prefer one Minister at the Expence of another (perhaps to such a Degree, as when you have actually entered a Church, to come out again, because he does not preach) is earthly, sensual, devilish.

Not to mention that Popularity and Applause cannot but be exceeding dangerous even to a rightly informed Mind, and must necessarily fill any thinking Man with a holy Jealousy, lest he should take that Honour to himself, which is due only to God; who alone qualifies himself for his Ministerial Labours, and from whom alone every good and perfect Gift cometh.

A *Fifth* Direction I would recommend is, to make a particular Application of every Thing that is delivered to your own Hearts.

When our Saviour was discoursing at his last hour with his beloved Disciples, and foretold that one of them should betray him, each of them immediately applied it to his own Heart, and said, *Lord, It is I?* And would Persons in like Manner, when Preachers are dissuading from any Vice, or -persuading to any Virtue, instead of crying, this was designed against such and such a one, turn their Thoughts inwardly, and say, *Lord, Is it I?* How far more beneficial should we find Discourses to be, than they generally are now?

But we are apt to wander too much abroad: Always looking at the Mote which is in our Neighbour's Eye, rather than the Beam which is in our own.

Haste

Haste we now to the *Sixth* and last Direction: If you would receive a Blessing from the Lord, when you hear his Word preached, pray to him, both before, in, and after every Sermon, to endue the Minister with Power to speak, and to grant you a Will and Ability to put in Practice what he shall shew from the Book of God to be your Duty.

This would be an excellent Means to render the Word preached effectual to the Enlightening and Enflaming your Hearts, and without this all the other Means before prescribed will be in vain.

No doubt it was this Consideration that made *St. Paul* so earnestly intreat his Beloved *Ephesians* to intercede with God for him ----- *Praying always*, says he, *with all Manner of Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and for me also that I may open my Mouth with Boldness, to make known the Mysteries of the Gospel.* And if so great an Apostle as *St. Paul* needed the Prayers of his People, much more do these Ministers, who have only the ordinary Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Besides, this would be good Proof that you sincerely desired to do as well as know the Will of God: And it must highly profit both Ministers and People; because God through your Prayers will give them a double Portion of his Holy Spirit, whereby they will be enabled to instruct you more fully in the Things which pertain to the Kingdom of God.

And oh! that all that hear me this Day would seriously apply their Hearts, to practise what has now been told them! ---- How would Ministers see
Satan

Satan like Lightning fall from Heaven, and People find the Word preached sharper than a two-edged Sword, and mighty through God to the pulling down of the Devil's strong Holds!

The Holy Ghost would then fall on all them that heard the Word; as when St. *Peter* preached. The Gospel of *Christ* would have free Course, run very swiftly, and Thousands again be converted by a Sermon.

For *Jesus Christ* is the same Yesterday, to Day, and for ever. He has promised to be with his Ministers always, even unto the End of the World. And the Reason why we do not receive larger Effusions of the blessed Spirit of God, is not because our All-powerful Redeemer's Hand is shortned, but because we are not prepared to receive them, but because we do not expect them, but confine them to the Primitive Times.

It does indeed sometimes happen that God to magnify his Free Grace in *Christ Jesus*, is found of them that sought him not; a notorious Sinner is forcibly worked upon by a publick Sermon, and plucked as a Fire-brand out of the Fire. But this is not God's ordinary Way of acting. No, for the Generality, he only visits those with the Power of his Word, who humbly wait to know what he would have them to do. And sends unqualified Hearers not only empty, but hardened away.

Take heed, therefore, ye careless, curious Professors, if any such be here present, how you hear. Remember that, whether we think of it or not, we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of *Christ*, where Ministers must give a strict Account of the Doctrine they have delivered, and you as
strict

strict a one, how you have improved under it. And, good God! how will you be able to stand at the Bar of an angry, Sin-avenging Judge, and see so many Discourses you have despised, so many Ministers who once longed and laboured for the Salvation of your precious and immortal Souls, brought out as so many swift Witnesses against you? Will it be sufficient then, think you, to alledge that you went to hear them only out of Curiosity, to pass away an idle Hour, to admire the Oratory, or ridicule the Simplicity of the Preacher? No, God will then let you know, that you ought to have come out of better Principles, that every Sermon has been put down to your Account, and that you must then be justly punished for not improving by them.

But fear not, you little Flock, who with Meekness receive the ingrafted Word, and bring forth the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness; for it shall not be so with you. No; you will be your Minister's Joy, and their Crown of Rejoycing in the Day of our Lord *Jesus*. And they will present you in a holy Triumph faultless and unblameable to our common Redeemer, saying, Behold us, O Lord, and the Children which thou hast given us.

But still *take you heed how you hear*. For upon your improving the Grace you have, more shall be given, and you shall have abundance. For he is faithful that has promised, who also will do it. Nay, Nay, God from out of Sin shall so bless you, that every Sermon you hear shall communicate to you a fresh Supply of Spiritual Knowledge. The Word of God shall dwell in you richly; you shall go on from Strength to Strength, from one Degree
of

of Grace unto another, till being grown up to be perfect Men in *Christ Jesus*, and filled with all the Fulness of God, you shall be translated by Death to see Him as He is, and to sing Praise before his Throne with Angels and Archangels, Cherubims and Seraphims, and the general Assembly of the First-born, whose Names are written in Heaven, for ever and ever.

Which God, &c.

S E R M O N

SERMON XI.

WORLDLY BUSINESS no Plea for the Neglect of *Religion:*

OR,

Too eager a Pursuit of Temporal
Concerns, inconsistent with sincere
Piety.

Matth. xvi. 26. *For what is a Man profitted, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

By *GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.*
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford.*

L O N D O N:

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M DCC XXXIX.



S E R M O N . X I .

Worldly Business no Plea for the
Neglect of RELIGION.

MATTH. viii. 22.

Let the Dead bury their Dead.



ST. P A U L, preaching at *Athens*, tells them, that, as he passed by, and beheld their Devotions, he perceived they were *in all Things too superstitious*. But, was this Apostle to rise, and come publishing the glad Tidings of Salvation in any of our populous Cities, he would see no Reason why he should charge the Inhabitants with this ; but rather, as he passed by and observed the Tenor of their Life, say, I perceive in all Things ye are too worldly minded ; ye are too eagerly bent on pursuing your lawful Business ; so eagerly, as either wholly to neglect,

4 *Wordly Business no Plea*
lect, or at least too heedlessly to attend on *the one Thing needful.*

There cannot then be a greater Charity shewn to the Christian World, than to sound an Alarm in their Ears, and to warn them of the inexpressible Danger of continually grasping after the Things of this Life, without being equally, nay a thousand times more concerned for their Well-being in a future State.

And there is still the more Occasion for such an Alarm, because Worldly-mindedness so easily and craftily besets the Hearts of Men. For, out of a specious Pretence of serving God in labouring for the Meat which perished, they are insensibly lulled into such a spiritual Slumber, as scarce to perceive their Neglect to secure that which endureth to everlasting Life.

