

## S E R M O N XXXVII.

## The christian's treasure.

1 COR. iii. 21.

— *All things are your's.*

**I**T is a peculiar delight of this apostle to survey the blessings we derive from *Christ*, and to run over the glories of the gospel in flowing language. At the end of this chapter he reckons up the privileges of the saints, and tells them, they have an interest in all things: "It does not become you, says he, to enter into parties, and to glory in any single man, no, not in *Paul*, *Apollos*, nor *Cephas*, for all things are your's, whether life or death, whether this world or the other, whether things present or things to come, all are your's."

To improve this proposition, and to bring it down to some practical purposes, let us consider,

I. What we are to understand by this extensive privilege of true christians, contained in this expression; "all things are your's," and what is the true limitation of the sense of it.

II. It shall be proved, that notwithstanding the limited sense of these words, yet the saints have a richer treasure in them, than the greatest riches of a sinner.

III. We shall enquire how christians come to possess such a treasure. And,

IV. See what use may be made of this doctrine.

First, What are we to understand by this expression, "all things are your's?"

To answer this enquiry clearly, I am constrained to introduce these two negatives.

1. We are not to suppose here that all things are in the possession of true christians, and under their power. This truth every man is a witness of, that the saints have neither heaven nor earth in their present possession. The sun and stars are not at their command, nor the riches of this world in their chests, nor the kingdoms of this world under their government. No, by no means, for they are most times poor and mean in this world, many of them destitute of the common supports of nature, and the comforts of life. *Christ* himself their Lord and master had not where to lay his head: And the apostles, who were the chief of christians, suffered "hunger and thirst, were naked and buffeted; they had sometimes neither food nor raiment, neither rest nor peace, nor any certain dwelling-place." 1 Cor. iv. 11.

2. And as all things are not in their possession, so neither are we to understand that all things in a civil sense are their right and property. They have not a just claim and demand of the good things which their neighbours possess, nor ought they to take possession of them, though they had power to do it. It is a very wicked prin-

principle which has no countenance from scripture, and has been abused to most unrighteous and bloody purposes, that dominion is founded in grace, or that the saints have a proprietary right to all the earth, and the good things of it. From this sort of doctrine, some men of furious zeal and enthusiasm have been tempted to rise and seize on the property of their neighbours. And indeed, all the persecution in the world upon the account of religion, is built on this principle, "that the saints alone have a right to peace and liberty, to honour and money, and all the good things of this life; and that the heretic and the sinner have no right to any thing." And though persecutors are very much ashamed to own this doctrine in words, yet they confirm it and comment upon it, in all their oppressive and bloody practices.

But the christian religion knows no such principles; it allows every man's property and interest in the goods of this world, whether he be a *turk* or a *jew*, a heathen or a christian, a saint or a sinner. It is providence has disposed of these outward things in the civil life, and become intitled to them, by the laws and agreement of civil society: And thus a rich wicked man may be righteously possessed of a fine house, and purple raiment, may have a well-spread table, and large lands and dominions, while a saint may happen to lie at his door destitute of bread and clothing.

But in what sense then can it be said, that "all things are their's?"

To give a just answer to this enquiry, we must take notice, that the apostle's first design here, is to shew, that believers need not be so fond of assuming to themselves a peculiar interest in one minister or another, for they may enjoy the gifts of all; "all are for their sakes:" And from this single hint he rises high into the privileges of the saints. Not ministers only, as *Paul* and *Cephas*, are designed for their benefit; but all are their's: All things in heaven or earth, in time, or in eternity, are appointed to do some service to them.

This therefore I take to be the true sense of my text, viz. "That all things in the creation of God, all things in all his vast dominions, which a christian can or shall at any time have to do with, shall as certainly serve to promote his true interest, and his final happiness, as though he himself had sovereign dominion over them, or present possession of them:" Alway supposing that the christian maintain his character, and act in his station becoming the dignity of his holy and heavenly calling.

The plain meaning of the words, is, that "all things shall work for the good of the saints." But the apostle chuses to express this in a noble manner here, and by such an exalted figure of speech as aggrandizes the character of the saints, and raises their dignity: And therefore he represents them as having a property in all things, and speaks sublimely of them, as though they were possessors of heaven and earth.

Now the ground on which he builds this manner of speaking, may be set in a just and easy light. We can properly be said to possess nothing but what turns to our account, what is of some service or advantage to us; and therefore in the common language of life, we say, concerning a rich covetous man, "he is a poor wretch, he has nothing, because he receives benefit from so small a part of his estate: And in truth, he has no more than he enjoys or uses." Now the true christian reaps the benefit of all things; and God, the great God, the possessor of heaven and earth, makes all things work together for the benefit of his people; and in this sense it is that all things are their's.

All things shall turn to their advantage, either, 1. for the support and comfort of their temporal life; or, 2. for the beginning and improvement of their spiritual life; or, 3. for their possession and enjoyment of life eternal.

But

But instead of collecting all the treasures and riches of the saints, under these three general heads, I shall chuse rather to make a paraphrase on the whole verse of my text, and thus discover the interest that a christian has in the persons and things of earth and heaven. "Whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are your's."

I. The ministers of the gospel are your's.

Is *Paul* appointed an apostle separated to the gospel by the immediate call of *Christ*; it is for your sakes, O ye *Corinthians*, that he was chosen and called! *Christ* had you in his eye, and upon his heart, when he stopped him in the midst of his fury and persecution; when he overwhelmed him with glory, in the road to *Damascus*; and from a persecutor, made an apostle of him, and a preacher of the cross of *Jesus*: For he designed then to send him to *Corinth*, to call you from heathenism, and to save your souls.

Is *Paul* a man of learning and of bright parts? Is he endowed with profound knowledge of divine mysteries above his brethren? Is he fit to preach for the conversion of the heathen world, and to write the great things of God for the church, in all future ages! It is for your sakes, O christians, that he is thus endowed: It is for you, O believers in *Great Britain*, though you live as it were at the ends of the earth, and in the old age of the world; it is even for you that he was appointed and inspired to write his epistles to *Rome*, *Corinth*, and *Ephesus*, and the rest of the early churches. It is by his writings, that you have been enlightened in the mysteries of *Christ*, and the wonders of the gospel. Almost seventeen hundred years ago was he made the apostle of the gentiles, and that partly for your sakes. *Paul* himself is your's.

Was *Apollos* an elegant man, and mighty in the scriptures? It was for you, O primitive christians, that he had the gift of oratory bestowed on him. Has any minister in our age and place of abode a peculiar talent of eloquence, hath he a vivacity of fancy, a strength of expression, a sweet accent, and a commanding voice? It is designed for the conviction and salvation of your souls. Can he thunder like the voice of God on mount *Sinai*, and flash the terrors of the law, like lightening, upon your consciences? It is to awaken you out of your carnal slumber and security in sin, to make you fly from the wrath to come, and cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" Can he set the blessings of salvation in a glorious and convincing light? It is to persuade you to accept them. Has he the art of striking the passions, and touching the inward springs of the soul? Can he spread the invitations of grace before you, in alluring language? Can he dissolve his thoughts in the tenderest accents of speech, and moisten his words with his tears? It is all designed as a means, in the hands of the Spirit, to melt your hearts to repentance, and to soften your souls to receive the impressions of the gospel? Has he the holy skill of displaying the glories of our blessed saviour? Can he set off the miracles of his life? Can he talk of his bleeding and his dying love in the most affecting manner? Can he paint him in the honours of his resurrection, his triumph, and his exalted state, in most magnificent colours? It is all for the assistance of your faith, the kindling of your love, and the advancement of your joy. Not *Paul* only, but *Apollos* is your's.

Is *Cephas* or *Peter* a man of boldness and courage to defend the truths of the gospel, or to speak for *Christ* amongst infidels? It is to lead you onward as the soldiers of *Christ*, through the midst of dangers, and to encourage you to face the persecuting world bravely, in the profession of the cross.

Or

Or is the character of *Cephas*, as an instructor of the young, and a condescending preacher to babes? He has this talent given him for your sakes too, to feed you, while you were babes in *Christ*, with the sincere milk of the word, to set before you the first principles of the oracles of God, and assist you to imbibe the rudiments of christianity, before you were fit to receive the more exalted doctrines, and be fed with stronger meat. Thus not only *Paul* and *Apollos*, but *Cephas* is your's.

All the officers in the church, both ordinary and extraordinary, are appointed for your sakes. It is for you that *Christ* ascended on high, and gave gifts to men. Read and believe it, *Eph.* iv. 11, 12. *And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

And as the gifts and graces of the ministers of the gospel are designed for the benefit of the church, so the outward circumstances that attend them, their sorrows, and their joys are ordained for the advantage of christians: And *St. Paul* rejoices in it, *2 Cor.* i. 3, 4, 6. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we our selves are comforted of God; — And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which appears to be effectual, when ye endure the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation, that is, we preach more effectually from our own experience."

Thus whatsoever be the characters, or the talents, or the circumstances of life that attend your ministers, they are ordained of God for some valuable purposes to you.

II. This world is your's. Not only the ministers of the gospel, but the world, and the things of it are your's. It is for your sakes, O believers, that the world stands! For when sin entered into it by *Adam*, the first man, there was a curse spread over it; and perhaps immediate destruction had attended it, but for the sake of the children of God, who were appointed to be born in successive ages, amongst the posterity of *Adam*, among the children of men. It is for the sake of the elect, who were given to *Christ* before the world was, that this earth, and these lower heavens are continued in being. This earth abides as a stage of action, proper for a state of trial for the saints, and when the last saint is born, and his state of trial is finished, the world and the works of it shall be burned up together.

It is for you, O christians, that these heavens, or, shall I say, this globe of earth rolls round in it's daily and yearly courses, and the sun and the moon send out their brighter or paler beams, to light you onward in your way to glory. The morning breaks for you to give you day-light, that you may work for God: And the evening spreads it's long thick shadows over the nations, to determine a time for your repose and refreshment. The darkness and the light are your's, during your continuance in the flesh. When all your work here is done, these lower "heavens shall be folded up like an old garment, as a vesture shall they be changed;" they shall flee away and be no more.

Survey the trees and the fields, how they bring forth food for you. The beasts of the earth grow and are nourished for your conveniency; they were born, and live, and die for your support and nourishment. The winds blow to purge the air for you, and to keep it wholesome, while God has appointed you to breathe in it. The  
fountains

fountains bubble, and the rivers flow to quench your thirst. Flax and wool are ordained for your covering, and the silk-worm is set to his shining task, that some of your garments may be soft and easy: "The beasts of the earth are at peace with you, and you are in league with the stones of the field," *Job* v. 23. O happy and glorious state of the children of God!

*Christ*, in his providential management of all things in this world, has a chief regard to his own people. The wicked of the earth who dwell among the saints, come in for a share of the common good things of life, chiefly as they are instruments of the providence of *Christ*, for some known or unknown benefit to his church.

I might tell you also, that if you are christians indeed, then though your ungodly neighbours may have a rightful civil property in many good things of the world, yet you have a better and sweeter interest in the earthly blessings which you possess. You can taste the love of a Father in them, and the kindness of a reconciled God. They are common benefits to the world, but they are made as it were special blessings to you. They are put into your hand by a better covenant: They are sanctified to your use: The world it self becomes a means to raise your hearts towards God. And whereas wealth, and honours, and the plenteous enjoyments of life, become a temptation and a snare to the wicked; and, through the corruption of their natures, divide their souls from God and heaven, the same things are made happy instruments in the hand of the mediator, to furnish you out for eminent service, and to help you onward to a better world.

III. Life and death are your's. Life, with all the comfortable attendants of it; or even with all it's difficulties and vexations, it is still designed for your advantage: And death, as terrible as it is in it self, shall appear to be a benefit to you. But I insist no longer on this head at present, because I design it to be the subject of following discourses.

IV. Things present, whether visible or invisible, and things to come, are all your's.

1. Visible things present are your's. I have shewed you in part already, how the wheels of nature are rolling for you. This lower creation stands and moves for your sakes, for your relief and support, while you are travelling to heaven. The present posture of things in this world, the daily scenes of life are continued or changed, and still over-ruled by divine providence for your good. Kingdoms, and laws, and governments, are established among men for your safety: If the world were without all government, and all things run into confusion, the saints, with all their earthly comforts, would become the plunder and property of the wicked continually. The princes of the earth, and the political constitutions of nations, are designed to be a screen and defence to the people of God, who dwell among them: For "if these foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" *Psalms*. xi. 3. "The wicked would bend their bow, and make ready their arrow upon the string; and they would not only in private, but publicly shoot at the upright in heart:" verse 2. There would be neither life nor safety for a christian. Yet, on the other hand, when *Christ*, in the course of his providence, brings confusion on states and kingdoms, and when he suffers the wicked of the earth, like wild beasts of the wilderness, to spoil, devour and destroy, it is usually designed by his wisdom, as a season of proper trial for his own people, and that country becomes a scene of their glorious sufferings. *Christ*, who is head over all things, sets up and pulls down tyrants or good princes, as may

best serve the counsels of his Father's mercy, and his own kind designs for his chosen and redeemed people.

And as the whole world of nature, and the present affairs of nations are managed by *Christ*, for the good of the church; so the world of grace, and the affairs of his sanctuary, and his kingdoms on earth, are all ordained for the benefit of the saints. Christians, why did he separate you from the world, and call you out of the wilderness, and make you a chosen nation, a peculiar people? Was it not for your advantage? Why did he write his word? Why did he ordain ministers and holy institutions? Was it not for your edification? Were not the seals of the covenant given to assist your faith, by the aid of your senses, and by this means to enflame your love, and exalt your joy? Are not the precepts of the word written to direct you in the way of duty? Are not the threatenings pronounced to awaken your fear, and guard you from sin and folly? And are not all the promises of the gospel given to comfort your souls, to support your spirits, and give a sweet taste of glory before-hand?

Whatsoever temporal circumstances attend you in this present life, whether they are painful or pleasant, they are all the appointments of your heavenly Father for your real interest. Are you at peace in the midst of plenty, and does every thing around you smile upon you? It is that your hearts may be raised to thankfulness, and your lips tuned to praise. Do you labour under pain or sickness? It is to wean you from flesh and blood, to put you in mind, that this tabernacle is falling, to awaken your hearts to insure a better habitation on high. Do you want food or raiment? It is to make you remember that you are in the wilderness, and to call your meditations upward to your Father's house, where there is bread enough, and to spare. Are you scorned and reviled by the basest of men? Are you persecuted or imprisoned and treated with rudeness or cruelty? It is to try and prove your suffering graces, that your faith, courage, and patience may shine as gold that has passed through the furnace; are you called to seal the truth and testimony of *Jesus* with your blood? It is to prepare you for the crowns of glory that are laid up for martyrs.

This thought leads me onward in the survey of this rich inventory of a christian, and carries my thoughts into the invisible regions, and into far distant futurities.

2. Not things present only in this visible world, but things invisible in other worlds are also your's, and were appointed for your benefit. These are numbered by the apostle among the riches and possessions of the saints.

Is there a heaven built on high, with many palaces of light in it? They were built and furnished for your reception. It is "the inheritance of the saints in light," *Col. i. 12.* Are there mansions of unknown glory, well prepared by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, since his ascent to heaven? He assures us in his last words, that they are prepared for you; *John xiv. 2, 3.* *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to my self; that where I am, there ye may be also.* Each of these mansions stands waiting for those saints, for whom they are provided; and they are all adorned with rich and magnificent furniture, in the perfect beauty of holiness.