The Words of the Text, if not at first View, yet when examined and explained, will be found applicable to this Case, as containing an admirable Caution not to pursue the Affairs of this World at the Expence of our Happiness in the next.

They are the Words of *Jesus Christ* himself: The Occasion of their being spoken was this,—— As he was conversing with those that were gathered round about him, he gave one of them an immediate Summons to follow him: But he, either afraid to go after such a persecuted Master, or rather loving this present World, says, *Suffer me first to go home and bury my Father,* or, as most explain it, *Let me first go and dispatch some important Business I have now in Hand.* But *Jesus* said

said unto him, *Let the Dead bury their Dead*; Leave worldly Business to worldly Men; let thy secular Business be left undone, rather than thou shouldst neglect to follow me.

Whether this Person did as he was commanded, I know not; but this I know, that what *Christ* said here in Person, he has often whispered with the small still Voice of his *Holy Spirit*, and said to many here present, that rise up early and late, take no Rest and eat the Bread of Carefulness; Come; draw off your Affections from the Things of this Life; take up your Cross and follow me. But, they, willing to justify themselves, make Answer, *Lord suffer us first to bury our Fathers*, to dispatch our secular Affairs.— I say unto all such, *Let the Dead bury their Dead*; let your worldly Business be left undone rather, than you should neglect to follow him.

From the Words thus explained naturally arises this Proposition, - - - - - That no Business, though never so important, can justify a Neglect of true Religion:

The Truth of which I shall first shew,
And then make an Application of it.

I. *First* then, I am to prove that no temporal Business, though never so important, can justify a Neglect of *true Religion*.

By the Word *Religion* I do not mean any Set of moral Virtues, any partial Amendment of our selves, or formal Attendance on any out-

lect, or at least too heedlessly to attend on *the one Thing needful*.

There cannot then be a greater Charity shewn to the Christian World, than to sound an Alarm in their Ears, and to warn them of the inexpressible Danger of continually grasping after the Things of this Life, without being equally, nay a thousand times more concerned for their Well-being in a future State.

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From the Words thus explained naturally arises this Proposition, - - - - - That no Business, though never so important, can justify a Neglect of true Religion:

The Truth of which I shall first shew,
And then make an Application of it.

I. *First* then, I am to prove that no temporal Business, though never so important, can justify a Neglect of *true Religion*.

By the Word *Religion* I do not mean any Set of moral Virtues, any partial Amendment of our selves, or formal Attendance on any out-

ward Duties whatsoever ; but a thorough real Change of Nature wrought in us by the invisible, yet powerful Operation of the *Holy Ghost*, preserved and nourished in our Souls by a constant Use of all the Means of Grace, evidenced by a good Life, and bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit.

This is the true and undefiled Religion, and for for the perfecting this good Work in our Hearts, the eternal Son of God came down and shed his precious Blood ; for this End were we made, and sent into the World, and by this alone can we become the Sons of God. Were we indeed to judge by the common Practice of the World; we might think we were sent into it for no other Purpose than to care and toil for the uncertain Riches of this Life : But if we consult the lively Oracles, they will inform us, that we were born for nobler Ends ; to be born again from above, to be restored to the Divine Likeness by *Jesus Christ* our second *Adam*, and thereby be made meet to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven ; and consequently there is an Obligation laid upon all, even the most busy People, to secure this End ; it being an undeniable Truth, that all Creatures ought to answer the End for which they were created.

Some, indeed, are for confining Religion to the Clergy, and think it only belongs to those who serve at the Altar : But what a fatal Mistake is this, seeing all Persons are indifferently called by God to the same State of inward Holiness ? As we are all corrupt in our Nature, so must we
all

all be renewed and sanctified. And though it must be granted, that the Clergy lie under double Obligations to be Examples to Believers in Faith, Zeal, Charity, and whatever else is commendable and of good Report, as being more immediately dedicated to the Service of God; yet as we have been all baptized with one Baptism into the Death of Christ, we are all under a Necessity of performing our Baptismal Covenant, and perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God: For the Holy Scriptures point out to us but one Way of Admission in the Kingdom of Christ,—— through the narrow Gate of a sound Conversion: And he that does not enter into the Sheepfold, whether Clergy or Layman, by this Door, will find to his everlasting Confusion, there is no climbing up another Way.

Besides, what a gross Ignorance of the Nature of *true Religion*, as well as our own Happiness, does such a Distinction discover? For, what does our Saviour, by willing us to be religious, require of us, but to subdue our corrupt Passions, to root out ill Habits, to engraft the Heavenly Graces of God's most *Holy Spirit* in their Room; and, in one Word, to fill us with all the Fulness of God?

And will Men be so much their own Enemies, as to affirm this belongs only to those who minister in holy Things: Does it not equally concern the most active Man living? It is the End of Religion to make Men happy, and is it not every one's Privilege to be as happy, as he can? Do Persons in Business find the Corruptions of their Nature, and
Disorder

Disorder of their Passions so pleasing, that they care not whether they ever regulate or root them out? Or will they consent that Ministers shall be alone Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light?—If not, as they desire the same End, why will they not make Use of the same Means? Do they think that God will create a new Thing upon the Earth, and contrary to the Purity of his Nature, and Immutability of his Counsel, admit them into Heaven in their natural State, because they have been encumbered about many worldly Things? Search the Scriptures, and see if they give any Room for such a groundless Hope.

But farther, one would imagine there was something of the highest Concern and utmost Importance in our temporal Affairs, that they should divert so many from purifying their Hearts by Faith, which is in *Christ Jesus*.

A covetous Miser, who neglects Religion by being continually intent on seeking great Things for himself and those for his own Household, flatters himself he herein acts most wisely, and at the same Time will censure and condemn a young Prodigal, who has no Time to be devout, because he is so perpetually engaged in wasting his Substance by riotous Living, and following of Harlots. But yet a little While, and Men will be convinced, that they are as much without Excuse who lose their Souls by hunting after Riches, as those who lose them by hunting after sensual Pleasures. For, though Business may assume an Air of Importance, when compared with other trifling

trifling Amusements, yet when put in the Balance with the Loss of our precious and immortal Souls; it is equally frivolous,—— According to that of our Saviour, *What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World and lose his own Soul; or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

And now, what need we any farther Proof? We have heard the Decision out of Christ's own Mouth. But because it is difficult to convince them of this important Truth, whose Hearts are blinded by the Deceitfulness of Riches, so that we had need to cry out to them in the Language of the Prophet, *O Earth, Earth, Earth, hear the Word of the Lord.* I shall lay before you one Passage of Scripture more, which I could wish were written on the Tables of all our Hearts. In the xivth of St. Luke, the 18th and following Verses, our Lord puts forth this Parable,—— *A certain Man made a great Supper, and had many, and sent his Servants at Supper Time to call them that were bidden: But they all, with one Consent, began to make Excuse. The One said, I have bought a Piece of Ground, and I must needs go see it, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought a Yoke of Oxen, and I must needs go and prove them, I pray thee therefore, have me excused. So the Servant returned, and shewed his Master all these Things.—— And what follows? Did the Master accept of their Excuses? No; the Text tells us, the good Man was angry, and said, that none of those which were bidden, should taste of his Supper. And what does this Parable teach more or less, than that the most
lawful*

lawful Callings cannot justify our Neglect, nay, that they are no longer lawful when they in any wise interfere with the great Concerns of Religion? For, the Marriage-Supper here spoken of, means the Gospel; the Master of the House is *Christ*; the Servants sent out, are his Ministers, whose Duty it is from Time to Time to call the People to this Marriage-Feast; or, in other Words, to be religious. Now, we find those that were bidden, were very well and honestly employed. There was no Harm in buying, or seeing a Piece of Ground, or in going to prove a Yoke of Oxen; but here lay their Fault,—They were doing these Things when they were invited to come to the Marriage Feast.