The angels, in their shining orders, are ordained to be your attendants: Those holy inhabitants of the upper blessed world, "incamp round about those that fear the Lord," *Psal. xxxiv. 7.* and are appointed as guards to his children, by their heavenly Father. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" *Heb. i. 14.* They wait upon your dying beds, and convey your souls to the bosom of *Abraham*? *Luke xvi. 22.* Happy souls; who have

have so illustrious a guard, so secure a convoy to the far distant and unknown regions of light and joy!

The very hell that is provided to punish impenitent sinners, though we cannot say it was built for you, christians; yet it has been of glorious and terrible service, to awaken your souls out of a natural and guilty state. When the spirit of God in the ministry of his word has opened the mouth of hell, and brought the flashes of that furnace into your face; it has awakened your consciences in time past, and driven you to seek refuge in the arms of *Jesus*, who delivers us from the wrath to come. Thus hell it self is constrained to pay a tribute towards the salvation of the saints.

And the devils themselves who dwell there, with all their fiery temptations, have been but as underworkers for our final good; they are as slaves to *Christ*, the great refiner, who designed to purify your souls by those very methods of temptation, which those evil spirits made use of on purpose to destroy you. Thus the ministers of divine wrath to sinners are become instruments of your benefit. "When *Satan* has desired to winnow you as wheat, *Christ* has prayed for you that your faith fail not," *Luke* xxii. 31, 32. and he has taken care that by this winnowing you might be purified, that nothing might fly away but the empty chaff; that you might appear in the sight of *Christ* as purer corn. Now if hell, and the wicked inhabitants of it, may be constrained to serve your interest, and to promote your happiness, surely there is nothing in all the creation, but may turn to your advantage. O divine privilege, when the creatures that are under the deserved curse of God, are thus made to subserve your blessedness!

3. But not only present invisibles, but even all future unseen things are your's too. The morning of the resurrection is appointed for your glory; and the great trumpet is put into the hands of the arch-angel, to awaken your sleeping dust into immortality. *Jesus* the Lord himself shall descend from heaven to call you from the grave: And "though ye were dead, ye shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live." *John* v. 35. The great day of judgment, and all the solemnities of it, are ordained for your honour, to publish your victories over sin and *Satan*, before the face of the whole creation, to pronounce you openly acquitted and justified before men and angels, to proclaim you the sons and daughters of the most high God, and determine your state to everlasting blessedness.

Are there crowns of infinite value laid up in heaven? Are there rewards of glory there, immense rewards, and of endless duration? It is to crown your labours, your conflicts, your christian race; it is to reward your sufferings, your patience, and your conquest: And the day of glory is stretched out to all everlasting, that your happiness may know no end. "Thus things present, and things to come, are all your's;" and there is nothing in time or eternity, which can come within the reach or notice, but in some of these senses shall subserve your interest, and turn to your advantage.

This is the genuine sense, and this the true limitation of these words, "all things are your's."

The second thing proposed in this discourse, was to prove, that notwithstanding the limited sense of these words, yet the true christian has a richer treasure in them, than all the worldly wealth of the sinner.

And without multiplying particulars, the proof of it will sufficiently appear in these four things.

I. The treasure of the meanest faint is vastly more large and extensive, than that of the richest sinner. Let the wicked man point to his heaps of money, and run over the names of his farms and manours, and call himself the lord and master of them all; it is but a narrow and poor survey, that a few pieces of shining earth can give us; or the fields that lie within the prospect of a mile or two, when compared with this vast and universal treasure, "all things are your's!" It is true, christians, that you have not the civil property and power over the earth or the heavens; but you receive a divine advantage from all things, and that is more than the sinner can say concerning any one thing that he possesses in the way of civil property.

II. This treasure of the faints is more secure, and more durable, than any thing that a sinner enjoys; therefore the apostle calls the wealth of this world, "uncertain riches, that cannot be trusted in, 1 Tim. vi. 17. "Riches make to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle toward heaven," Prov. xxiii. 5. and leave the owner poor and destitute: Many a wealthy man who flourished yesterday, in abundance of ease and plenty, may be stripped of all to-morrow, and want the common supports of nature. What possessions soever are built upon the foundations of civil property, may be taken away from the faint or the sinner, by robbing and plunder, by cheating and knavery, by inundations of water, or the rage of fire, or by the invasion of a foreign enemy; but the beneficial interest that a christian has in all things is preserved to him by the covenant of grace. He may be stripped of all earthly possessions, but the loss of his temporal estate shall turn to his real benefit, as well as the possession of it. Losses and crosses, as well as plenty and peace, are numbered among the items of his inventory, and make up his treasure; so that though the outward scenes of things on earth are perpetually changing, his real and everlasting treasure is the same; for all things that appear in nature, that occur in present providence, or shall arise in future ages, shall work for his advantage: He may lose money or lands as well as a sinner; but that very loss shall turn to his gain.

This sort of treasure he cannot be dispossessed of by death it self; for when he quits his visible interest in all things in this lower world, he enters into a new world of spirits, which he has never seen; and yet all things in that world are his too: All things in those unknown regions, where the departing spirit goes, are made over to the faint, by the same covenant as the things of this world; they shall all administer some divine profit to him, and be a part of his happiness in the world to come.

III. This treasure of a christian is ever growing, at least in the possession; for the occurrences of every day make some addition to it; whereas the wealth of sinners is impaired with using. The largest earthly estate may be wasted: Money decreases daily by procuring the supports of life; but a christian's treasure still improves. He lives upon it every day, and yet it grows still.

The providences of God here on earth, present us daily with some new affairs, new occurrences: Whether they be pleasant or painful, still the spiritual man finds his interest in them; and when he reviews his account in the evening, if his heart has been in a proper frame, he may write himself gainer. He has possessed and enjoyed the very crosses and sorrows of his former days: He has treasured up a store of divine experiences, in the midst of plenty and want, health and sickness: New scenes of life arise, new appearances of things; he is still like the bee, ready to suck honey from every flower that blows: He gathers his food and his riches from weeds that are unsavoury, as well as from the blossoms of perfume: If he is by this means

adding



adding daily to the number and strength of his graces and virtues, he is, as it were, treasuring up a good foundation for time to come, and, shall I be bold to say, adding beauties and ornaments to his robes of glory, and lustre to his heavenly crown.

IV. This large inheritance of a christian is all sanctified, which is more than can be said of any part of a sinner's estate. The riches of this world may be abused to luxury and debauchery, to iniquity and sore vexations. They may be abused to profaneness and impiety, to dishonour God, and corrupt the conversation of men, and to ruin their souls for ever: But this large and extensive treasure of a christian, is designed for his real happiness, as well as for the honour of his God; whatsoever he has to do with in the world, he uses it to the glory of his God, to the honour of his saviour, to the benefit of his fellow-creatures, and to his own sublimest advantage. And concerning this sacred treasure, it may be said, that it is the property, or in the possession of a christian, no farther than it is sanctified to him, or than he receives it with a sanctified mind. "To the pure, all things are pure;" *Tit. i. 15.* for "everything is sanctified by the word of God and prayer," *1 Tim. iv. 5.* The exercise of piety among the saints, puts a sort of consecration upon all creatures, so far as they use or enjoy them.

Thus it is made sufficiently evident, that the treasure of a saint vastly excels all the richest possessions of a sinner.

I cannot enter now upon the third branch of my design, which was to shew, how a christian comes to be made heir and possessor of all things. Let us therefore shut up the present discourse with this one reflexion.

Reflexion. "How unreasonable is it for a christian to forsake his profession, or his practice, for any thing which this world can tempt him with? For his treasures and enjoyments already are greater than any thing he can hope for in the ways of sin.

"What a powerful motive may be drawn hence, to persevere in faith and holiness? Christians, "all things are your's;" every thing you converse with shall turn to your benefit; "this world, and the other, things present and things to come, life and death are your's."

"What valuable pretences can the world make, to tempt you to lose this inheritance, to quit these hopes, and to part with these possessions? Can you, by complying with any temptation, provide your self with such riches as these; or with any thing that shall answer the loss of them? Sin and the world can promise you but a little, narrow share of good things: The gospel of *Christ* gives you a most extensive treasure, for it bestows all things upon you. The world can make nothing secure, but the treasures of christianity are everlasting; they reach beyond the grave, into unknown worlds and ages. All the wealth, and pleasures, and enjoyments of this life perish with the using; but your inheritance is ever upon the increase:" As fast as time and providence bring forth days, and seasons, and new scenes, so fast this treasure grows; and you may receive the daily profit of it. What can sin and the world give you but what hath a secret curse in it? These your treasures are sanctified blessings, and the foretastes of them are designed to assist you onward in the ways of holiness and peace, till you arrive at the brightest and sweetest part of them, the full enjoyment of God and happiness in the upper world.

"Go on then, christians, with zeal and courage in the profession of your faith: Go on with constancy in the practice of duty: Feed daily upon that portion of your inheritance, which your heavenly Father appoints to sustain you in your travels homeward; and expect the rest in your Father's house. When the world would tempt

tempt you to forego your sacred interest in the gospel, by the alluring offer of any temporal enjoyments, tell the world that "life and death, things present and things to come, are your's already:" Let the world know that *Christ* has engaged and secured your heart for ever to himself, by outbidding all that the world can offer; for he has written down and sealed your title to a larger and richer inheritance, and annexed it to his own: "Ye are joint-heirs with *Christ*: And he has appointed it to stand recorded in his holy book to the view of men and angels, that all things are your's."

#### THE RECOLLECTION.

"And is it possible that so worthless a creature as I am, should be really intitled to all these blessings: Can it be true, that so rich an interest in the good things of time and eternity belongs to me? To me, who am less than the least of all the mercies of God? To me, who in the days of sin and ignorance, have abused all things, O my God, to thy dishonour? To me, who have provoked thy justice to strip me of all the common blessings of nature and life, and to make me for ever poor and miserable? Is the mercy of God so vast and overflowing, as not only to forgive these provocations, and to admit me into his favour, but to bless me also with so rich an inheritance? Fall down prostrate, O my soul, at the foot of sovereign and all-sufficient grace. Remember thy guilt, thy poverty, and thy wretchedness, and be ever humble before God thy infinite benefactor. Mourn over all thy unworthiness, and maintain a constant temper of penitent love, and self-abasing gratitude. I deserve to be cut off for ever, O Lord, from thy house, from thy family, and from all the blessings of thy children: But thou hast called me to the knowledge of thy Son *Jesus*, thou hast taught me to lay hold on the arm of thy salvation, thou hast made me willing in the day of thy power to renounce every sin, to subject my self to thy scepter of righteousness, and to accept the grace of thy gospel. Thou hast opened the treasures of thy love, treasures that contain in them the good things of earth and heaven, things visible and invisible, things present, and things to come: And while these treasures stood open to my view, in the voice of thy gospel thou hast told me, "all is your's."

"O for an enlarged exercise of faith, to survey this inheritance! to rejoice in this extensive bounty of the most high! to read the blessed language of this text, and to believe it with a humble claim and appropriation! Surely here is enough for faith to live upon, through all the remaining years of my pilgrimage, and my hope, till faith shall be turned into perfect sight, and hope into full and final enjoyment.

"I would not change my portion with the richest sinner on earth: My estate is larger, and my interests are more extensive. His gold and silver, his houses and lands can reach no farther than this world and time; but my inheritance runs into eternity, and my enjoyment of it has no period.

"My treasures are secure against all the invasions and plunder of enemies, against all the rage of the winds, and waves, and fire; against all the confusions of the world, against all the overwhelming changes of time and nature; even against death it self, and the last conflagration. These lower heavens may be dissolved, the elements may melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works thereof, with all the fields, and the palaces, and the treasure of it, may be burned up, but my inheritance stands ever secure; for God himself, who is the original creator and possessor of all things, has secured life and happiness to me in his covenant: He has secured a possession of every thing that can be necessary to my happiness, or to my eternal life.

O that

“O that I were taught to enjoy these blessings daily! and to observe the daily accessions that are made to my treasures, by all the new scenes of providence that are ever rising! May I may be instructed to make a sanctified improvement of them all, and thus add something hourly to my best interest, to my everlasting hope! May life itself, with all the daily comforts and crosses of it, minister to me some sacred meditations, some holy and heavenly thoughts! May a divine consecration come down on all my affairs and concerns in this present state! And by a wise improvement of all those parcels of my inheritance, which my heavenly Father puts into my hands here on earth, may I be trained up and grow fitter daily for those brighter talents, those more glorious enjoyments which he keeps in reserve for me when time shall be no more!” Amen.

A

## H Y M N

F O R

## S E R M O N XXXVII.

*A christian's treasure*: “All things are your's, whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, &c.

[ Long metre. ]

1.

**H**OW vast the treasure we possess!  
How rich thy bounty, king of grace!  
This world is our's, and worlds to come:  
Earth is our lodge, and heav'n our home.

2.

*Paul* is our teacher: while he speaks,  
The shadows flee, the morning breaks;  
His words like beams of knowledge shine,  
And fill our souls with light divine.

3.

*Cephas* is our's: he makes us feel  
The kindlings of celestial zeal:  
While sweet *Apollos'* charming voice  
Gives us a taste of heav'nly joys.

4.

The springing corn, the stately wood,  
Grow to provide us house and food:  
Fire, air, earth, water, join their force;  
All nature serves us in her course.

5.

The sun rolls round to make our day,  
The moon directs our nightly way;  
While angels bear us in their arms,  
And shield us from ten thousand harms.

6.

O glorious portion of the saints!  
Let faith suppress our sore complaints,  
And tune our hearts and tongues to sing  
Our bounteous God, our sovereign king.

S E R M.

## S E R M O N XXXVIII

## The christian's treasure.

I COR. iii. 21.

— *All things are your's.*

**T**HERE is nothing that a wise man can wish for in order to make him happy, but the gospel proposes it to encourage the faith and practice of christians. What honour is there to be enjoyed among the sons of men, that is wont to gratify our ambition, but the gospel assures us of higher honours than this, when it makes us the sons of God? What pleasures are there to be tasted in the satisfaction of animal nature, but the gospel invites us to more refined, and more lasting pleasures, which are to be derived from the love of God, and the company of our saviour with all his saints? What riches can be possessed or desired by the most covetous mind, but the gospel proposes a far more extensive, a more durable, and more useful treasure, when it tell us in the words of my text, "all things are your's?"

The former discourse has made it appear in what sense these words are to be understood: Not that we have a present possession of all things, a power over them, or a civil right to seize and enjoy them; but the meaning is this, that so far as a christian can have any thing to do with the things of this world, or of another, things present or to come, they shall all be made to work together for his real good.

It has been also proved in the

SECOND place, that this inheritance of the saints is incomparably richer, and more valuable than any thing which sinners can possess.

I proceed now to the

THIRD general proposed, and that is, to enquire how christians come to be partakers of so fair and rich a treasure.