Without Doubt, Persons may very honestly and commendably be employed in following their respective Callings; but yet, if they are engaged so deeply in these, as to hinder their working out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling, they must expect the same Sentence with their Predecessors in the Parable, that none of them shall taste of *Christ's* Supper; for our particular Calling, as of this or that Profession, must never interfere with our general and precious Calling as we are Christians. Not that Christianity calls us intirely out of the World; the Holy Scriptures warrant no such Doctrine.

It is very remarkable, that in the *Book of Life*, we find some almost of all Kinds of Occupations, who notwithstanding served God in their respective Generations, and shone as so many Lights in the World. Thus we hear of a good *Centurion* in the
Evangelists,

Evangelists, and a devout *Cornelius* in the *Acts*; a pious Lawyer, and some that walked with God, even of *Nero's* Household in the *Epistles*; and our Divine Master himself in his Check to *Martha* does not condemn her for minding, but for being cumbered or perplexed about many Things.

No, you may, nay, you must labour, out of Obedience to God, even for the Meat which perishes. But then, that I may in the *second* Place apply what has been said,

I beseech you, by the Mercies of God, in *Christ Jesus*, let it not be at the Expence of that which endureth to everlasting Life: For, to repeat our Blessed Saviour's Words, *What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World and lose his own Soul; or, What shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

Were we always to live in the World, then worldly Wisdom would be our highest Wisdom: But forasmuch as we have here no continuing City, and were only sent into this World to have our Natures changed, and to fit our selves for that which is to come; then to neglect this important Work for a little worldly Gain, what is it but with prophane *Esau*, to *sell our Birthright for a Mess of Pottage*.

Alas! how unlike are Christians to Christianity, they are commanded to *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all other real Necessaries shall be added unto them*; but they are fearful (O Men of little Faith!) if they should do so, all other Necessaries would be taken away from

from them : They are strictly forbidden to be careful for the Morrow, and yet they rest not Night or Day, but are continually heaping up Riches for many Years, though they know not who shall gather them.

Is this acting like Persons that are Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth? Is this keeping their Baptismal Vow? Or rather, is it not directly apostatizing from it, and deserting the Service of *Christ Jesus*?

But what will be the Hope of such Worldlings, when God shall take away their Souls? What, if the Almighty should say to each of them, as he did to the rich Fool in the Gospel, *This Night shall thy Soul be required of thee*; Oh then, what would-all those Things profit them, which they are now so busy in providing?

Was eternal Life, that free Gift of God in *Christ Jesus*, to be purchased with Money; or could Men carry their Stocks beyond the Grave, to buy Oil for their Lamps, *i. e.* Grace for their Hearts, when they should be called to meet the Bridegroom, there might be some Reason why God might well bear with them: But since their Money is to perish with them; since it is certain, as they brought nothing into the World, so they can carry nothing^d out; or supposing they could, since there is no Oil to be bought, *i. e.* no Grace to be purchased when once the Lamp of their natural Life is gone out; Would it not be much more prudent to spend the short Time they have here allotted them in buying Oil while it may be had,
and

and not for Fear of having a little less of that which will quickly be another Man's, eternally lose the true Riches?

What think you? Is it to be supposed that it grieved that covetous Worldling before mentioned, when his Soul sprung into the World of Spirits, that he could not stay here 'till he had pulled down his Barns and built greater? Or think you not that all Things here below seemed equally little to him then, and he only repented that he had not employed more Time in pulling down every high Thought that exalted itself against the Almighty, and building up his Soul in the Knowledge and Fear of God?

They may, for a Season, seem excellently well employed in being solicitously careful about the important Concerns of this Life; but when once their Eyes are opened by Death, and their Souls launched into Eternity, they will then see the Littleness of all sublunary Cares, and wonder they should be so besotted to the Things of another Life, while they were, it may be, applauded for their great Wisdom and profound Sagacity in the Affairs of this World.

Alas! how will they bemoan themselves for acting like the unjust Steward so very wisely in their temporal Concerns, in calling their respective Creditors so carefully, and asking how much every one owes to them, and yet never remembering to call themselves to an Account, or enquire how much they owed their own great Lord and Master?

And

And now, what should I say more? The God of this World, and the inordinate Desire of other Things must have wholly stifled the Conscience of that Man, who does not see the Force of these plain Reasonings.

Permit me only to add a Word or two to the Rich, and Persons that are freed from the Business of this Life.

But here I must pause a While, for I am sensible that it is but an ungrateful, and, as some may imagine, an assuming Thing, for such a Novice in Religion to take upon him to instruct Men in high Stations, and who perhaps would disdain to set me with the Dogs of their Flock.

But however, since *St. Paul*, who knew what best became a young Preacher, commanded *Timothy*, young as he was, to exhort and charge the Rich with all Authority, I hope, none here, that are so, will be offended, if with Humility I beg Leave to remind them, though they once knew, that if Persons in the most busy Employments are indispensably obliged to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, much more ought they to do so, who are free from the Toils and Incumbrance of a lower Way of Life, and, consequently, have greater Opportunities and Leisure to prepare themselves for a future State.

But is this really the Case, or do we not find by fatal Experience that to many of those whom God has exalted above their Brethren,
who

who are cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fare sumptuously every Day, by a very sad Abuse of God's great Bounty towards them, think that their Stations set them above Religion, and so let the Poor, who live by the Sweat of their Brows, attend more constantly on the Means of Grace than they.

But, Woe unto such rich Men ! for they have received their Consolation. Happy had it been if they had never been born : For if the careless irreligious Tradesman cannot be saved, where will the luxurious and wicked Gentlemen appear ?

Let me, therefore, by Way of Conclusion, exhort all Persons, High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another, to make the Renewal of their fallen Nature the one Business of their Lives ; and to let no worldly Profit, no worldly Pleasure divert them from the Thoughts of it. Let this Cry, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh*, be ever sounding in our Ears ; and let us live as Creatures that are every Moment liable to be hurried away by Death to Judgment : Let us remember that this Life is a State of infinite Importance, a Point between two Eternities, and that after these few Days are ended, there will remain no more Sacrifice for Sin ; let us be often asking our selves, How we shall wish we had lived when we leave the World ? And then we shall always live in such a State as we shall never fear to die in. So that whether we live, we shall live unto the Lord ; or whether we die,

die, we shall die unto the Lord; for that living or dying we may be the Lord's.

To which End, let us beseech God, the Protector of all them that put their Trust in him, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy to increase and multiply upon his Mercy, that he being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through Things Temporal, that we finally lose not the Things Eternal; through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

F I N I S.

S E R M O N X I I .

T H E

M A R K S

O F T H E

N E W B I R T H ;

O R,

The different States of N A T U R E
and of G R A O E described.

*John viii. 5, 6. — Except a Man be born of Water
and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the King-
dom of God. That which is born of the Flesh, is
Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit, is
Spirit.*

By *GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.*
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for *C. DAVIS,* at *D'Anvers's-Head,*
in the *Old-Bailey*

M DCC XXXIX.



S E R M O N XII.

The MARKS of the NEW BIRTH.

A C T S xix. 5.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?



W O Constructions have been given us of these Words; some have supposed, that the Question here put, is, Whether these Disciples, whom St. Paul found at *Ephesus*, after he had passed through the upper Coasts, had received the Holy Ghost, by Imposition of Hands at Confirmation. ----- Others think, that these Disciples had been already baptised into *John's* Baptism; but that not being attended with an immediate Effusion of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle here asks them, *Whether they had received the Holy Ghost by being baptised into Jesus Christ?* And upon their answering in the Negative, he first baptised, and then confirmed them in the Name of the Lord *Jesus Christ*.

Which of these Interpretations is most true, is neither easy nor very necessary to determine. However, as the Words contain a most important Enquiry, without any Reference to the Context, I shall from them draw these two General Heads of Discourse.

- I. *First*, I shall shew who the Holy Ghost, here spoken of, is; and how we must all receive him before we can be stiled *True Believers*.
- II. *Secondly*, I shall lay down some Scripture Marks, whereby we may know, *Whether we have thus received the Holy Ghost, or not*.
- III. *Thirdly*, By Way of Conclusion, I shall address myself to several distinct Classes of Professors, concerning the Doctrine that shall have been delivered.

I. And *First*, I am to shew who the Holy Ghost, spoken of in the Text is; and how we must all receive him e're we can be stiled *True Believers*.

By the Holy Ghost here spoken of, is signified the Holy Spirit, --- the third Person in the ever blessed Trinity, --- consubstantial, and ce-eternal wit the Father and the Son, --- proceeding from, yet equal to them both.---He is emphatically called *Holy*, because infinitely Holy in himself, and the Author and Finisher of all Holiness in us.

This blessed Spirit, who once moved on the Face of the great Deep, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin before that Holy Thing was born of her, who descended in a bodily Shape like a Dove on our Blessed Lord, when he came up out
of

of the Water at his Baptism; and lighted afterwards in fiery Tongues on the Heads of all his Apostles at the Day of *Pentecost*; this is the Holy Ghost, who must move on the Faces of our Souls; this Power of the Most High must come upon us, and we must be baptised with his Baptism and refining Fire, before we can be stiled True Members of its mystical Body.

Thus, says the Apostle, *Know ye not that Christ is in you?* that is, by his Spirit, *unless you are Reprobates?* Now if any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And again, *St. John, We know that we are his by the Spirit that he hath given us.*

It is not indeed necessary that we should have it now given in that miraculous Manner in which it was at first given to our Lord's Apostles, by Signs and Wonders. But it is absolutely necessary that we should receive the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying Graces as really as they did, and so will it continue to be till the End of the World.

For thus stands the Case between God and Man: God at first made Man upright, or as the sacred Penman expresses it, *In the Image of God made he Man*, that is, his Soul was the very Copy, the Transcript of the Divine Nature. He that before had by his Almighty Fiat spoke the World into Being; breatheth into Man the spiritual Life, and his Soul became adorned with all the Perfections of the Deity. This was the finishing Stroke of the Creation: The Perfection both of the moral and material World, and so near resembled its Divine Original, that God could not but rejoice, and take Pleasure in his own Likeness. And therefore we read, that when God had finished the inanimate

Parts of the Creation, he looked upon it, and behold it was *Good*; but when that lovely Godlike Creature, *Man*, was made, behold it was *very Good*.

Happy then, unspeakably happy must Man needs be, who was thus Partaker of the Divine Nature; and thus might we have still continued, had he still continued Holy. --- But God had placed him in a State of Probation, with a free Grant to eat of every Tree in the Garden of *Eden*, except the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Day he did eat thereof he was surely to die; that is, not only to be subject to temporal, but spiritual Death, and consequently to lose that Divine Image, that spiritual Life God had not long since breathed into him, and which was as much his Happiness as his Glory.

These, one would imagine, were easy Conditions for a finite Creature's Happiness to depend on. But Man, unhappy Man, being seduced by the Devil, and desiring like him, to be equal with his Maker, eat of the forbidden Fruit, and thereby became liable to that Curse which the Eternal God, who cannot lie, had denounced against his Disobedience.

Accordingly we read, that soon after *Adam* had fallen, he complained that he was naked. Naked not only as to his Body, but Naked and left destitute of those Divine Graces, which before decked and beautified his Soul. --- The unhappy Mutiny and disorder which the visible Creation fell into, those Briars and Thorns which now sprung up and overspread the Earth, were but poor Emblems, but lifeless Representations of that Confusion and Rebellion, those divers Lusts and Passions which sprung up in, and quite overwhelmed the Soul of Man
imme-

immediately after the Fall:--- Alas! he was now no longer the Image of the invifible God; but as he had imitated the Devil's Sin, he became Partaker of the Devil's Nature, and from an Union with, funk into a State of direct Enmity againft God.

Now in this dreadful difordered Condition are all of us brought into the World. --- For as the Root is, fuch muft the Branches be. Accordingly we are told, that *Adam* begat a Son in his own Likeness, that is, with the fame corrupt Nature which he himfelf had funk into after he had eaten the forbidden Fruit. And Experience, as well as Scripture proves, that we alfo are altogether born in Sin and Corruption, and therefore incapable, whilft in fuch a State, to hold Communion with God. For as Light cannot have Communion with Darknefs, fo God can have no Communion with fuch polluted Sons of *Belial*.

Here then appears the End and Defign why *Chrift* was made manifef in the Flefh, --- viz. to put an End to thefe Diforders, and to reftore us to that primitive Dignity, in which we were at firft created. Accordingly he fhed his precious Blood to fatisfy his Father's Juftice for our Sins, and thereby alfo he purchafed again for us the Holy Ghoft, who fhould once more reinfamp the Divine Image upon our Hearts, and make us capable of living with and enjoying God.