I. It is the kind and eternal purpose of God their Father, that it should be so. Christians, God has created all things in the world of nature with this design, that you should derive some benefit from them, as far as they can come within your reach or notice, your service or use: He appointed all things in the counsels of his providence, to bear some blessing for you: He has ordained all things in his kingdom of grace for your advantage; and there are unknown regions of light and glory which he has provided for you. His elect were ever nearest to his heart, next to the man *Christ Jesus*, next to his only begotten son; "for they were all chosen in him before the foundation of the world," *Eph. i. 4.* Whether creation or providence, whether nature, grace or glory, "all things are for your sakes," *2 Cor. iv. 15.*

I would caution you again, that you are not to understand it in such an incredible sense, as though God made every particular creature in the upper and the lower worlds, only to give the possession of them to the saints, or that he manages all his providential kingdom, merely for the sake of his own people without any other view.

No

No, this is stretching the words into an extent too large and unreasonable; for there are millions of creatures, millions of plants and animals in earth and sea, that are born, and grow, and live, and die again, which the saints of God never saw, nor know, nor shall know; nor can they receive any immediate benefit from them. But the meaning is this, that all things whatsoever the saints can or shall have to do with in this or other worlds, were intended to yield some profit to them, and especially while they maintain their character as the children of God, and walk as becomes their dignity and their profession. In all God's general counsels of creation, and providence, and grace, he kept his eye, as I may say, still upon his saints: He designed their good in ten thousand instances, in his great and glorious works, and resolved that nothing in all his kingdoms should interfere with their last and best interest.

Though what he has written down in the book of his decrees, is read only at large by his Son *Christ Jesus*, yet he has written out a sweet abstract of it in the book of his promises, that the saints on earth might read and know it. *Rom. viii. 28. And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* It was for their sakes the promises were written, that they might have not only a present relish of divine blessings, but a sweet foretaste of joys long to come.

The blessings of the children of God were numbered up, and written down originally for them, in the book of God's everlasting counsels; and in the book of his word has he copied out for them, the blessings of heaven from above, and of the deep from beneath; the precious things brought forth by the sun, and under the influence of the moon; the chief things of the ancient mountains on earth, so far as is needful for them here, and the precious things of the everlasting hills of paradise hereafter.

Does the great creator and Lord of all keep the wheels of nature in their settled courses? It is for his people's good. "The stars in their courses shall fight for *Israel*:" Or does he countermand nature in any of it's motions, and bid the "sun stand still in *Gibeon*, and the moon in the valley of *Ajalon*?" It is that the armies of his people may have long day-light, to subdue their enemies. Hail-stones and thunder shall break out of the clouds to destroy the *Canaanites*, when *Israel* is at war with them: But if *Israel* want bread in the wilderness, the clouds shall drop down manna, and give them bread from heaven. The Lord gave up *Egypt* with her armies to the waves of the red-sea, for the ransom and redemption of his people: He gave *Ethiopia* and *Seba* to the sword for the safety of his servant *Jacob*. *Isa. xliii. 7. I have loved thee, O Israel, therefore I gave men for thee, and people for thy life.*

And it is no wonder that God has given all things to his children, since he has given himself to them, and told them, "I am your God:" It is no wonder he has bestowed all other things upon them, since he has bestowed his Son upon them: His own, his only Son, who is dearer to him than all the creation. *Rom. viii. 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

II. The saints have an interest in all things, for *Christ* is made Lord over all things for his people's good. *Eph. i. 22. "God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to his church."* Thus the names of the saints are, as it were, inserted into that divine patent that exalts and constitutes *Christ* Lord of all.

And indeed, *Christ* has not only a right to all things by the mere donation of the Father, but it may be said, he has purchased all things for his own honour, and his people's good. "Because he was obedient unto death, therefore God has so highly exalted him, *Phil.* ii. 8. and made him Lord of the dead and the living, *Rom.* xiv. 9. And perhaps it is in this sense, that the inheritance of the saints may be called the purchased possession," *Eph.* i. 14.

Now, christians, since all the affairs of nature, grace, and glory, are put into the hands of such a friend in trust for you, that they may be managed and employed for your advantage, it is as well, nay, it is much better than if all things were at present in your possession, that is, under your present state of weakness and folly; for his wisdom and goodness shall govern all for your truest interest. Ye are *Christ's*, so the apostle expresses it in the verse next to my text: And *Christ*, who has all in his hands, will take care of you who are his own.

"*Christ* is made heir of all things," *Heb.* i. 2. And if ye belong to *Christ*, "then are ye heirs of God, and joint-heirs with *Christ*," *Rom.* viii. 17. And the express promise of the Father confirms it, that all things are your's. *Rev.* xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." *1 Cor.* xii. 27. "Ye are the members of the body, and *Christ* is the head." Now the members must in their measure become sharers of what the head possesses. In your proportion, O christians, you shall have communion with *Christ* your Lord, in his royalties and his wide dominion; for he hath promised that "ye shall sit down on his throne, when ye have overcome your enemies, even as he overcame, and is set down on the throne with his Father," *Rev.* iii. 21. Ye are one with *Christ*, and therefore in your measure, O believers, and according to your capacity, ye shall possess and enjoy all things which he possesses, so far as is requisite for your benefit in this world, and your truest happiness for ever.

III. The saints are actually invested with this privilege, by believing on the Son of God, by accepting the covenant of his grace, by receiving *Christ Jesus* the saviour, according to the appointed methods of the gospel. When a poor, destitute, guilty, and perishing creature is made willing by divine grace, to give up himself to *Christ* as his saviour and his Lord, he is divested of his guilt, he is clothed with the robes of salvation, he is translated out of a state of sin, poverty, and wretchedness, into a state of rich grace, and becomes a child of God, and a heir of all things. A living faith, which has all the springs of holiness in it, is ordained to carry in it all the springs of treasure and felicity. This unites the soul to *Christ*, this gives a humble claim to all the blessings laid up in the eternal decrees and purposes of God; blessings purchased by the blood of his son *Jesus*; blessings promised in the word of the gospel, wherein all things are given for a possession to the children of the most high.

IV. All things may be said to belong to the saints, or shall turn to their advantage, because the blessed Spirit is given them, to teach them to improve all things for their own benefit. *1 Cor.* ii. 12. —*We have received,—the Spirit, which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God:* And that not only that christians might know what their treasures are, but learn how to make a right use of them too.

They are taught by the holy Spirit, to receive the common blessings of nature from the hands of God, as a Father and a friend, and a God in covenant: And they rejoice in them as such, with humble thankfulness; they are instructed to derive useful  
medita-

meditations from the sun, moon, and stars; and to read the wisdom, the power, and the glory of their creator, and their Father there, and to rejoice in his goodness. The peaceful state of kingdoms, or battels, wars and earthquakes, and the convulsion of nations, are all made useful lessons to a child of God; and he gains something from all of them, by the teachings of the blessed Spirit.

The saints are led into an acquaintance with the word of God by the same Spirit too: They receive the promises and directions of the gospel, through the influences of this Spirit. They derive light, holiness and comfort from every part of the book of God; that is, from the law and the prophets, the histories and the epistles, and from all the ordinances of the sanctuary: He teaches them to borrow some food and delight from *Moses* and *David*, as well as from *Peter* and *John*. He leads them through the sweet fields of gospel-grace, and directs them to gather many a flower there for their refreshment, and to feed on the fruit of the tree of life for their support. He shews them how to profit by the ministry of a *Paul*, and to learn the deep mysteries of *Christ*: He impresses on their souls the warm and pathetic words of an *Apollos*, and fires their hearts thereby with zeal and love: He teaches his younger-disciples over again the first lessons of grace, which a *Cephas* had just taught them. Thus *Paul* and *Apollos*, and *Cephas* are their's.

He instructs them how to converse with things invisible and future by faith, and to make use of the unseen and distant glories of eternity, for their present comfort and joy. "It is the God of hope, who by his Spirit fills them with all peace and joy in believing," *Rom. xv. 13.*

And I might add also, that the holy Spirit is given them, and dwells in them as an earnest of their inheritance of all things, *2 Cor. v. 6.* till the redemption of this purchased possession, that is, till it shall be redeemed, and freed from all the present incumbrances of sin and *Satan*, *Eph. i. 13, 14.* Then in a happy hour shall this purchased possession be disclosed in the fairest light, and proclaimed to be the property of the saints.

To sum up all in a few words, a christian's interest in all things is well founded, and well confirmed. They are his by the original purpose of God the Father, when he created all things; it was his design that his chosen people should receive benefit from them. They are his by the appointment of divine providence, that all things shall work together for his good. They are his; for *Christ* the Son of God has purchased a dominion over all things, that he may manage them for the service of his redeemed ones. They are his, because the Spirit teaches him to derive some advantage from all things by faith and holy meditation. God has given himself to the saints as their portion for ever: He has given his own Son for them as a ransom from death; he has given his Spirit to them, as the principle of their life: And in this view, we may rise in the language of faith, and say in the words of the blessed apostle, "How shall he not herewith freely give us all things?" *Rom. viii. 32.*

Thus having made it appear in what sense all things are your's, and upon what foundations this glorious privilege is built, I proceed in the

LAST place, to consider what use may be made of this discourse.

First use. It affords a word of mourning and terror to obstinate and impenitent sinners. Are all things made beneficial to the saints? Think with your selves then what you lose, because you are not of that number. If you live and die in this sinful state, you have a comfortable interest in nothing: Nothing works for your real benefit. Your abuse of all things that you have any thing to do with, takes away the true pleasure and enjoyment of what you possess, and turns them into a curse to

you instead of a blessing. "Whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, or this world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come nothing is your's; for ye are not *Christ's*." And ye shall reap no final and lasting advantage from any thing, if you persist in a sinful and impenitent state; for ye are without God in the world, without *Christ*, and without hope.

Do you sit under the ministry of *Paul*, who spreads the glorious light of the gospel around you? But the God of this world hath blinded your minds, that this divine light should not reach them: Even the preaching of *Paul* is a favour of death unto you, if you live and die without the faith and love of *Christ*. Do you hear the zealous and pathetic language of *Apollos*? But your heart perhaps grows the harder under it: You resist the affectionate entreaties of the gospel, from the lips of that eloquent preacher. And even *Apollos*, whose soul is wont to melt with compassion for perishing sinners, shall rise up in judgment against you. And as for the plain and condescending ministry of *Cephas*, you despise the man and his sermons together; therefore you can get no benefit by them. Neither *Paul*, nor *Apollos*, nor *Cephas* is your's.

Well, if spiritual things are not your's, you hope, however, that you have a property in things temporal: If the blessings of the church do not belong to you, yet you claim a good share in this world, and the blessings of it: You feed deliciously, you are dressed in gay colours and gold, and you have wealth laid up in store for many years to come. Poor vain creatures! What is all your treasure? What is your property in it? A sorry property in lands, and a large estate, when not a clod of the earth, nor a penny of the money shall turn to your real and lasting benefit! I grant that you possess some of the good things of this world indeed. But your riches and plenty are not real and proper blessings, while you are afar from *Christ*, and strangers to him: Your own unbelief and impenitence, and rebellion against God, turn all the comforts of the world into curses: It is only the grace of *Christ* can take off the curse, and sanctify this world into a blessing.

Life is not your's; it is not for your final advantage, while you waste it in vanity and sinful amusements: A long life spent in this manner, shall but add to your guilt, and aggravate your condemnation.

Death is not a benefit, but a dreadful hour to you, for it delivers you over to the full power of *Satan*, that cruel tormentor, and opens the scene of your everlasting sorrows.

Things present are not blessings to you, while you resolve to continue in this sinful state. You abuse the day-light, and waste it in trifles or in crimes; or at best you spend it in an eager pursuit of the things of the world, with the neglect of God. The night is given to recruit nature for new services, but you seize the shadows of the evening to make a screen for your secret iniquities, and hide your sins behind the curtains of midnight.

You feed on the fruits of the earth, and other rich provisions of divine bounty; but perhaps you make them instruments of shameful intemperance: Or at best, you lay out the strength of them in empty follies, or in low earthly designs, without a thought of God or heaven. The morning and the evening wait upon you in long successions, but you are heaping up iniquities from morning to evening. You walk daily in the paths of death, and the sun-beams do but light you onward to everlasting darkness. You are nourished by your food for the day of slaughter. Daily and hourly you abuse the goodness of God, and even these abused blessings of his goodness shall call for greater-degrees of vengeance at his awful judgment-seat. Thus  
neither



neither the light of the sun, nor the fruits of the earth, neither day nor night, are your's; for you abuse them to sinful purposes, and they yield you no real profit.

And if things present are not your's, if ye have no solid and lasting benefit by them, much less can you pretend to claim any comfortable share in the things that are to come. There is a heaven of happiness provided for the saints, but you are utterly unprepared to fulfil the business of it, or to taste the blessedness. There is no room nor place there for you. There is nothing glorious and delightful among all the promises of God, or all the joyful scenes of the world to come, that you can claim any title to, nor have you any interest in them. When hell shall open it's mouth indeed, to receive millions of the damned, according to the final sentence of the judge, there you will find a place and room provided for you; but it is an uneasy and dreadful one. Hell is your's, the vengeance of God is your's, endless misery is your's; you have been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; and you can claim nothing but this painful portion, this dismal and everlasting inheritance.

And can you be content with such a portion as this is, while the saints are inheritors of all that is holy and happy, both in this world and the next? O may your busy thoughts be awakened betimes, and make you ever restless and uneasy in your present wretched estate! Return to the Lord in humble mourning, for all your past iniquities: Return to God speedily, from whom you have wickedly departed: Loath your selves because of your abominations, and abandon every idol: "Say to him, my Father, in the spirit of faith and penitence, and he will put you among the children, and give you a goodly heritage," *Jer. iii. 19.*

Seek acquaintance with *Jesus* the Son of God, the saviour, the Lord and heir of all things; commit your souls to his hands, resign your selves entirely to his grace, that he may change your unholy natures by his Spirit, that he may cleanse away your guilt by the blood of his atonement, that he may give you an interest in his own riches; then the covenant of his love shall sanctify to you all the enjoyments of earth and time, and make you possessors of all the good things in heaven and eternity.

Second use. This doctrine discovers to us the glory of the new covenant. A blessed covenant indeed that has given so rich a treasure to creatures so unworthy! We are sinners, and deserve nothing, yet when we believe in the Son of God, the gospel gives us in our measure the inheritance and possession of all things.

*Adam* was made Lord of this lower world; this earth and the creatures that dwell on it were put into his hands, all things below were given him for his use, his support, and his delight. Thus mankind, considered in the first *Adam*, in his innocent estate, were lords of all. But "by one man, sin entered into the world;" *Rom. v. 12.* and by that sin, *Adam* has forfeited his sovereignty and dominion, with all his large possession of the creatures, both for himself and for us. When the sentence came forth from the mouth of God, "Curfed be the ground for thy sake," *Gen. iii. 17.* the curse fell on all this lower world, and did, as it were, make a seizure of the creatures out of the hands of *Adam* the great sinner. They are no more his in that sanctified manner for his real and final benefit, as they were before: They now become instruments of temptation and sin, pain, and sorrow, and misery. But the covenant of grace restores all back again to us in and by the second *Adam*, who is the Lord of the new world, and under this character, is possessor of all things: And a sanctified use of all things is given to us again, in and by *Christ Jesus*. O glorious covenant, that can take away the curse from creatures, and make them become a blessing to the saints!

But

But there is a further glory in it still; for our possession of all things in the second *Adam*, is far more secure than it was in the first. This rich and extensive treasure is put into the hands of *Christ* our mediator, our head, and our surety for us, that we may not abuse our possession by sin to our own ruin; and that we may not forfeit our inheritance the second time, and so lose it for ever.

Third use. This doctrine yields sweet consolation to a poor afflicted faint, who is taught to make a right improvement of it. The gospel should teach a christian in these circumstances, such divine language as this. "Am I poor and despised by the great and rich in this world? yet I trust I am made a child of God by his renewing grace, and the promise gives me a right to all things. God my Father has engaged that all things shall work together for my good. He has made me a joint-heir with his best beloved Son *Jesus*, and has given me a fair and large inheritance. I shall be possessor of every comfort amongst the creatures that is necessary to my supreme interest, and my final happiness, and God himself is my eternal portion.

"What if I cannot read my name and my title to lands and houses, to green fields and palaces, in large conveyances and writings under the seal of men? but I can read my name as a christian in the covenant of grace, under the seal of God, and the blood of his Son, and there I find that all things are mine. While I survey the gardens of a rich sinner, every herb and flower there gives me more sweetness than he can find in them all: For I can converse with God my maker, and my Father, in every herb, and every flower. While I walk amongst the trees of my neighbour's fields, they yield me their refreshing shade, and compose my thoughts to divine meditation. I can lift up my eyes to the stately building where my neighbour dwells, and raise my thoughts thence to the mansions of glory: Then I rejoice to think how much my inheritance and my mansion there exceeds the most magnificent structure on earth. Thus his fields, and his gardens, and his stately dwelling afford a divine delight to me, which perhaps the earthly possessor of them knows nothing of: And though I have almost nothing that I can call my own on earth, yet in this sense, I possess all things. My God hath given me so much of the good things of this world, as he saw needful and proper for my real interest: And surely if I might have had all things within my immediate reach, and under my sovereignty, I would not lay hold of more of them, if I were truly wise, than would promote my welfare.

"Do I sit at the footstool of the rich in the house of God; or am I but a door-keeper in the sanctuary? yet I can there hear *Paul* declare the sublime mysteries of the gospel, and while he reveals the wonders of God's eternal love, my heart within me believes, and adores, and rejoices. *Apollos* entertains me with most affectionate discourses of the grace of *Christ*, and his glory; my faith rises high, my love is kindled to him whom my eyes have not seen, I believe in him, I love him, and my joy grows almost unspeakable. I remember the former instructions of *Cephas*, who taught me the first principles of this divine religion; and I take pleasure in those sacred foundations. Blessed be God, they are unshaken, and my faith and hope, which were begun under his ministry, stand for ever firm. *Paul*, and *Apollos*, and *Cephas* are mine.

"It has pleased my heavenly Father indeed, to lay many sorrows upon me in this wilderness; but I have learned to think and speak like a christian, and say, Though I appear as dying, yet behold I live; though I am chastened, yet I am not killed: Every stroke of his rod is given by the hand of his love. His rod, like the rod of *Aaron*, blossoms with divine blessings, and brings forth holy fruit.

"These

“These very sorrows are sanctified to make me partaker of his holiness. These wounds that I feel let out the blood of pride, and cure the distempers of my soul. Thus the very sufferings of nature, and the sorrows of life are mine; I have learned to reckon my afflictions among my blessings; they work for my profit. Whether peace or pain, all are mine.

“Besides, I solace my self in the midst of my poverty and distress with this sweet meditation, that the less I enjoy of temporal comforts, and the delights of this world, if I improve my sufferings and sorrows well, there is the more joy and glory laid up for me in the world to come.” “My light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” 2. *Cor.* iv. 17.

“Is my life on earth stretched out to a tiresome age? Heaven will be much the sweeter; and after many toils, I shall have the stronger relish of an eternal rest. Or does death make haste toward me in younger years, and bring my body quickly down to the dust? My soul then is but dismissed the sooner to the building on high that is prepared for me; for whether life, or death, all are mine.

“When I cast my eyes around, and survey the present frame of things, the sun in his daily circuit, and the moon and stars in their nightly courses, my faith assures me they are all employed in rolling the months and hours away, that stand between me and immortal happiness: And when the morning of the resurrection dawns upon the earth, the gospel tells me, that I have a share in all the rising glories of that day. Should the heavens and the earth be shortly set on fire, if I have but my faith awake within me, I shall have no fear nor surprize; I my self, and all my best interests are out of the reach of these flames; my treasures are of an unperishing kind. The period of all things here below shall but usher in my brightest hours, and begin the years of my eternal pleasure; for the book of God assures me, that things present and things to come are mine.

“Make haste then, all ye remaining revolutions of nature; and days, and months, and ages make haste: Time cannot fly too fast for me, who have such an eternity in view. My Lord hath told me in his word, surely I come quickly, and my heart echoes to that voice of my beloved, “Amen, even so come Lord *Jesus*.”

Fourth use. This doctrine requires the believer to be found in the constant exercise of faith, that so he may be able always to survey his inheritance, and take solid delight in it. Otherwise, when he sustains loss in temporal things, and sickness and trouble attend him in the flesh, he will be ready to judge by the mere principles of sense, and to think his comforts all gone, and that he has nothing left. It is faith alone can teach a believer to rejoice in this treasure given him by the covenant of grace, when the world has taken almost all sensible comforts from him. The natural man with an eye of sense looks on things just as the eye of a brute-animal beholds them, and sees nothing more than according to the common impressions they make on flesh and blood: But the eye of faith is aided by the divine glass of the covenant, which as a microscope, discovers many beauties, where the natural eye, unassisted, can see nothing but roughness and deformity.

It is nothing but faith fixing it's eyes on sanctified losses and crosses, sanctified pains, and sickness, and distresses, that can enable us to reckon these among our treasures. It is nothing but the spirit of faith that can instruct us to think our selves rich, because we are heirs of the kingdom, while we are poor and destitute in this lower world, *James* ii. 5. It is the spirit of faith that taught the apostle *Paul* to triumph under all his infirmities, in such language as this; “as dying, and behold we live;”

as sorrowful, and yet alway rejoicing; as poor, and yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. vi. 9, 10. And if we have the same spirit of faith we may believe and speak the same language.

Fifth use. This doctrine forbids all murmuring at the hand of God, though his dispensations may have something painful and severe in them. He has given us all things indeed, by the promise of the gospel, but he has not put this treasure into our own hands, lest we should abuse and forfeit it; but he has put it into the hands of *Christ* for us; and it is *Christ* our Lord who distributes out such parcels and portions of our estate to us daily, as his perfect wisdom sees most proper to promote our real interest.

The christian under sickness, perhaps will say, "Is not life and health writ down in the inventory of my inheritance?" Yes, but sickness and death are written down there too, and thy saviour knows that sickness is better for thee at this season than health. Do not murmur at his hand, for God the Father has intrusted him to manage and govern all his own vast dominions; and canst not thou intrust him to manage thy estate, to dispose of thy concerns, and to allot thy daily portion to thee?

The saint surrounded with distress and poverty, or naked, and hungry, will say, "Is not food, and raiment, and peace specified in the articles of the covenant, and numbered among my treasures?" Yes, but poverty, and hunger, and cold, and nakedness are there also: And thy heavenly Father sees it best to withhold peace and plenty from thee at present, or to give thee thy food and raiment but in a scanty measure, to mortify thy flesh, to humble thy pride, to wean thee from the creatures, to teach thee immediate dependence on himself, and to fit thee for a departure to the heavenly world.

When thou art deprived therefore of one earthly comfort after another, and the remaining good things of this life seem to be leaving thee, have a care of murmuring against thy God. Dare not take up the words of *Jacob*, and say, "*Joseph* is not, and *Simeon* is not, and will ye take *Benjamin* also? Surely all these things are against me," *Gen.* xlii. 36. But *Jacob* was made to know, by sweet experience, that all these things wrought for his real advantage, and were made the means of preserving himself and his family too in a day of spreading famine and desolation.

Sixth use. This doctrine forbids all contention and envy at our fellow-creatures, as well as repining against God.

Is my brother healthy and strong, while I am sick and feeble, and languishing? Does my brother possess more of the good things of this life than I do? It is because our common Father sees it proper to keep me shorter, and to withhold so full an allowance from me. I have an interest in the same large inheritance; I am a child of the same family; and therefore all things are mine as well as his: But I have committed it entirely to the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father, to put it into my hands what part he pleases of my large inheritance. He is wisest, and will distribute the several portions that he sees fittest for his children, and for this reason I cannot envy my brother. It is the same kind and faithful hand that weighs and measures out my grains and scruples, and little handfuls of earthly blessings, that gives my brother his loads and his full barns.

Has the ministry of *Paul* been blessed to me, and not that of *Apollos*? Have the labours of *Apollos* been more blessed to my fellow-christian, or the plain and familiar instructions of *Cephas*? Well, I will never make any parties in the church upon this account; for all the ministers of the gospel are appointed for our edification; and I will rejoice in them all, and bless God for the service they do the family of *Christ*.

If my portion of spiritual food be distributed to me by the hands of *Paul*, it is our common Father that conveys the same sacred food to another, by the hands of *Cephas* or *Apollos*; and the world shall never hear me say, "I am of *Paul*, in opposition to *Apollos* or *Peter*;" though I must confess, God has blessed his ministrations most eminently to my soul.

Seventh use. Has God given all things to the saints by the covenant of grace, surely then they should return all things back again to him, in a way of gratitude, duty, and service. Has he promised to make every thing which we have to do with, concur to promote our best interest, and our final happiness? Let us then apply our selves with zeal and diligence, to make every thing within our reach subserve his divine interests, and the glory of his kingdom.

Has my gracious God with-held nothing from me, but together with his own Son given me all things, why then should I with-hold any thing from him? Why should I not devote my heart, my head, my hands, my whole self, and all things that are within my power, to the honour of his name? Does God bestow life or health or riches upon such a worthless creature as I am? Let holiness to the Lord be written upon them all. And if my fellow-creatures are poor, needy, cold, and starving, let me cheerfully minister to them of my substance, which the great Lord of heaven and earth has so richly bestowed on me. My God honours me indeed, when he makes me the dispenser of his blessings among his creatures, and especially among his saints. I lose nothing by this benevolence, but am rather enriched by this very distribution. I become rich in good works, and rich in divine promises: "He that gives to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him." Alms are as money laid out to the best interest, and are a growing treasure.

But should I hope for no new beneficial return of all my kindness to men, the very benefits received of God my Father constrain me to this bounty. Has he given all things to a poor worthless creature, and shall I give nothing to the poor, or to the unworthy? Shall I not rather imitate the profuse bounty of my God, who commands "his sun to shine, and his rain to descend both on the evil and the good." It is a divine excellence to love and to distribute as God does.

The name of *Jesus* my saviour has yet a further power to oblige me to use all my earthly possessions for his honour. Has *Christ Jesus* purchased this large and fair inheritance for me with his blood, has he given me much on earth, and the hopes of greater treasures in heaven, then I will be my own no longer, but give my whole self up to him, with all my powers, and talents, and possessions! They are thine, blessed saviour, they are thine for ever. It is the solemn and deliberate wish of my heart, that I may never possess or enjoy any thing from which *Christ* has no revenue of glory. O that his grace may enable me to employ things present for this holy purpose! And when I arrive at the actual possession of things to come, they shall be improved in an unknown but a nobler manner, for the everlasting glory of my God, my Father, and my saviour.

#### THE RECOLLECTION of the doctrinal part.

"In this discourse, O my soul, thou hast not only been called to survey the riches of thy inheritance, but thou hast learned also, in what manner this inheritance is made over to thee, if thou art a sincere christian, and a believer on the Son of God.

"Look backward, my soul, to eternal ages, before the world began, when God marked out the bounds of this creation, and the limits of these heavens, and this earth,

earth, he designed them with all their treasures, for the service of his holy ones, for the benefit of his children, angels and men; and thy name and thy share was written down amongst them. The great God, in those early days of his eternity, has provided a rich sufficiency for thy present and future blessedness. O may my faith take this delightful and distant retrospect, and rejoice in God's eternal love!

“ God has given all things into the hands of his own Son *Jesus*, whom he hath ordained Lord of all, that he might govern and dispose of all things for the good of his people. *Christ* is risen from the dead, and hath taken possession of all the blessings of grace and glory, in the name of his saints, that he may make them possessors in their season, and according to their measure: That he may make thee, O my soul, a rich possessor of so fair an inheritance; and that he may keep every part of it secure for thee, till in succession of times and seasons, both in earth and in heaven, thou art fit to receive and enjoy it. If thou art made a joint-heir with *Christ*, thou art heir of all things.

“ But remember, it is a living faith in *Christ* that must intitle thee to this rich inheritance. It is of infinite importance then, to search often and inquire, Am I a christian indeed? A sincere convert, a believer in *Jesus*? And does my faith evidence it self in all the fruits of repentance, love, and holiness? O may I feel my soul to live daily this divine life by the faith of the Son of God, that I may maintain a humble claim to these treasures of mercy laid up in the gospel; treasures committed to the hands of *Christ* to be kept safe for me.

“ And may the blessed Spirit instruct me daily to improve all things to my spiritual and eternal benefit, that I may not be like a fool, who has a prize put into his right-hand, and knows not how to make use of it! May I be taught to draw some sacred advantage, some holy delight and refreshment from the continual new scenes and occurrences of life! May I derive knowledge, and love, and heavenly sweetness from the surprizing works of God, as the God of nature, and from the more surprizing wonders of his grace! May I learn something divine and holy from all the transactions of his providence, and the various turns and changes of this present state, till I am prepared and made meet for a more fit and ample possession of the everlasting inheritance of the saints in light!” Amen.

A HYMN

A  
H Y M N  
F O R  
S E R M O N XXXVIII.

*All things working together for good.*

[ Long metre. ]

1.  
**M**Y soul, survey thy happiness,  
If thou art found a child of grace,  
How richly is the gospel stor'd!  
What joy the promises afford!

2.  
"All things are our's;" the gift of God,  
And purchas'd with our saviour's blood:  
While the good Spirit shews us how  
To use and to enjoy them too.

3.  
If peace and plenty crown my days,  
They help me, Lord, to speak thy praise:

If bread of sorrows be my food,  
Those sorrows work my real good.

4.  
I would not change my blest estate  
With all that flesh calls rich or great;  
And while my faith can keep her hold,  
I envy not the sinner's gold.

5.  
Father, I wait thy daily will,  
Thou shalt divide my portion still:  
Grant me on earth what seems thee best,  
Till death and heav'n reveal the rest.

## S E R M O N XXXIX.

## The right improvement of life.

I C O R. iii. 22.

— *Whether life or death, — all are your's.*

**I**T is a large and fair inheritance that belongs to the children of God. They have no need to divide themselves into little parties, and to quarrel about their particular interest in one minister or another, in one blessing or another; for whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, whether life or death, all things are their's.

My former discourses have explained in what sense christians possess all things, and that is, that all things present or to come, that can any way affect or concern them, shall certainly turn to their benefit, and subserve their great and final interest. I proceed now more particularly to enlarge on the words, which I had chiefly in my design, “whether life or death, all are your's.”

The first doctrine arising from the words is this, “Life it self, and the continuance of it to the saints, is for their advantage.”

Now to improve this proposition to practical purposes, I shall do these things.

- I. I shall make it appear under a variety of instances, that life is designed for the benefit of christians.
- II. I would amplify and confirm the doctrine yet further, by discovering what a variety of graces may be exercised on earth, which can have no place in heaven: and make it appear, that in some respects, a saint below hath advantage above the saints that are on high.
- III. I shall answer a considerable objection or two that seems to rise against the doctrine, while I am treating of it: And, at last, Some inferences will be drawn from the whole discourse.