This, I fay, was the only End of our Lord's coming into the World --- Nay, this is the only End why the World itfelf is now kept in Being. For as foon as a fufficient Number are fanctified out of it, the Heavens fhall be wrapped up like a Scrowl; the Elements fhall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth and all that therein is to be burnt up.

This is that new Birth mentioned by our blessed Lord to *Nicodemus*, without which we cannot see the Kingdom of God. This is what *St. Paul* calls being renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, and herein consists that Holiness without which no Man shall see the Lord.

In this manner then it is undeniably certain we must receive the Holy Ghost, e're we can be styled true Members of *Christ's* mystical Body.

II. I come now, in the *Second Place*, to lay down some scriptural Marks, whereby we may easily judge whether we have received the Holy Ghost or not.

And the *First Mark* I shall mention is — our having received a Spirit of Prayer and Supplication: For that always accompanies the Spirit of Grace. No sooner was *Paul* converted, but behold he prayeth, says *Jesus Christ*. And this was urged as an Argument to convince *Ananias* that he was converted. And God's Elect are said to cry to him Day and Night.

For since one great Work of the holy Spirit is to convince us of Sin, and to set us upon seeking Pardon and renewing Grace thro' the All-sufficient Merits of a crucified Redeemer, whosoever has felt the Powers of the World to come awakening him from his spiritual Lethargy, cannot but be always crying out, Lord, what wouldst thou have me do? Or in the Language of the importunate blind *Bartimeus*, Jesus, thou Son of *David*, have Mercy upon me.

The blessed *Jesus*; as he received the Holy Ghost without Measure, so he evidenced it by nothing more than his frequent Addresses to the

Throne.

Throne of Grace. Accordingly we read, that he was alone on the Mountain praying—— That he rose a great while before Day to pray. Nay, that he spent whole Nights in Prayers. And whosoever is made Partaker of the same Mind, will delight in nothing so much as to draw nigh unto God, and lift up holy Hands and Hearts in fervent and devout Prayer.

It must be confessed indeed that this Spirit of Supplication is often as it were sensibly lost, and decays for some Time even in those who have actually spiritual Dryness and Barrenness of Soul, find in themselves a Listlessness and Backwardness to this Duty of Prayer; —— but then they take it as their Cross, and still persevere in seeking *Jesus* tho' it be sorrowing. And their Hearts notwithstanding are fixed upon God, tho' they cannot exert their Affections so strongly as usual, on Account of their spiritual Deadness which God for his wise Reasons has suffered to benumb their Souls.

But as for the formal Believer, it is not so with him. No, he either prays not at all, or if he does enter into his Closet, it is with Reluctance —— out of Custom --- or to satisfy the Checks of his Conscience --- Whereas the true Believer can no more live without Prayer, than without Food Day by Day. And he finds his Soul as really and perceptibly fed by the one, as his Body is nourished and supported by the other.

A Second Scripture Mark of our having received the Holy Ghost is —— not committing Sin.——

Whosoever is born of God, says St. John, sinneth not, neither can he sin, because his Seed remaineth in

in him --- Neither can he sin. This Expression does not imply the Impossibility of a spiritual Man's sinning. For we are told, that in many Things we offend all. It means only thus much; that a Man that is really born again of God, doth not wilfully commit Sin, much less live in the habitual Practice of it. For how shall he that is dead to Sin, as every converted Person is, live any longer therein?

'Tis true, a Man that is born again of God may, thro' Surprize or Violence of a Temptation, fall into an Act of Sin. Witness the Adultery of *David* and *Peter's* Denial of his Master. But then, like them, he quickly rises again, goes out from the Guilt of Sin away by the Tears of a sincere Repentance, joined with Faith in the Blood of *Jesus Christ*; takes double Heed to his Ways for the future, and perfects Holiness in the Fear of God.

The Meaning of this Expression of the Apostle, that a Man that is born again of God, cannot commit Sin, has been * fitly illustrated in the Example of a covetous Worldling, to the general Bent of whose Inclinations, Liberality and Profuseness are directly opposite. But if, upon some unexpected sudden Occasions, he does play the Prodigal, he immediately repents him of his Faults; and returns with double Care to his Savingness again. --- And so is every one that is born again. To commit Sin is as contrary to the habitual Frame and Tendency of his Mind, as Generosity is to the Inclination of a Miser. But if at any Time he is drawn into Sin, he immediately with double Zeal returns to his Duty, and brings forth Fruits meet for Repentance.

Whereas

* *Law's Christian Perfection.*

Whereas the unconverted Sinner is quite dead in Trespases and Sins, --- as if he does abstain from the gross Acts of it, from worldly selfish Motives, yet there is some Right Eye he will not cut off; some specious *Agag* that he will not sacrifice for God; and thereby he is convinced that he is but a mere *Saul*; and consequently, whatever Pretensions he may make to the contrary, he has not yet received the Holy Ghost.

A *Third* Mark whereby we may know whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost is, ---- our Conquest over the World.----- For *whoever is born of God*, says the Apostle, *overcometh the World*----- By the World we are to understand, as St. *John* expresses it, all that is in the World, the Lust of the Eye, the Lust of the Flesh, and Pride of Life.----- And by overcoming of it is meant our renouncing these, so as not to follow or be led by them. ----- For whosoever is born from above, has his Affections set on Things above: He feels a Divine Attraction in his Soul, which forcibly draws his Mind Heavenwards; and as the Heart panteth after the Water-Brooks, so doth it make his Soul to long after the Enjoyment of his God.

Not that he is so taken up with the Affairs of another Life, as to neglect the Business of this. No, a truly spiritual Man dares not stand any Day idle: But then he takes Care, though he laboureth for the Meat which perisheth, first to secure that which endureth to everlasting Life. Or if God has exalted him above his Brethren, yet, like *Moses*, *Joseph*, and *Daniel*, he notwithstanding looks upon himself as a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth.

Having

Having received a Principle of new Life, he walks by Faith and not by Sight.— And his Hopes being full of Immortality, he can look on all Thing here below as Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. — In short, tho' he is in, yet he is not of the World: And as he was made for the Enjoyment of God, so nothing but God can satisfy his Soul.

The ever Blessed *Jesus* was a perfect Instance of overcoming the World. For though he went continually about doing Good, and always lived in a Press, yet wherever he was, his Conversation tended Heavenwards. In like Manner he that is joined to the Lord in one Spirit, will so order his Thoughts, Words, and Actions aright, that he will evidence to all, that his Conversation is in Heaven.

On the contrary, an unconverted Man being of the Earth, is earthy: And having no spiritual Eye to discern spiritual Things, is always seeking for Happiness in this Life, where it never was, will, or can be found. Being not born again from above, he is bowed down by a Spirit of natural Infirmary; the Serpent's Curse becomes his Choice, and he eats of the Dust of the Earth all the Days of his Life.

A *Fourth* Scripture Mark of our *New Birth*, or of our having received the Holy Ghost is, — our loving one another.