First let me shew, wherein life appears to be a benefit to true believers.  
Life is your's, O christians, for

I. This is the time that was given you for your reconciliation to God, and securing your everlasting interest. All the elect of God are born into this world sinful and miserable, by their relation to the first *Adam*; therefore *St. Paul* seems to include himself, as well as the heathen infidels, when he speaks of the iniquity of their nature, and the guilt of their state. *Eph. ii. 2.* “We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.” Now this life is the time given to seek deliverance from the wrath to come, to fly to the hope that is set before us; “now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,” *1 Cor. vi. 2.* Now while we are  
in



in our state of trial, before the gates of the grave have closed upon us, and before the gates of hell have been opened to receive us.

We are all, by nature, strangers to God, enemies in our minds by wicked works, and under sentence of condemnation: Remember, O sinners, this is the time to get acquaintance with God, to return to his service, and obtain his special favour. We are defiled and guilty creatures: This is the hour of cleansing, while the fountain of the blood of *Christ* stands open, to wash us from sin and uncleanness. We are, by nature, utterly unfit for heaven, and all the works and the joys of it, because of the vicious inclinations that govern us. This is the day of repentance as well as pardon: This is the day given us to insure those blessed mansions on high, and to obtain preparing graces. This temporal life is the only season, wherein the sentence of our condemnation can be reversed, and wherein we may obtain eternal forgiveness, and a right to life everlasting. The blood and righteousness of the Son of God, are not proposed nor offered to guilty creatures in the other world. Now is the time to acquire a meetness for the inheritance in light through the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit.

After death there is nothing of this kind to be done; "There is no work, nor device, no knowledge, nor wisdom, no faith or repentance to be exercised, no such duty to be performed among the dead, no opportunity to rectify the mistakes of life: There is no grace to be obtained for sinners "in the grave, whither we are all travelling," *Eccles. ix. 10.* What is left undone at that awful moment, must be for ever undone. At the voice of the summons we must go, whether pardoned or unpardoned, whether holy or unholy, whether hoping or despairing. And a dreadful spectacle it is, as your eyes ever beheld, to see a sinner expiring in full and raging despair.

But O what infinite advantage has it been to christians, that they have enjoyed this golden hour of grace, and been taught to improve it well! What had become of you, O believers, if ye had been arrested some years ago by the messenger of death, and hurried away into eternity? Where had your portion been, if ye had been sent down to the grave in the midst of your sins, before you were awakened or convinced of your folly and danger, before you had felt inward repentance, or had been acquainted with *Jesus* that bought and bestows forgiveness; before ye had known the virtue of his reconciling blood, or seen the face of a God reconciled? While your hearts and life were all unclean and unholy, your death must have been dreadful, and your soul for ever unhappy. What infinite honours are due to the patience and long-suffering of your God, and to the mercy and mediation of *Jesus* your saviour? Glory be to divine patience, and divine grace, for life prolonged, and a sinner saved!

II. Life is your's; it is your opportunity of doing much service for *Christ*, and manifesting your gratitude for his redeeming love. *2 Cor. v. 15.* "They who live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again."

Here on earth, you may speak of the wonders of his grace that has saved you, and publish his love that is unspeakable: You may tell sinners of the infinite dimensions of this love, to invite them to partake of the same salvation. Here your lips, and your tongues may be delightfully employed, in declaring what you have tasted of the blessings of the gospel, and the grace of *Christ*; and call others to "taste and see that the Lord is good, and how blessed the man is that trusteth in him," *Psal. xxxiv. 8.* Here you may make it known, for the support of poor convinced wretches that are ready to despair, what heights and what lengths, what breadths and what depths there

there are in the love of *Christ*; for it reached your soul even at the borders of hell, it spread wide to cover all your great and hainous iniquities; it rises high, for it has lifted your hopes to heaven, and it stretches its sweet and sovereign influence beyond the length of time, and provides for your life and happiness that shall measure out eternity. Here you may proclaim the praises of your redeemer to an ignorant world, you may promote his interest a hundred ways on earth, and thus glorify your favour which is in heaven.

This is not to be done in the same manner, nor for the same blessed purposes amongst the saints above. When the body lies senseless and mouldering in the grave, the tongue cannot praise the Lord; "The living, the living, they praise thee as we do this day;" as *Hezekiah* did when he was recovered from sickness, and had a sense of pardoned sin. *Isa. xxxviii. 17, 18.* "In love to my soul, thou hast delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. The grave cannot praise thee, the dead cannot celebrate thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth." This is the proper work of the living saint, to make known to sinners the grace of salvation.

Life is the only time of such work and service. "Opportunity, saith a writer on this subject, is like a golden instrument to dig for heavenly treasure: Do not wear it out as many have done in digging for pebbles, and at your latter end become a fool. Plead not your mean capacity: "Kings of the earth, and all people, old men and children, may praise the Lord, *Psal. cxlviii. 11, 12.* Serve your age according to your talent, *Mattb. xxv. 15.* He that had but one talent, but a single capacity, was called to account for it, and cast into outer darkness. Think how many opportunities you have out-lived, which will never have their resurrection: Redeem lost time, by improving what remains. Project improvements of life, since your light is near extinguished. Make up in affection what may be wanting in action. If you cannot do much, yet love much. If our servants should work no better for us than many have done for God, we should turn them out of doors. Stir up others to work for God, that you may do by their hand what you cannot do by your own." Thus this pious author.

Let us consider what glorious services have been done for God, by the long continuance of saints in this world. Survey the labours and the sufferings, the ministry, the zeal and the success of the blessed apostles, who planted the first christian churches. What monuments of honour did they raise among *jews* and strangers, among *greeks* and barbarians, the savage and the polite heathens, to their crucified and exalted favour! What multitudes of subjects were brought to bow the knee to *Jesus* by their preaching! What a large harvest of souls was gathered unto *Christ*, when the apostle scattered the seed of the gospel all round the countries, from *Jerusalem*, through the provinces of the lesser *Asia*, and through the southern parts of *Europe*, as some have supposed, as far as *Spain*! And the redeemer was glorified by his labours where the name of the true God the creator was hardly known before. What an extensive blessing to the world was the life of *Paul*? It is to this, that the following ages of christianity, as well as the primitive saints, owe the unspeakable benefit of his writings; and it is to this, that *Great-Britain* owes the blessing of his divine epistles. How honourable was it for *St. Paul* himself, and how happy for us, that he was made an instrument of such service to *Christ*, such a glorious service, as spread it self round the nations, and reached to distant ages of mankind. His long life was an illustrious blessing both to himself and to the christian world.

III. Life is your's, O christians, for it allows many a proper season for giving examples of holiness to mankind. And it is a honour to a saint, to be made an example of religion amongst a nation of sinners, or a pattern of holiness, among the churches of believers. Herein you become followers and imitators of the blessed Lord your master: He is the first pattern, he is the most glorious example; for in all things he must have the pre-eminence.

If you become a public and shining example of virtue, and piety, and goodness, you may attain these four very valuable ends at once.

1. By this means you pay great and just honours to the blessed gospel whereby you are saved, and confound and silence the impious accusations and slanders of the wicked: And especially if your station and rank in the world make you the object of more public notice, either in a city, in a village, in a neighbourhood, or in any society of men, then like a candle or a torch set on a hill, you diffuse light and honour far around you, and God and the gospel are glorified on your account.

And not only in the higher stations of life, but even servants of the lowest character, if they are but saints, "may adorn the doctrine of God their saviour in all things," *Titus* ii. 10. It is greatly for the credit of our holy religion, when the men of this world seeing our good works, are forced to confess that there is something divine in christianity, that God is amongst us of a truth; and by these means they are constrained to glorify our Father, and our redeemer, and our holy religion. This is the command of *Christ*, *Mattb.* v. 16.

2. Hereby sinners are not only convinced that there is a power and glory in the doctrine of *Christ*, but many a soul has been converted to the faith of *Jesus*, by beholding the pious conversation, the heavenly graces, the holy love, the divine zeal, the constancy, the patience, and the sufferings of christians. The good women in *St. Peter's* days were exhorted to invite and draw their unbelieving husbands to the faith and love of the gospel, "by beholding their chaste conversation, coupled with religious fear, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," *1 Pet.* iii. 1—4. Look forward, O christians, to the last great day, and think with what a pleasing joy you shall hear those who have been converted by your example, and reformed from a licentious course of life, declare this to your public honour before men and angels: Your holy example, though buried long in silence, shall have a glorious resurrection in that day, and the judge himself shall proclaim it to your praise, that he used your piety here on earth, as an instrument of his grace to enlarge his kingdom.

3. Hereby christians of a lower form, and those that are babes in *Christ*, are awakened to a holy imitation of your superior virtues and graces. It was the continuance of *St. Paul* in this life, through the various stages of it, that recommended him as a pattern to the believers of his day, in all the various circumstances of their lives; and the longer he lived, the more glorious example he left behind him, for the benefit of the saints, that they might be "followers of him as he was of *Christ*," *1 Cor.* xi. 1. And I may add in the

Fourth place, Where a christian of shining virtues and of diffusive goodness is blessed with a long life, the memory of his example, and the sweet savour of his graces, remain the longer on earth, after his own departure to heaven. It is like a rich perfume that has lain some considerable time among garments, it communicates a pleasant fragrancy to the apparel long after the perfume it self is removed. Thus many a saint, by the sweet odour of his name, has done honour to the gospel in the place where he lived, while his bones are mouldering in the dust: The history of his various virtues, has dwelt long on the lips of the surviving neighbours;

bours; and perhaps, hath awakened others to an imitation of such a pattern many years after his decease.

Whether example be of any use in heaven, or whether the saints of lower rank there may be excited to holy imitation, by the superior graces or glories of more eminent saints, is not so well known to us; but this we may be well assured of, that the example of christians can have no use in that happy world, to guard the doctrine of *Christ* from profane reproaches, or to convince or convert sinners and infidels. It is the living, and the living alone, that can do this service for *Christ*, and glorify his gospel in such instances as these.

But I proceed to another advantage of our continuance in this world.

IV. Life is your's; for it gives opportunity for abounding in good works to the great benefit of mankind. The longer a saint lives, if he maintains his character with honour, he becomes so much a greater blessing to the world. But what a deal of good ceases with the life of a good man!

Christians, ye are required to maintain good works for the honour of your Father, and for the glory of your saviour, who hath purchased you to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works: But there is another reason for them too, and that is, "these things are good and profitable to men," *Titus* ii. 14. compared with the third chapter, verse 8. Every day of life opens some new scenes, wherein you may be serviceable to your neighbours, your relatives, your fellow-creatures, and so make the world the better for you.

The days and years of life should be numbered by the multitude of good works, as much as by the revolutions of the sun and moon: For lost and wasted time should not come into the account of life. But if this were our way of counting, what should we say of thousands, who have lived to no other purpose but to eat and drink, and to make up the number of mankind? O it is a mean and pitiful thing only to be old in time, and not in duties to God, or benefits to men. And, as an author speaks on this subject, "all the good works of many who are stricken in years will lie in a very little compass: To be an ancient man or woman of two or three years old, sounds like a contradiction," and it is, indeed, a matter of great shame, and ought to awaken deep repentance.

How many are there that live to no purpose at all, and the world will not miss them when they are gone? How many that live to wicked purpose, and the world is glad to be rid of them? Some are mere cumberers of the ground, and some are perfect nuisances, and public mischiefs. Such should never pretend to the name of christians. Let us remember it was the character of our blessed Lord, that "he went about doing good; and he was willing to work those works while it was his day of life; for the night was coming on him wherein he should have no such sort of work to do," *John* ix. 4. O may our saviour be our pattern, and let us be followers of the holy *Jesus*! Alas! what a noble pattern! what slow and distant followers!

It was this desire of service to the world, that put the great apostle into a strait betwixt two, as in *Phil.* i. 23. He knew not what to ask for; "shall I pray for death and glory, my heart hath a wish that way? It is far better for me to depart, and to be with *Christ*: Or shall I desire to continue in life? This is for the service of your faith, and furtherance of your joy; therefore I am content, saith he, to have my crown and glory deferred, that my longer life may be your advantage. O what an illustrious spirit of zeal and love reigned in the heart of this apostle!"

"Ye

“Ye are the light of the world,” saith *Christ* to his disciples, *Matth. v. 13, 14.* What a dark dungeon would this world be, if it had never a saint in it? “Ye are the salt of the earth;” What corruption of manners would overspread the face of the earth! What vile communications, and odious practices would defile the world in a few years, if every christian were dead! What shameful and abominable works had over-run the heathen nations, before *Christ* and his gospel appeared, and the idolaters were made christians!

A saint in a family, is like the ark of God in the house of *Obed-edom. 2 Sam. vi. 12.* “For the Lord blessed the house of *Obed-edom*, and all that pertained to him, because of the ark of God.” A pious soul is a *Joseph* in the family of *Potiphar, Gen. xxxix. 5.* “When the Lord blessed the *egyptian’s* house for *Joseph’s* sake, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field.”

A number of saints in a city, or a nation, are many times like *Noah, Daniel, and Job*, in the midst of them. They guard the public by their prayers from mighty ruin and wide desolation. *Sodom* it self had been saved, if there had been ten righteous souls in it. And I am persuaded, *Great-Britain* had been a kingdom of idolaters and slavery, or a heap of confusion and slaughter, and a field of blood long ago, because of the provoking wickedness in the midst of it, had it not been for the few righteous that have always stood in the gap: There have been always some powerful pleaders at the mercy-seat, when the wrath of God and the destroying angels have been breaking in like a flood upon us, some *Moses* and *Samuel* to withhold the desolation, when popery and tyranny have been just at our gates, and ready to overwhelm us.

O how many unknown blessings do these sinful nations enjoy, because of the lives and the prayers of the saints that are in it! Holy souls, who though they are divided into different parties, and practise their different forms, yet worship the same God, through the same mediator, and by the same Spirit, who are ever welcome to the throne of grace, who are all saints in the esteem of God, and in the language of scripture. Strange, that the name of a saint should be used as a term of reproach amongst us, and cast upon one party in a way of scorn, when these are the persons of every party who are the most excellent in the earth; these are the guards and walls of defence to the nation, “the chariots of our *Israel*, and the horsemen thereof,” *2 Kings ii. 12. xiii. 14.*

V. Life is your’s; for it affords means for brightening your evidence for heaven, and improving your own preparation for glory. Surely you are not willing to depart from this world, till you have good hope of an interest in a better state, and a comfortable expectation that it shall be well with you for ever. Does God prolong your days on earth? See then, that the principles of piety and goodness be well rooted in your hearts, and that your graces grow up under the influences of heaven: See that they bud and blossom with fair flowers, to the honour of your profession, and to the joy of your own consciences. Let the sacred fruits of your love and zeal break out upon all just occasions: Shine brighter in holiness every day of your mortal life, and bring forth fruits meet for life everlasting, that ye may know and be assured that the seeds of glory are sown within you, such divine seeds as will bear a rich and blessed harvest in the great day.

“He that has this hope will purify himself as *Christ* is pure,” *1 John iii. 3.* and his increasing purity will confirm his hope. Believe it, christians, as your life and practice grows more divine and undefiled, the image of *Christ* will appear in you with fairer evidence, and raise your hopes of dwelling with him to the joys of assurance.

furance. Many a soul has gone to heaven as in a chariot of triumph, after some years of their practice of christianity, who, at their first profession of it, were oppressed with many doubts and fears, and were often trembling upon the borders of despair. Life was their blessing indeed, when it taught them to die with faith and honour, and enter into the world of spirits with divine joy.

Let it be said then concerning you, O christians, that you sensibly approach nearer to heaven every month of your continuance upon earth, and that you look more like the inhabitants of that upper world, by how much the longer you continue in this lower state; that when you depart hence, you may be assured of a joyful admission into paradise. May your graces shine bright, and your evidences for heaven appear so glorious and uncontested, that there may be no tremblings about your heart in that solemn and important hour; no doubtful flutterings or frights on a death-bed, but that you may find the gates of glory open before you, that you may see your way clear through the dark valley, and have a rich and abundant entrance into the kingdom of your God on high.

VI. Life is your's, that by a due improvement of it your crown of glory may be enlarged, and your seat advanced in heaven.

That there are different degrees of honour and joy, conferred on the saints above, according to their different characters and capacities, is a doctrine that hath so much countenance and evidence from scripture, that we can no longer justly doubt of it: And, I think, I have made this appear by uncontested proofs in another place\*. If you are zealous for the cause of *Christ*, and active in his service through all the stages of life, and your old age be crowned with abundant fruits of righteousness, your reward in glory shall bear a proportion to these labours, and the length of your time on earth shall give a glorious addition to your recompense in the heavenly world, *1 Cor. xv. 58.* "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." What a shame and pity is it, that you or I should have a long life on earth, and but a low rank or a little portion of reward in heaven!

But to animate your zeal, I would humbly propose yet a more surprizing advancement in glory, to the diligent improvers of life and grace. What if the services you do for God on earth should still bring forth new fruit among men long after your death? And what if your happiness should be ever increasing in this proportion? When the great judge comes, he will surely "reward every one according to their works:" But in *Jer. xvii. 10.* it is said, "God will not only give to every man according to his ways, but also according to the fruit of his doings?" What if our labours, our prayers, our pious works and words, or our examples on earth should go on to produce this divine fruit, even the conversion of souls when we are in heaven? And what if the rich and overflowing grace of God should reward us on this account with growing glories? And "those who turn many to righteousness in this manner, should shine as stars with encreasing lustre?"

Some divines have supposed, that the mischievous influence of the works and lives of the wicked shall encrease their torment: And perhaps, *Jeroboam*, who set up the calves at *Dan* and *Betbel*, and who made the land of *Israel* to practise idolatry for some hundreds of years after his own death, might feel yearly more intense agonies of conscience, and his hell grow seven times hotter. This is a dreadful thought, and should

\* *Treatise of death and heaven, discourse II. section 2. See vol. II. p. 154—160.*

should terribly awaken and impress those sinners who have diffused their iniquities far and wide, who have corrupted whole families, and cities, and nations, and spread their poison through succeeding ages. And why may not the joy and crown of *St. Paul* encrease and brighten by the conversion of sinners, through sixteen hundred years, by the influence of his holy writings amongst all the christian nations? And thus not the *Theſſalonians* alone, but the inhabitants of *Great-Britain* shall be the matter of his glory and his joy? O it is a blessed thing to multiply good instructions, and counsels, and exemplary practices of holiness; and to hear of them after we have gone to heaven, either by ministering angels, or by souls newly arriving there, that they still yield on earth a further crop and harvest of honour to *Christ*, and profit to men. Such tidings as these cannot but raise and advance our own joys.

As your zeal and labour in active service shall find a retribution every way answerable, so your patience under sufferings shall meet with a proportionable reward. *2 Cor. iv. 17.* "For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Life is the only season, as I shall shew afterwards, for this sort of exercise; and the longer we endure sorrows here honourably, the richer shall our reward be hereafter, though the reward is not of merit but of free grace.

How many saints are there in heaven exalted to eminent stations in that upper world, and some who wear, perhaps, the crown of martyrdom, and enjoy the prizes of victory over a thousand temptations, after they have run a long race in christianity? And yet many of these, it may be, would have possessed but a low station, and a little share of honour and happiness in those heavenly regions, if they had been cut off from the earth in their younger days, and been called away to heaven immediately after their conversion. Surely, if you have spent many years in public labour for *Christ* and zealous devotion, you have endured cruel mockeries, imprisonments, and sharp sorrows, for the sake of *Christ* and his gospel, and through the course of a long life, have born a constant testimony to the faith of *Jesus*, there are superior glories suited to your character in heaven, which wait your arrival there.

Thus I have made it appear, in various instances, that temporal life it self, and the continuance of it, becomes a real advantage to a true christian; which was the first thing I proposed.

But here is an objection which may be raised against this doctrine, viz. "Do not some true christians fall into grievous sins, when their life is prolonged, whereby their conscience is wounded, their garments defiled, their profession blemished, and the holy name of God and *Christ* blasphemed? Is long life therefore any blessing to christians, since we are so uncertain how we shall behave, and especially if we behave ill?"

Answer 1. The great and natural design, and tendency of our continuance in life, is to do more service for God and men, and obtain more blessings for our own souls; to grow more fit for heaven, and to raise and enlarge our crown. If we abuse the time given us for these blessed purposes, and indulge to sinful lusts or follies, it is highly criminal in us, and we alone must bear the blame.

Answer 2. Sometimes those very sins have been so impressed upon the conscience by the convincing spirit, as to become a means to awaken degenerate christians to greater watchfulness, greater tenderness of conscience, and greater degrees of humility, of spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness: Those very falls have been made an occasion of their rise and growth in christianity by the grace of that God, who turns darkness into light, and a curse into a blessing.

But where it is not so, God is not to be charged with injustice, in not raising us to higher degrees after our falls; our negligence and criminal indulgences of temptation, have justly forfeited his peculiar favours: And it must still be confessed, it is our own fault where length of life is not attended with growth in grace, and meetness for superior glory.

I should now proceed to the

Second general head proposed; but not having room to finish all my design at once, I shall conclude this discourse with these two reflexions.

First reflexion. What a rich advantage is put into the hands of a young convert! When a sinner, in his younger years of life is changed into a saint, what a blessed privilege is granted him by divine grace! And what a glorious opportunity is afforded him, the improvement whereof may reach to everlasting ages!

“Happy soul, who art reconciled to God betimes, and a thousand sins in the following course of thy life are hereby prevented! Happy soul, to whom *Christ* has manifested his love in the beginning of life, and saved thee betimes from eternal death! According to the course of nature, thou hast a prospect of doing long service for thy Lord and thy God. Awaken all thy thoughts; consult, contrive, and seek divine advice what thou shalt do for his honour, who hath given thee so early a salvation. Pray for the direction of the blessed Spirit, to mark out the paths of thy feet, and to employ thy head, thy hands, and thy tongue, in the most honourable manner for thy God, and the most useful for the good of men.

“Remember, every hour of thy time is a part of thy treasure: Let it not be said at last, it was a prize put into the hand of a fool, that had no skill nor heart to use it. God, even thy God, expects a daily revenue of glory, as the just improvement of this treasure. Let a holy zeal be kindled within thee, to do glorious services for thy creator and thy saviour, and to shew thy large returns of love to him who hath first loved thee. Let a pious ambition set all thy powers at work to do some uncommon good for men, and to be made an extensive blessing to all that are near thee. Arise, and shine long as a fair example of holiness in a dark and wicked world, and let every year of life brighten thy character on earth, and enlarge thy reward in heaven. Be not content merely to get safe within the walls of paradise; the thief on the cross, who was called at the last hour of life, obtained this privilege; but let thy ambition rise higher, and reach at some of the more exalted stations in that kingdom. Then shall it appear that life is thine in the sweetest sense, when every stage and period of it shall add new honours to the name of thy God, give new blessings to the world, and advance the joys of thy own eternity.”

Second reflexion. If life be such a privilege to a christian, and be a part of his treasure in this sense, then what a dismal account hath an old sinner to give, who hath wasted life and time in folly and guilt, and no part of it hath been improved for his eternal happiness.

“O miserable creature! Neither life nor death is thine. Bethink thy self a little, and review the dismal scene, say to thy soul, what have I been doing these fifty or sixty years? I came into life guilty and unclean, and am now upon the borders of death unclean and guilty still. I was born a child of wrath, and am a son or daughter of wrath still. I was by nature an enemy to God, and I am an enemy to God still, and have no interest in his love. Life was given me that I might seek reconciliation and grace; but I have neglected and abused offered grace, and am not yet reconciled to my almighty and offended maker. The judge is just at hand, methinks I hear the sound of his chariot-wheels, and a dismal account have I to give of all my wasted



wasted life. I have done no real service for God, nor have given an example of holiness to men; but alas! I have been a pattern of iniquity, or at least, I have followed a multitude to do evil: Every year have I heaped up to my self new treasures of wrath in hell, instead of securing a crown in heaven, and advancing my station and my joy there. Is there any hope for me in the poor remains of life that may yet be allotted me? Is the grace of the gospel sufficient to save such a wretch as I am?"

"Yes, O sinner, it is sufficient, for *Jesus Christ* came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief of them. There is grace in the heart of the Father to receive thee; there is sufficient virtue in the blood of *Christ* to cleanse away all thy guilt; there is influence enough in the blessed Spirit to soften thy heart, and renew thy nature, though thou art an old hardened rebel, and a transgressor from thy very infancy. Lose not a moment more, but set about the work in good earnest; trifle no longer with grace, thou who art on the borders of the grave; fly to the hope that is set before thee; beg salvation of God with daily and nightly tears, and give him no rest till he hath heard thee. Such an importunity is like to be successful; and then, though thy temporal life hath been no benefit to thee hitherto, yet the last moments of it may possibly be accepted, and prevent thy everlasting death; God who is rich in mercy, may bestow on thee some humble place in heaven, but thou canst not expect to shine amongst the brightest saints. Thou mayst be blessed among the dead who die in the Lord, and rest from thy sorrows and thy sins; but thou hast scarce any good works to follow thee. Thy works in all the sprightly years of thy life, have been matter of guilt and shame, and it is infinite mercy, that they shall be remembered no more. But if thy heart be broken for sin, and healed by the blood of *Christ*, thy humble repentance, and thy holy faith in the few remaining days of old age, and death shall be accepted through the abounding grace of the gospel. The dying thief on the cross forbids thee to despair utterly, though thou hast run a terrible risk, and ventured on the borders of destruction: And if thou art saved at last, it is so as by fire, it is like a brand plucked out of the burning, or as a man escaping naked out of the flames, and passing on the very brink of hell into everlasting life."

#### THE RECOLLECTION of the doctrinal part.

"And is life the only space given me to be reconciled to God, and am I still a stranger and an enemy? Have I wasted away so many years of this golden season of hope, this day of mercy, and have I not yet received this mercy, nor laid hold on this hope set before me; Search, examine, enquire, what is thy state, O my soul? And if thou art yet a child of wrath, and unreconciled to God, make haste and fly for refuge to the grace of the gospel. Cry mightily for repentance and forgiveness in the name and blood of *Jesus*. Let no more days of thy life pass away in such a dangerous and dreadful state, lest life should come to a speedy period, and then thou art banished from grace and hope for ever.

"But if the characters of a sincere penitent, and a holy christian be found with thee; if thou art partaker of the love of God, through the grace of *Jesus*, then "bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me praise his holy name," that he has not cut me off in the days of my enmity to God, un sanctified, and unpardoned; that he has lengthened out my life and the seasons of his mercy, till he has changed my sinful nature, and secured me in the covenant of his grace.

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“ Is life given me as an opportunity of service to my Lord *Jefus*? It is he that has redeemed me; it is he that has laid out his valuable life for me, what shall I do, O my saviour, to make some humble returns of acknowledgment and love? O let my useless and unserviceable years be forgiven, and let the remains of life, whether long or short, be all devoted to the interests and honours of my redeemer. Were it possible for the saints, after they have dwelt some time in heaven, to come down and dwell on earth again, how would they multiply their labours, and lay out their new life in more activity and service for their God and saviour? When they have found and tasted what a heaven of happiness succeeds the short labours of life, how would they double all their zeal and diligence, and be grieved they could do no more? When they have seen and conversed with their beloved Lord, and beheld him face to face, with how much warmer love would they engage in his service? Surely they would all cry out, that the longest life on earth is much too short to shew their zeal, affection, and gratitude to so divine and glorious a friend. Think of this, O my soul, and remember, if thou ever arrive safe at heaven, thou wilt wish thou hadst done more for thy beloved Lord here on earth.

“ Is this mortal life continued to me that I may spread a favour of piety amongst my fellow-creatures, and set a religious example to men? Lord, suffer me to do nothing that may lead sinners astray from thee. Pardon all the evil examples I have ever given, and let my future conduct shine in holiness, as a pattern to those that are round about me. Methinks, I would convince the world that religion has something excellent and divine in it, and encourage them to the practice of strict godliness.

“ Is life prolonged that I may be profitable to mankind, and have I lived thus long already to so little purpose? Though my goodness extends not unto thee, O Lord, yet I entreat that my fellow-creatures may be the better for me while I continue amongst them. O may the God of *Abraham* bestow on me that rich favour which *Abraham* received in those divine words of promise, “ I will bless thee, and I will make thee a blessing,” *Gen. xii. 2.* I would fain live useful and beloved, that I may die desired and lamented. What a shameful thing is it when I go out of the world, that my acquaintance should say, “ He is gone, but there is no loss of him.”

“ Have my days been prolonged thus far that my hopes of heaven might be daily encreasing, that my evidences of adoption might grow stronger daily, and my soul be more prepared for heaven: Look inward then, O my soul: Hast thou acquired a more divine and heavenly temper than in years past? Art thou wrought up to a greater meetness for the inheritance on high? Are thy desires, thy appetites, and all thy powers more fitted for the business of heaven, and attuned to the blessedness of the upper world? Art thou growing fitter still for the sight of God, for converse with *Christ*, for the company of saints and holy angels? How are thy days, and months, and years run out to waste, if thou art so much nearer death, and yet art not so much riper for heaven?

“ And is it possible that a length of life should be so improved, as that my crown of glory, and my portion of happiness may be enlarged hereafter? Let my holy ambition awake at such a hint as this, and let me aspire to a superior rank among the blessed, by employing every part of life to the most noble and excellent purposes for which life is granted. Let me ever abound in the work of the Lord, since I am assured that no part of my labours shall be in vain in the Lord, or want it's proper recompense. Though it is the blood of my redeemer that has purchased all the prizes and crowns in heaven; yet if I am a swift runner in the christian race, and the

the race it self be long, I am fitted to receive the fairer prize: And if I am an active and victorious soldier in the army of *Christ*, and have served faithfully through a tedious war, I may have reason to hope for a brighter crown. We may humbly wait for a reward in proportion to the work, according to the encouragements of the bible, while we still acknowledge, that it is free and sovereign grace both enables us to hold out working, and bestows the rich reward." Amen.

A

## H Y M N

F O R

## S E R M O N XXXIX.

*The right improvement of life.*

[ Common metre. ]

1.  
**A**ND is this life prolong'd to me?  
 Are days and seasons given?  
 Shall I not then prepare to be  
 A fitter heir for heav'n?

2.  
 I'll never let these moments pass,  
 These golden hours be gone:  
 Lord, I accept thy offer'd grace,  
 I bow before thy throne.