We know, says St. *John*, *we are passed from Death unto Life, because we love the Brethren. And by this*, says *Jesus Christ*, *shall all Men know, that you are my Disciples, if ye have Love one towards another.* — Love is the fulfilling of the Gospel, as well as the Law; for God is Love, and whosoever dwelleth in God, dwelleth in Love.

But

But by this Love we are not to understand a Softness and Tenderneſs of meer Nature, or a Love founded on worldly Motives (for this a natural Man may have) but a Love of our Brethren proceeding from a Love towards God. Loving all Men in general, becauſe God loves all, and loving good Men in particular, for the Grace we ſee in them, and becauſe they love our Lord *Jeſus* in Sincerity.

This is *Chriſtian* Charity, and that new Commandment which *Chriſt* gave his Diſciples. New, not its for Object, but in the Motive and Example whereon it is founded, even *Jeſus Chriſt*. This is that Love which the primitive Chriſtians were ſo renowned for, that it became a Proverb — *See, how theſe Chriſtians love one another!*—And without this Love, though we ſhould give all our Goods to feed the Poor, and our Bodies to be burnt, it would profit us nothing.

Farther, this Love is not confined to any particular Set of Men, but is impartial and Catholick. A Love that embraces God's Image wherever it beholds it, and that delights in nothing ſo much as to ſee *Chriſt's* Kingdom come.

This is the Love wherewith *Jeſus Chriſt* loved Mankind. — He loved all, even the worſt of Men, as appears by his weeping over the obſtinately Perverſe; but wherever he ſaw the leaſt Appearance of the Divine Likeneſs, that Soul he loved in particular.— Thus we read, that when he heard the young Man ſay, *All theſe Things have I kept from my Youth*, that ſo far he loved him. And when he ſaw any noble Inſtance of Faith, though in a *Centurion*, a *Syrophanician*, Aliens to the Commonwealth of *Iſrael*, how he is ſaid to marvel at it, as
Man,

Man, to rejoice in it, speak of, and commend it? So also every spiritual Disciple of *Jesus Christ* will cordially embrace all that worship God in Spirit and in Truth, howsoever they may differ as to the Appendages of Religion, and Things essentially necessary to Salvation.

I confess indeed that the Heart of a natural Man is not thus enlarged all at once; and a Person may really have received the Holy Ghost (as *Peter* no doubt had when he was unwilling to go to *Corne- lius*) though he be not arrived to this. — But then we affirm, where a Person is truly in *Christ*, all Narrowness in Spirit decreases in him daily; the Partition-Wall of Bigotry and Party Zeal is broken down more and more; and the nearer he comes to Heaven; the more his Heart is enlarged with that Love which there will make no Difference between any People, Nation, or Language, but we shall all with one Heart, and one Voice, sing Praises to him that sitteth upon the Throne for ever.

But I hasten to shew a *Fifth*, and that the last Scripture Mark of our *New Birth*, that I shall at present mention, Loving our Enemies.

I say unto you, says Jesus Christ, Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do Good to those that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.— And this Duty of loving our Enemies is so necessary, that without it, our Blessed Lord tells us, our Righteousness does not exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Phari- sees*, nay, or of *Publicans* and Sinners: For if you do Good to them only which do Good to you, what do you more than others? What do you extraordinary? Do not even the *Publicans* the same?

And

And these Precepts our Lord confirmed by his own Example, when he wept over the bloody City; when he suffered himself to be led as a Sheep to the Slaughter; when he made that mild Reply to the Traitor Judas, *Judas betrayest thou the Son of God with a Kiss?* — And more especially when in the Agonies and Pangs of Death, he prayed for his very Murderers, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

This is the most difficult Duty to the natural Man, but whosoever is made Partaker of that Promise of the Father, will find it practicable and easy. For if we are born again of God, we must be like him; and consequently delight to be perfect in this Duty of doing Good to our worst Enemies in the same Manner, though not the same Degree, as he is perfect. --- And he sends his Rain on the Evil and the Good; causeth his Sun to shine on the Just and Unjust: And herein more especially commendeth his Love towards us, that whilst we were his Enemies, he sent forth his Son, born of a Woman, made under the Law, that he might become a Curse for us.

Many other Marks there are scattered up and down the Scriptures, whereby we may know whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost. Such as to be carnally minded is Death, but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace. --- Now the Fruits of the Spirit are Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Meekness, with a Multitude of Texts to the same Purpose. --- But as most, if not all of them, are comprehended in the Duties already laid down, I dare affirm, whosoever, upon an impartial Examination, can find the aforesaid Marks upon his Soul, may be as certain, as though an
Angel

Angel was to tell him, that his Pardon is sealed in Heaven.

And as for my own Part, I had rather see these Divine Graces, these Heavenly Tempers stamped upon my Soul, than to hear an Angel from Heaven saying unto me, *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins be forgiven thee.*

For these are infallible Witnesses; these are *Emanuel*, God with and in us; these make up that white Stone, which none knoweth, saving he who receiveth it; these are the Earnests of the Heavenly Inheritance in our Hearts. In short, these are Glory begun, and are that good Thing, that better Part, which, if you continue to stir up this Gift of God, neither Men or Devils shall ever be able to take from us.

III. I proceed now, as was proposed, in the *Third Place*, to make an Application of the Doctrine delivered, to several distinct Classes of Professors.

And *First*, I shall address myself to those who are dead in Trespases and Sins. --- And here how could I weep over you, as our Lord wept over *Jerusalem!* For alas! how distant must you be from God, what a prodigious Work have you got to finish, who instead of praying Day and Night, seldom or never pray at all! And instead of being born again in God, so as not to commit Sin, are so deeply sunk into the Nature of Devils as to make a Mock at it. Or instead of overcoming the World, so as not to follow or be led by it, are continually making Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof. And lastly, instead of being
endued

endued with the Godlike Disposition of loving all Men, even your Enemies, have your Hearts full of Hatred, Malice, and Revenge, and deride those who are sincere Followers of the lowly *Jesus* — But think you, O Sinners, that God will admit such polluted Wretches into his Sight? Or, should he admit you, do you imagine you could take any any Pleasure in him? No, Heaven itself would be no Heaven to you: The Devilish Dispositions which are in your Hearts would render all the spiritual Enjoyment of those blessed Mansions ineffectual to make you happy. — To qualify you to be blisful Partakers of that Heavenly Inheritance with the Saints in Light, there is a Meetness required, to attain which ought to be the one Business of your Lives.

It is true, you, as well as the Righteous, in one Sense shall see God (for we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of *Christ*) but you must see him once, never to see him more. For as you carry about in you the Devil's Image, with Devils you must dwell. Being of the same Nature, you must share the same Doom. Repent therefore and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out. See that you receive the Holy Ghost before you go hence: For otherwise how can you escape the Damnation of Hell?

Secondly, I shall apply myself to those who deceive themselves with false Hopes of Salvation. And because, through the Influence of a good Education, or other providential Restraint, they have not run into the same Excess of Riot with other Men, think they have no Need to receive the Holy Ghost, and flatter themselves that they are really born again.