3.  
 Now cleanse my soul from ev'ry sin  
 By my redeemer's blood:  
 Now let my flesh and heart begin  
 The honours of my God.

4.  
 Let me no more my soul defile  
 With sin's deceitful toys:  
 Let chearful hope encreasing still  
 Approach to heav'nly joys.

5.  
 My thankful lips shall loud proclaim  
 The wonders of thy praise,  
 And spread the favour of thy name,  
 Where-e'er I spend my days.

6.  
 On earth let my example shine:  
 And when I leave this state,  
 May heav'n receive this soul of mine  
 To bliss divinely great.

S E R M.

## S E R M O N XL.

## The privilege of the living above the dead.

I CoR. iii. 22.

— *Whether life or death, — all are your's.*

**W**HEN these words were explained, this doctrine was drawn from the first part of them, viz. “When life is given or continued to the saints, it is for their advantage.”

The first thing proposed in our meditations of this truth, was to make it appear by a variety of instances, that life is designed for the benefit of christians.

I proceed now to the

Second, *viz.* to amplify and confirm this doctrine yet further, by representing what various graces may be exercised on earth, which can have no place in heaven; and to discover in what respects, a living christian may be said to have some advantage over the saints that are dead.

I. The first grace I shall mention, which belongs only to this life, is, faith of things unseen, whether present or future; for in heaven this sort of faith is ended and lost; it vanishes into sight. 1 CoR. v. 7. Here in this world we walk by faith, and not by sight; but in the world above, we shall live by sight, and not by faith. “Blessed are those souls on earth who have not seen, and yet have believed.” *John xx. 29.*

Hereby the living christian doth much honour to God, and offers him a revenue of such glory, as can never be offered to him among all the saints and angels on high. To believe that there is a God who made all things, among a world of atheists, that deny him that made them; to carry it toward an unseen God with a solemn awe of his majesty, and deep reverence and submission to his will, in the midst of thoughtless finners who deride religion, and live without God in the world; to believe that the bible is the word of God, notwithstanding all the difficulties contained in it, and all the bold and subtle cavils that infidels have raised against it, to make this word the ground of our religion, the rule of our practice, and the foundation of our hopes, in the midst of an age of deists and heathens, that laugh at our bible and our belief together: These are noble instances of a militant faith in a world of infidelity. To believe that *Jesus of Nazareth*, who was hanged upon a tree without *Jerusalem*, and died there, is the only begotten Son of God, the maker and the saviour of the world; to believe that he now lives and governs all things at the right-hand of his Father, and to trust in him who died upon the cross to give us a crown of eternal life; these are such exercises of the grace of faith, as have no place in the world of sight, where every saint beholds him face to face: Such acts as these, are only suited to our present state of absence from the Lord, and yet they are highly honourable to God and our redeemer, “whom having not seen we love, and in whom, though  
now

now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable,"— 2 *Pet.* i. 8.

To believe that there is a heaven of glory far above the clouds, where our Lord *Jesus Christ* has dwelt in his human nature almost two thousand years, and where ten thousands of his blessed saints and angels are for ever enjoying divine consolations; to maintain a firm belief that there is a reward for the righteous laid up on high, while they are here trodden to the dust; to believe there is a hell, an unseen world of misery and torture, where damned spirits are punished for their rebellion against the great God, and shall for ever suffer the weight of his indignation; and to walk through this world with a holy negligence and contempt of it under the influence of these future invisibles, these eternal joys and eternal sorrows: This is a faith that gives much glory to God, while we live, and speak, and act, while we suffer and endure, as seeing him who is invisible, and firmly believing all the joys and terrors of another world, which are hidden from us by the veil of flesh and blood.

This was the faith of the ancient patriarchs, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; this was the faith of *Noah* and *Moses*, and many other heroes, whose names shine with honour in *St. Paul's* epistle to the *Hebrews*; and the great and blessed God received daily honours from this their faith.

In heaven all these invisibles are seen, all these futurities become present, and they are no longer matters of faith. O that this faith might overspread the earth, as light is found all over heaven!

II. Hope and expectation of future blessings, either here or hereafter, under all present darkneses and discouragements, is another grace which may be exercised by the living saints; but among the saints that are dead, there is no room nor place for it; for in heaven our hope is turned into enjoyment; "hope that is seen or enjoyed, is not hope, what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," *Rom.* viii. 24. And this patient and chearful expectation under discouraging difficulties, is a glorious homage paid to God, such as the saints in heaven cannot pay him.

The living christian knows not what honour he brings to his God, when his hope for promised mercies bears it self up, while there are no appearing prospects to the eye of sense, and in opposition to a thousand rising dangers; when he can live upon the naked promise, and be assured of the full performance, merely because his God hath spoken it.

Then we give honour to God, such as the souls in heaven cannot give him, when under the renewed exercise of faith and repentance we maintain a humble hope of the pardon of sin through the promises of his gospel, even though our iniquities have been exceeding great, and though sin is every day working and striving against our best purposes, and too often bringing us under fresh guilt.

Then we glorify our blessed redeemer so as the saints in heaven cannot glorify him, when we feel our consciences burdened with sin, and yet maintain faith and hope of acceptance with a great and holy God, through the death, righteousness, and intercession of a person whom we never saw. This is an illustrious honour done to the name, and sacrifice, and mediation of the Son of God.

Then we give glory to the blessed Spirit our enlightener, and our sanctifier, when in the midst of our own errors and darkneses, and in the midst of difficulties and cavils raised by men, we trust in his promised guidance into all necessary truth;

when we walk on in the midst of temptations, waiting and hoping for fresh sanctifying influences, while we feel and groan over the deceitfulness and the weakness of our own hearts, that are too ready to start aside from God like a broken bow.

Then we honour God and his gospel indeed, when we hope for our own final salvation through the blood of the everlasting covenant, having fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us, though by the wiles of the devil, we have been under strong temptations to despair, and sometimes have seemed to be forsaken of God, as *Christ Jesus* was when hanging on the cross: It was then that he glorified his Father and his God, by the constancy and courage of his hope, in such a manner as he was never capable of doing after that great and dreadful day; and herein his poor tempted followers have been noble imitators of their saviour and their Lord, and have held fast their confidence in divine mercy in the midst of sore temptations, and given great glory to their God and Father.

Nor is this hope a vain presuming confidence, or a bold fit of enthusiasm, for it evidences it's own heavenly and divine original, by keeping the soul pure, and holy, and humble, in the midst of all this darkness, and this disconsolate state; "He that hath this hope will purify himself, even as *Christ* is pure," 1 *John* iii. 3. A presuming hope that carries no spring of holiness in it, can neither honour God nor profit men.

But there are other occasions also in this life, for the exercise of the grace of hope, viz. amidst huge and threatening difficulties, that relate to the public interests of religion. When the feeble and doubting christian sees the affairs of the church of *Christ* sinking daily, he is almost ready to sink and die too, and to despair for *Zion*; and it is the language of his unbelief, "by whom shall *Jacob* arise, for he is small?" But the stronger christian, who knows how to live upon a promise, can reply, that the God of *Jacob* is almighty, the king of *Israel* is the true God and everlasting king, and the interest of the church shall rise again, even though it were drowning; for not all the floods on earth, nor even the gates of hell shall prevail against the church that is built upon *Jesus* the rock of ages: And *Jesus* himself receives his special tribute of glory from his saints on earth, while they triumph in this hope.

There are also some seasons wherein a living saint honours God in this world, by maintaining his hope in the midst of various trials that attend him in his private affairs, and especially when poverty and distress overtake him like an armed man, and he hath no other help nor hope left, but in some gracious words of promise, and some unknown appearances of providences in his behalf. Blessed are the poor who can live by faith!

A christian honours God also greatly in the days of sickness, and the hour of death, when he feels nature sinking, and flesh dissolving; yet he can look upon his withering limbs without dismay, in the hope of the resurrection, and speak in the language of holy *Job*, "Though after my skin worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," *Job* xix. 26.

I grant that the saints who are in heaven, the spirits of the just made perfect wait also, and hope for the resurrection of the body, and all the promised blessings of that day; but they have a bright and sure prospect of it by the light of glory, in which they read all the promises; and they have a pledge and pattern of it in the body of *Jesus Christ* raised from the dead, and glorified in the midst of them. Their hope lies under no darkness, no discouragement. The saints on earth therefore, in the exercise of this their hope, give a greater glory to God than those in heaven;

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for it struggles with mighty difficulties, and overcomes them all. It is such a hope as *Abraham* built on the mere promise of God, that he should have a son when he was a hundred years old, and his wife *Sarah* was ninety. "He hoped in God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were; who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken; so shall thy seed be. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God," *Rom. iv. 17, 18, 20.*

III. Liberality and compassion to the poor is another exercise of grace, for which this life only gives opportunity. The objects of our bounty on earth are both faints and sinners; for we are charged to imitate our heavenly Father, "who commands his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall and refresh the just and the unjust," *Matth. v. 45.* But in the world to come, the faints are raised far above the want of our compassion, and condemned sinners in their long everlasting misery are forbid all refreshment.

It is in this life only, that we can shew our love to *Christ* himself, by refreshing the bowels of his faints. It is here that we may treasure up matter for divine approbation and solemn applause, in the great judgment-day, when the alms that have been given in a private corner, where "the left-hand has not known what the right-hand did," shall be published with honour before that innumerable assembly. "I remember," says our blessed Lord, "I well remember, when in yonder world ye fed my hungry faints, then ye fed and nourished me; when ye gave drink to them, ye gave drink to me, and relieved my thirst; when ye bestowed garments on them, it was I that was naked, and ye clothed and covered me; and when ye visited them in sickness or in prison, I was the prisoner, I was sick, and I take it as kindly as though ye had visited and comforted me." Astonishing condescension of the son of God! Surprising honour put on the liberal christian! But here is the only place for acquiring these honours, though they are published hereafter.

There is no poor christian to be supplied in heaven out of the stores of your bounty, no naked faints to be clothed there. All the regions of heaven cannot afford any such object of your compassion and love. Many a faint on earth is hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and exposed to sore hardships and necessities, but necessities and hardships are unknown in heaven. Many a widow, and orphan, and poor destitute christian, lies sick and groaning as it were at the gates of glory: Let us seize the opportunity to feed, to support, and to comfort them; for there is no destitute creature, no sick or poor, no needy widow or orphan, within the gates.

Life is given to some persons for this very end! Good *Dorcas* was even raised from the dead, and had her life lengthened out to make more coats and garments for the poor. Ministering to the faints is a delightful labour, and a business worth living for. In this world the rich christian has the honour of being a steward for God to feed his children; but in the world above, there are no earthly treasures to receive such a sort of consecration as this is, no alms to be offered up as an acceptable sacrifice to God the Father, or to his Son *Jesus*. See then that ye practise this virtue as often as providence gives a proper occasion, and thus consecrate your substance to the Lord of the whole earth. Lend a little to the Lord in this manner, and it shall be paid with large interest: "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him," *Prov. xix. 17.*

Perhaps another week, or another day shall divide you from all your earthly riches; no more of them can be laid out for God: Perhaps death may send you into the invisible world, and ye shall have no more objects of your pity for ever; "whatsoever thy hand then finds to do, do it with all thy might," *Eccles.* ix. 10. "You that are rich in this world, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life," 1 *Tim.* vi. 18, 19. And remember that "he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully in his distributions to the poor, for the sake of *Christ*, shall also reap bountifully of the riches of glory, in the great day of reward," 2 *Cor.* ix. 6.

IV. Another grace which only the living can exercise, is, charity to our fellow-creatures under their mistakes, or infirmities, and a charitable and loving frame of spirit to our fellow-christians who differ from us either in principle or practice.

Infirmities and mistakes belong only to the present state: This life is the only time when a fellow-saint can be overtaken in a fault, and when we are capable of restoring such a one in the spirit of meekness. It is here only that the proposed motive has any room or place; "consider thyself lest thou also be tempted," *Gal.* vi. 1. And though we are bound to maintain an everlasting aversion to every sin, yet we should imitate and honour the forgiving mercy of our God, by speaking peace and consolation to a returning sinner.

Be not too severe in your censures, you who have been kept from temptation, but pity others who are fallen, and mourn over their fall. Do not think or say the worst things you can of those who have been taken in the snare of *Satan*, and been betrayed into some grosser iniquities. When you see them grieved and ashamed of their own follies, and bowed down under much heaviness, take occasion then to speak a softening and a healing word. Speak for them kindly, and speak to them tenderly. "Have compassion of them, lest they be swallowed up of over-much sorrow," 2 *Cor.* ii. 7. And remember too, O censorious christian, that thou art also in the body, it is rich grace that has kept thee hitherto, and the same God, who for wise ends has suffered thy brother to fall, may punish thy severity and reproachful language, by withholding his grace from thee in the next hour of temptation; and then thy own fall and guilt shall upbraid thee with inward and bitter reflexions, for thy sharp censures of thy weak and tempted brother.

This life is the only time wherein we can pity the infirmities of our brethren, and bear their burdens. This law of *Christ* must be fulfilled in this world, for there is no room for it in the next; "wherefore bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil ye the law of *Christ*," *Gal.* vi. 2.

This world is the only place where different opinions and doctrines are found amongst the saints: Disagreeing forms of devotion, and sects, and parties, have no place on high: None of these things can interrupt the worship or the peace of heaven. See to it then, that you practise this grace of charity here, and love thy brother, and receive him into thy heart in holy fellowship, though he may be weak in the faith, though he may observe days and times, and may feed upon herbs, and indulge some superstitious follies, while thou art strong in faith, and well acquainted with the liberty of the gospel. Let not little things provoke you to divide communions on earth; but by this sort of charity, and a catholic spirit, honour the favour and his church here in this world; for since there are no parties, nor sects, nor contrary



trary sentiments among the church in heaven, this christian virtue can never find any room for exercise there. This kind of charity ends at death.

V. Sympathy with mourners, and pity and relief to those that are oppressed with many sorrows, is a virtue that belongs only to the saints on earth. There are no sorrowful christians in heaven; and the various methods of comfort, which we practise toward our suffering brethren here below, are therefore unpracticable in the upper world. "The God of all comfort is he who comforteth us in our tribulations, for this reason, that we may be able to comfort those that are oppressed with their heavy afflictions," 2 Cor. i. 4. "This is pure religion and undefiled, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, as well as to keep your selves unspotted from the world," James i. 27. But it is the religion of the church on earth, not the religion of heaven.

Go then, and visit thy brother in distress, visit poor afflicted and suffering christians: Go mention the promises of divine grace that belong to them in a suffering state, and lead them to rest upon some happy promise: Go teach them the benefit of afflictive circumstances: Let the twelfth chapter to the *Hebrews* be your text, and raise many a sweet inference for the support of sufferers. Tell them of the fruits of holiness that grow upon the bitter tree of earthly sorrows; and that the wood of the cross blossoms with grace and glory. Put them in mind of the examples of divine deliverance, when there has been no outward prospect of help and hope. Lead them to a meditation of the heavenly state: Point their thoughts upward: Direct their faith and their hope thither: Teach them to look at the things that are unseen and eternal, that they may be able in the language of faith to say, "These light afflictions which are but for a moment, are working for us an eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

There are no sorrows among the inhabitants of heaven, no sufferings there, no pain, no complaint; nor is there any need of your consolations: This is a work you cannot do in paradise, but God delights to see his children here comfort one another in their travels through this valley of tears, this tiresome wilderness, 1 *Thess.* iv. 18. Then let us give our fellow-christians their due of consolation, and offer to our God the sacrifice of his delight.