But do you shew it by bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit? Do you pray without ceasing? Do you commit Sin? Have you overcome the World? And do you love your Enemies, and all Mankind, in the same Manner as *Jesus Christ* loved them?

If these Things, Brethren, be in you, and abound, then may you have Confidence towards God: But if not, although you may be civilized, yet you are not converted. No, you are yet in your Sins. The Nature of the old *Adam* still reigneth in your Souls. And unless the Nature of the second *Adam* be engrafted in its Room, you can never see God.

Think not therefore to dress yourselves up in the Ornaments of a good Nature, and civil Education, and say with *Agag*, surely the Bitterness of Death is past. For God's Justice notwithstanding that, like *Samuel*, shall shew you no Peace ——— However you may be highly esteemed in the Sight of Men, yet in the Sight of God you are but like the Apples of *Sodom*, Dunghills covered with Snow, mere whited Sepulchres, appearing a little beautiful without, but inwardly full of Corruptions and of all Uncleaness. ——— And consequently will be dismissed at the last Day, with a *Verily I know you not.*

But the Word is profitable for Comfort, as well as Correction.

Thirdly, Therefore I do address myself to those who are under the Drawings of the Father, and are going through the Spirit of Bondage, but not finding the Marks before-mentioned, are ever crying out, *Who shall deliver us from the Body of this Death?*

But

But fear not, little Flock; for notwithstanding your present Infant State of Grace, it shall be your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

The Grace of God, through *Jesus Christ*, that shall deliver you, that shall give you what you thirst after. He hath promised he will also do it. Ye shall receive the Spirit of Adoption, that Promise of the Father, if you faint not. Only persevere in seeking it,——and determine to find no Rest in your Spirit, till you know and feel that you are thus born again from above, and God's Spirit witnesseth with your Spirits that you are the Children of God.

Fourthly and lastly, I address myself to those who have received the Holy Ghost in all its sanctifying Graces, and almost ripe for Glory.

Hail happy Saints! For your Heaven is begun on Earth.—— You have already received the first Fruits of the Spirit, and are patiently waiting till that blessed Change come, when your Harvest shall be compleat. I see and admire you, tho' alas! at so great a Distance from you.—— Your Life, I know, is hid with *Christ* in God.—— You have Comforts, you have Meat to eat, which a sinful, carnal, ridiculing World knows nothing of. *Christ's* Yoke is now become easy to you, and his Burden light: You have passed through the Pangs of the *New Birth*, and now rejoice that the Man *Christ Jesus* is spiritually formed in your Hearts. You know what it is to dwell in *Christ*, and *Christ* in you. Like *Jacob's* Ladder, although your Bodies are on Earth, yet your Souls and Hearts are in Heaven. And by your Faith and constant Recollection, like the Blessed Angels,
you

you do always behold the Face of your Father which is in Heaven.

I need not then exhort you to press forward: For you know that in walking by the Spirit there is great Reward. Rather will I exhort you in Patience to possess your Souls yet a little while, and *Jesus Christ* will deliver you from your Burden of the Flesh, and an abundant Entrance shall be administered unto you into the eternal Joy and uninterrupted Felicity of his Heavenly Kingdom.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be ascribed all Honour, Power, and Glory, for ever and ever.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XIII.

The P O W E R O F C H R I S T's R E S U R R E C T I O N ;

O R,

A Resurrection from Sin, to a Life of Righteousness, the chief End of CHRIST's rising from the Dead.

1 Pet. i. 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
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M DCC XXXIX.



SERMON XIII.

The Power of CHRIST'S Resurrection.

PHILIP. iii. 10.

That I may know Him, and the Power of His Resurrection.



THE Apostle, in the Verses going before the Text, had been cautioning the *Philippians* to beware of the Concision, *i. e.* of some *Judaizing Teachers*, who endeavoured to subvert the Simplicity of the Gospel, by telling them, they still ought to be subject to Circumcision, and all the other Ordinances of *Moses*.

— And that they might not think he spoke out of Prejudice, and condemned their Tenets, because

4. *The Power of CHRIST's*

because he himself was a Stranger to the *Jewish Dispensation*, he acquaints them, that if any other Man thought that he had whereof he might trust in the *Flesh*, *i. e.* seek to be justified by the outward Privileges of the *Jews*, he had more. For he was circumcised the eighth Day, of the Stock of *Israel*, *i. e.* not a Profelyte, but a native *Israelite*, of the Tribe of *Benjamin*; the Tribe which adhered to *Judab*, when the others revolted; and *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*; a *Jew* both on the Father's and Mother's Side; as touching the *Law*, a *Pharisee*, the strictest Sect amongst all *Israel*. - - - And to shew he was no *Gallio* in Religion, on Account of his great tho' misguided *Zeal*, he had persecuted the Church of *Christ*; and as touching the Righteousness of the *Law*, as far as the *Pharisees* Exposition of it went, he was blameless, and had kept it from his Youth. - - - But, says he, when it pleased *GOD*, who separated me from my Mother's Womb, to reveal his Son in me, what Things were Gain to me, those Privileges I boasted myself in, and sought to be justified by, I counted Loss for *Christ*. And that they might not think that it repented him that he had done so, he tells them, he was now more confirmed than ever in his Judgment. For, says he, yea doubtless (the Expression in the Original rises with a holy Triumph) and even now I count all Things but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of *Christ Jesus* my Lord. - - - And that they might not object that he said and did not, he acquaints them, he had given Proofs of the Sincerity of these
these

these Professions, because for the Sake of them he had suffered the Loss of all his worldly Things, and still was willing to do more; for, says he, I count them but Dung, (no more than Offals thrown out for the Dogs) - so that I may win or have a saving Interest in *Christ*, and be found in him (as the Manslayer in the City of Refuge) not having my own Righteousness which is of the Law, not depending on having *Abraham* for my Father, or any Works of Righteousness which I have done, either to atone or serve as a Balance for my Evil Deeds, but that which is through the Faith of *Christ*, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith. *i. e.* A Righteousness of God's appointing, and which will be imputed to me, if I believe in *Christ*, - - - that I may know him, *i. e.* *Christ*, and the Power of his Resurrection; that I may have an experimental Knowledge of the Efficacy of his Resurrection, by feeling the Influences of his Blessed Spirit on my Soul. In which Words two Things are implied:

First, That *JESUS CHRIST* did rise from the Dead.

Secondly, That it highly concerns us to know the Power of his Rising again.

Accordingly in the following Discourse I shall endeavour to shew,

4 *The Power of CHRIST's*

because he himself was a Stranger to the *Jewish Dispensation*, he acquaints them, that if any other Man thought that he had whereof he might trust in the Flesh, *i. e.* seek to be justified by the outward Privileges of the *Jews*, he had more. For he was circumcised the eighth Day, of the Stock of *Israel*, *i. e.* not a Profelyte, but a native *Israelite*, of the Tribe of *Benjamin*; the Tribe which adhered to *Judah*, when the others revolted; and *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*; a *Jew* both on the Father's and Mother's Side; as touching the Law, a *Pharisee*, the strictest Sect amongst all *Israel*. - - - And to shew he was no *Gallio* in Religion, on Account of his great tho' misguided Zeal, he had persecuted the Church of *Christ*; and as touching the Righteousness of the Law, as far as the *Pharisees* Exposition of it went, he was blameless, and had kept it from his Youth. - - - But, says he, when it pleased *GOD*, who separated me from my Mother's Womb, to reveal his Son in me, what Things were Gain to me, those Privileges I boasted myself in, and sought to be justified by, I counted Loss for *Christ*. And that they might not think that it repented him that he had done so, he tells them, he was now more confirmed than ever in his Judgment. For, says he, yea doubtless (the Expression in the Original rises with a holy Triumph) and even now I count all Things but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of *Christ Jesus* my Lord. - - - And that they might not object that he said and did not, he acquaints them, he had given Proofs of the Sincerity of these
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First, That *JESUS CHRIST* did rise from the Dead.

Secondly, That it highly concerns us to know the Power of his Rising again.

Accordingly in the following Discourse I shall endeavour to shew,

First, That *CHRIST* is risen indeed from the Dead; and that it was necessary for him so to do; and,

Secondly, That it highly concerns us to know and experience the Power of his Resurrection.

That *JESUS* should rise from the Dead was absolutely necessary; first on his own Account: For he had often appealed to this as the last and most convincing Proof he would give them that he was the true Messiah, - - - - *There shall no other Sign be given you, says he, than the Sign of the Prophet Jonas. - - - -* And again, *Destroy this Temple of my Body, and in three Days I will build it up. - - - -* Which Words his Enemies remembered, and urged it, as an Argument, to induce *Pilate*, to grant them a Watch, to prevent his being stolen out of the Grave. ---
 --- *We know that that Deceiver said, whilst he was yet alive, After three Days I will rise again. - - -* So that had he not risen again, they might have justly said, We know that this Man was an Impostor.

Secondly, It was necessary on our Account, ---
He rose again, says the Apostle, for our Justification; i. e. that the Debt we owed to God for our Sins might be fully satisfied and discharged.

I had

It had pleased the Father (for ever adored be his infinite Love and free Grace) to wound his only Son for our Transgressions, and to arrest and confine him in the Prison of the Grave, as our Surety for the Guilt we had contracted, by setting at nought his Commandments. Now, had *Christ* continued always in the Grave, we could have had no more Assurance that our Sins were satisfied for, than any common Debtor can have of his Creditor's being satisfied whilst his Surety is kept confined. - - - But he being released from the Power of Death, we are thereby assured that in his Sacrifice God was well pleased, - - - that our Atonement was finished on the Cross; and that he had made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World.

Thirdly, It was necessary that our Lord *Jesus* should rise again from the Dead, to assure us of the Certainty of the Resurrection of our own Bodies.

The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body was entirely exploded and set at nought among the *Gentiles*, as appears from the *Athenians* mocking at and calling *St. Paul* a Babler and a Setter forth of strange Doctrines, when he preached to them *JESUS*, and the *Resurrection*. And though it was believed by most of the *Jews*, as is evident from many Passages of Scripture; yet not by all; the whole Sect of the *Sadducees* denied it. But the *Resurrection* of *JESUS CHRIST*

CHRIST put it out of Dispute. For, as he acted as our Representative, if he our Head be risen, then must we also, who are his Members, rise with him. And as in the first *Adam* we all died, even so in him our second *Adam* we must all in this Sense be made alive.

As it was necessary upon all these Accounts, that our Blessed Lord should rise from the Dead; so it is plain beyond Contradiction, that he did. Never was any Matter of Fact better attested. Never were more Precautions made Use of to prevent a Cheat. - - - - - He was buried in a Sepulchre, hewn out of a Rock, so that it could not be said that any digged under, and conveyed him away. It was a Sepulchre also wherein never Man before was laid; so that if any Body did rise from thence, it must be the Body of *Jesus of Nazareth*. Besides, the Sepulchre was sealed, and a great Stone rolled to the Mouth of it; and a Band of Soldiers (consisting not of his Friends, but of his professed Enemies) was set to guard it. And as for his Disciples coming by Night and stealing him away, it was altogether impossible. For, it was not long since that they had all forsaken him, and they were the most backward in believing his Resurrection. And supposing it was true that they came whilst the Soldiers slept; yet the Soldiers must be cast into a deep Sleep indeed, that the rolling away so great a Stone did not awake some of them.

And our Blessed Lord's afterwards Appearing at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, to his Disciples, when they were assembled together, when

when they were walking to *Emmaus*, when they were fishing; nay, and condescending to shew them his Hands and Feet; and his at length appearing to above five hundred Brethren at once, put the Truth of his Resurrection out of all Dispute.

Indeed, there is one Objection that may be made against what has been said, That the Books wherein these Facts are recorded were written by his Disciples.

And who more proper Persons than those who were Eye-Witnesses of all what they related, and eat and drank with him after his Resurrection. "But, they were illiterate and ignorant Men." Yet, as good Witnesses of a plain Matter of Fact, as the most learned Masters in *Israel*. Nay, this rendered them more proper Witnesses. For, being plain Men, they were therefore less to be suspected of telling or making a Lie; more particularly, since they laid down their Lives for a Testimony of the Truth of it.

We read indeed of *Jacob's* telling a Lie, tho' he was a plain Man, in Order to get his Father's Blessing. But, it was never heard since the World began, that any Man, much less a whole Set of Men, died Martyrs for the Sake of an Untruth, when they themselves were to reap no Advantage from it.

No, this single Circumstance proves them to be *Israelites*, indeed, in whom was no Guile. - - And the wonderful Success GOD gave to their Ministry afterwards, when Three Thousand were converted

converted by one Sermon, and twelve poor Fishermen, in a very short Time, were enabled to be more than Conquerors over all the Oppositions Men or Devils could make, was as plain a Demonstration, that *Christ* was risen, according to their Gospel, as that a Divine Power, at the Sound of a few Ram's Horns, caused the Walls of *Jericho* to fall down.

But, what need we any farther Witnesses? Believe you the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord? I know that you believe it, as your Gathering together, even on this first Day of the Week in the Courts of the Lord's House, abundantly testifies.

What concerns us most to be assured of, and which is the

Second Thing which I was to speak to, is, - -
 - - Whether we have experimentally known the *Power of his Resurrection*; that is, *Whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost*, and by his powerful Operations on our Hearts been raised from the Death of Sin, to a Life of Righteousness, and true Holiness.

It was this the great Apostle was chiefly desirous to know. - - - The Resurrection of *Christ's* Body, he was satisfied, would avail him nothing, unless he experienced the Power of it in raising his dead Soul.

For another, and that a chief End of our Blessed Lord's rising from the Dead, was to enter