VI. Forbearance and forgiveness of real or supposed injuries, is a grace to be practised only by the living christian. *Christ Jesus* our Lord demands it, and lays a bar upon your hopes of the forgiveness of God, if ye refuse it to your fellow-creatures, *Matth.* vi. 14, 15. And the great apostle intreats you to practise it. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man hath a quarrel against any: Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye,* Col. iii. 12, 13. Charity, or love, as it should be translated, suffers long, beareth all things, and hopeth all things; and though considered in the general notion of love to the saints, it lives for ever in heaven; yet these special exercises of it belong to this world. Charity or love is not easily provoked, it thinketh no evil, giveth every thing the best turn that it will bear, and puts the best sense upon all things that are spoken. O that every living christian might adorn his profession with the exercise of this virtue! 1 *Cor.* xiii. 4—8.

Meekness is a grace which has no place in the upper world, in this respect, that it has no trials there. Glorify God your saviour therefore in the days of your trial here below,

below, and be ye meek and lowly as he was, be ye slow to anger, and swift to forgive, as God your Father is. When you hear a word of offence or reproach spoken, and feel the rising ferment of the blood, watch against it, subdue it; this is the hour of battle, see that ye come off conquerors. When there is a word of bitterness upon your tongue, stifle it, and keep silence, subdue the temptation, and prevent that sin, give glory to God in this manner, which the saints in heaven cannot do. "Dearly beloved, avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto wrath: Be not overcome with evil; but overcome evil with good," *Rom. xii. 19, 21.*

Love is a virtue that flourishes in heaven, it grows high, it spreads wide, and it shines bright in the upper world. Love is a grace that outlives faith and hope, and endures for ever. There is no such union of hearts, no such sacred bonds of affection as are found among the saints on high. Heaven is the very element and region of love; but it is all love to God, love to *Christ*, and to our fellow-saints: For love to enemies is not known in that country, because there is no enemy there. To love them that hate us, to bless them that curse us, to pity, and forgive, and pray for those that injure us, these are not only noble singularities of the christian religion, which are not known amongst all the catalogues of heathen virtues, but neither are they practised in the heavenly world. As glorious and sublime as they are, yet they are never found among the spirits of the just made perfect: Those holy souls, are all far above the reach of malice, hatred, and enmity; there are no objects there for them to exercise these divine virtues upon. Love to enemies therefore dwells only amongst the living saints: To forgive injuries, is the glory that is peculiar to christians in this mortal state, and our blessed saviour has a most peculiar revenue of honour from it.

But besides the honour that *Christ* and his gospel receive from such a kind and charitable conduct, there is a pleasure in this victory over resentment, that far exceeds the pleasure of revenge, which is the delight of the wicked: And it is a pleasure also, which the saints above cannot partake of; for there are no offences, no injuries, no provocations there: This life alone is the time to forgive, and to be forgiven. Now who is there among us, that would not seize the opportunity of every injury and offence to practise a glorious duty, and enjoy a pleasure which the blessed in heaven cannot taste?

VII. Self-denial and mortification of sin, belongs also to this life alone. It is the first lesson in the school of *Christ*, to deny our selves daily, if we will be his disciples, *Luke ix. 23.* but it is the lesson of the school and not of the palace; a lesson for earth and not for heaven; for in the world above, our duty is all delight, and there is no need of contradicting our own pleasure, or our interest, in order to please or serve our God, or our brother. In those holy regions every part of our work is congenial to our sanctified natures, and with resistless appetite and inclination he shall pursue all the duties that belong to that happy state.

Nor are there any sins to be mortified there: The body of death is buried with the body of flesh in the grave, and earth is the place where the members of it must be put to death. *Mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, Col. iii. 5.* Let us be daily engaged in the zealous practice of this duty, and subdue all the unruly appetites that make an assault upon our virtue, that defile our consciences, and subdue our peace. Now, now is the time to set our selves at work to fight against our vicious inclinations, and our irregular desires: Now let us multiply our victories

victories over sin and self. Earth is the field of battle with sin: In heaven our desires shall all be pure and holy, there is no sinful wandering appetite, no perverse affection, no irregular thought or wish amongst all the saints above: There is no contest with indwelling corruptions, no such conquests are to be gained in all that holy and happy world. There are no new honours of this kind to be given to *Jesus*, the captain of our salvation, nor any new triumphs to be obtained over sin, to the glory of divine grace. Come then, let us bestir our selves, and awake to the battle, let us bravely resist the workings of flesh and blood, by the aids of the blessed Spirit, let us be strong in the grace that is in *Christ Jesus*, and maintain the glorious warfare, like soldiers who fight for the honour of their general, and who hope for a crown of immortality.

[ If this sermon be too long, it may be divided here. ]

VIII. Repentance and godly sorrow for our past offences, belong only to this life. Converting grace works only on earth; we are called to repent in order to be forgiven, "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," *Acts* iii. 19. And the exercise of this grace is not only necessary at first conversion, though it most eminently appears at that season, but it must run like a thread through the whole course of this mortal life, till death shall put an utter end to sin. Let every known sin therefore which we are guilty of, be attended with some new and sensible exercise of shame, and sorrow, and holy indignation against our selves. Let us live in a daily, constant, penitent frame, for we are daily sinners. This painful sense of sin, this holy mourning, is a honour done to the law of our God. It is the living, the living who are called to this work; for there is no repentance in the grave: Shew your hatred of sin therefore continually, and your sincere love to the law of holiness, by such a humiliation as becomes an imperfect saint.

You will ask me, "Do not saints in heaven repent that they have ever sinned here on earth?"

I answer, that whatsoever regret they feel in the memory of their past transgressions, it is not attended with such sensible shame and inward pain at the heart, as are necessary to that duty of repentance that is required here on earth; for there is nothing must break in upon their perfect peace or joy in heaven. As God is said not to remember their iniquities, because he does not remember them in order to punish, so the saints above are not said to repent of sin, because they have no such shame and grief accompanying it as whilst they dwelt upon earth, and which are some of the most remarkable ingredients in our repentance.

But we may suppose there is among them some sort of holy self-displicity, and something of a sacred regret, that ever they offended such a God, and such aaviour? There will be surely an inward and hearty disapprobation of their former sinful ways whenever they think upon them: And, indeed, without some reflexion on their former guilt and misery, they can never give due glory to *Christ* their redeemer, who rescued them from their sorrows and their sins. But all the painful and shameful attendants of this grace of repentance must be banished from heaven, because it is a state of perfect joy and peace.

IX. Patience and submission to the will of God under all manner of painful providences, gives glory to God here on earth, such as the saints in heaven cannot give him.

We

We are taught indeed to say, "Lord, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." But it is the preceptive will of God, or the will of his commands, which is here signified, not his providential will, whereby he punishes; for there is no affliction in heaven, and therefore there is no such sort of submission, no exercise of patience there: They obey the will of his commands in perfection there, and God himself has no will that they should suffer, or endure sorrow.

Shew then, O believers, your submission to the will of God here, as dear and obedient children, when your heavenly Father sees it needful to chasten you. *Heb. xii. 6—11.* "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? Give him reverence therefore when he corrects you, and be ye in subjection to the Father of spirits and live." It is only children under age that their earthly fathers scourge and chastise; such are christians in this world, the sons of God in their infant state; but when the children are grown up to manly age, they have no more chastisement; such are the saints in heaven, who are grown to the fulness of the measure of that stature which God designs for them in *Christ*. This life therefore is the only time when you can honour the sovereignty and the wisdom of God your Father, when he sees fit to take his rod in hand, and to instruct you in righteousness.

X. A sacred compassion for perishing sinners, and longing desire and labour for the conversion of souls, is a business that belongs to this life only. When we are past the line of time, and entered into eternity, we can add no new subjects to the kingdom of our Lord: This is a service that can be performed no where but in the present state: It is the living, and they alone that have this work intrusted with them. When the lips are closed in the grave they cannot speak for God, nor exhort sinners to be saved.

Let ministers call up all their powers then to the blessed work of the gospel. Let them stir up all their gifts, and employ them all for the welfare of immortal souls. What is their furniture of human learning? What are their talents of oratory, their flowing language, and their art of persuasion? What is their vivacity of spirit, their sweetness of voice, their penetrating force of elocution? What are all these but weapons of warfare to fight against the kingdom of *Satan* among men, and instruments to build up the church of God on earth? What are they all but consecrated gifts to win souls to *Christ* out of the kingdom of this world? They are given only for service in the present life. Let us use them then with our utmost skill for these holy purposes: For, "whether there be tongues, they shall cease: Whether there be knowledge and human learning, that shall vanish away?" *1 Cor. xiii. 8, 9.* These poor imperfect talents are not made for heaven. Let our zeal therefore employ them to the utmost on earth.

O let us be instant in season and out of season, and proclaim the terrors of the law to awaken the stupid and impenitent, to make them fly from the wrath to come. Let us publish the glad tidings of the gospel, and by all the methods of compassion and tenderness, let us beseech and intreat sinners to be reconciled to God. Let us set the unfearchable riches of *Christ* before them, the all-sufficiency of his righteousness, and the power of his grace; and study and contrive how we may address their consciences in the most successful manner, till we have won their hearts over to *Christ* and salvation.

And

And let this not only be the labour of the sanctuary, and the work of our public offices in the church, but let the houses where we dwell, and the families where we visit, be witnesses for us in the great day, that we have instructed and warned the souls of men, that we have carried on the business of the pulpit in the parlour, and have spread the favour of the knowledge of *Christ* through all our conversation.

Let parents that are solicitous for the eternal welfare of their off-spring, and love their sons and daughters as their own souls, let them seize the present opportunity for this sort of work. Let them make use of all the language of gentle authority and of constraining love, to win the hearts of their children to God, to persuade them to accept of the grace of *Christ*, and snatch them as brands out of the burning. Let friends and dearest relatives, let masters and rulers of families, lay hold on every just occasion to speak of the things of God to those that are near them. Life is the only time to express our zeal for God, and love to souls, in such a manner as this. When we pray, "thy kingdom come," we should awaken our endeavours to gain some new subjects to *Christ*.

Come, let us all engage our own consciences in this sacred and compassionate work, while we consider, that "to day is the accepted time, now is the hour of salvation." God may put an end to our own lives, or the lives of our friends to-morrow, and either their death or our's will prevent this sort of work for ever. Then we can speak no more, or they can hear us no more: They will be for ever out of the reach of our compassionate desires to save them. We may send our bitter sighs, and our fruitless groans, after them, when they are gone down to darkness without hope; and we may feel the inward anguish of a sharp and painful repentance, while, through our neglect, and their own folly and wickedness, they are cursing the day of their birth, and crying out, in full despair, under the torture of divine vengeance.

XI. Another grace which can be exercised only in this life, is, holy zeal, and boldness in the profession of christianity, with courage in suffering for *Christ*. These are virtues that belong only to our mortal state; these are made necessary to the saints, by the opposition that is raised against true religion by the men of this world. Here in this world, "they that will live godly in *Christ Jesus*, must suffer persecution," 2 *Tim.* iii. 12. Our saviour himself, in the first publication of his own gospel, "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself;" he sealed his doctrine with his own blood, and has given his followers a glorious example of a suffering zeal and holy fortitude. Imitate him who "endured the cross, and despised the shame," *Heb.* xii. 2, 3.

This sort of virtues doth not belong to the heavenly state; for there is no opposition made to truth and holiness: There are no such trials of our zeal and courage in heaven; courage to speak boldly for *Christ*, and zeal to give him public glory, by maintaining his gospel in the face of terror and death; for there are no infidels, no sinners, no enemies in all the heavenly regions. There are no threatening tyrants, no persecuting powers, no penal laws in the upper world: No prisons, no fires, no gibbets nor axes there for the followers of the lamb; no cruel mockings, nor so much as a reproachful word: but the greater our zeal is for the service of God and our saviour in the heavenly state, the greater shall be our honour and applause among the inhabitants of that country.

Endure then for a season, ye disciples of *Christ*, grow bold in the profession of his name, and exult with holy joy, "that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for

his sake, *Acts* v. 41. It is here on earth only, that it is in your power to shew, how much you love your saviour more than your life, and that your love to your Lord is stronger than death with all its terrors. Upon this account shall I exhort you to practise what the apostle *James* expresses; *James* i. 2. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into divers temptations; for the proof or trial of your faith shall appear honourable and glorious when *Christ* comes," *1 Pet.* i. 7. It was a frequent and sacred ambition among the primitive christians to contend for the crown of martyrdom. This world is the only stage for such bloody conflicts, and this life is the only season wherein we can obtain the addition of this ornament to our crown of glory.

XII. May I add in the last place, that a calm and chearful readines for a removal out of this world, is an honour done to *Christ* and his gospel here on earth, which belongs not to the heavenly state. Death, in the course of nature, as well as by the hands of violence, hath always something awful and formidable in it. Flesh and blood shrinks and trembles at the appearance of a dissolution, and *Christ* delights to see the grace that he has wrought in his saints, gain the ascendancy over flesh and blood, and conquer the terrors of death and the grave. He loves to see his followers maintain a serene soul, and venture into the invisible world upon the merit of his blood, with holy fortitude and a chearful faith. It is only the living christian that can die, and glorify God his saviour in that great and important hour. The saints, who are arrived at heaven, "dwell in the temple of God, and shall go no more out." *Rev.* iii. 12. They are for ever possessed of life and immortality. There are no more deaths or dangers for them to encounter, no more terrors to engage their conflict. Death is the last enemy of the saints; and when the christian meets it with sacred courage, he gives that honour to the captain of his salvation, which the saints in glory can never give, and which he himself can never repeat. Dying with faith and fortitude is a noble conclusion of a life of zeal and service. It is the very last duty on earth; when that is done, then heaven begins.

Thus I have made it evident, in many instances, that there is a rich variety of virtues and graces to be exercised in this life, which have no place after death, and upon this account the living christian may be said to have some advantage beyond the dead.

Here an objection or two will arise that may require an answer.

Objection I. But is not heaven always represented as a state of perfection? Is not grace and holiness more complete there than ever they have been, or can be in the time of our mortal life? And yet, how can it be a state of greater perfection, if so many graces are wanting there?

Answer. These graces which belong to the living saint, and have no place among the happy dead, are but the various exercises of a sanctified mind, arising from some imperfections in our present state. Faith is owing to our want of sight: Hope is owing to our want of enjoyment: Patience, courage, compassion, forbearance, forgiveness, repentance, and such like graces, are owing to the sins, the sorrows, or the temptations that are found in this world only. The follies, the mistakes, the infirmities of our selves, or our fellow-christians, or the wickedness of the world wherein we live, are the only things that give occasion for the exercise of such graces as I have now mentioned; therefore, in a perfect state there is no room for them.

Yet every saint in heaven has a sanctified nature, which is the root and spring of all these graces, and they would appear in glorious exercise again, if there were any objects,

objects, or occasions, or seasons proper to excite them. Therefore the saints above are not defective in any virtue or grace, though they have no actual exercise of several of them in heaven. So God himself would not be in himself less merciful if he appeared in any province of his dominion, where there was no creature in misery, and consequently no proper object for mercy. He is a God of infinite compassion and forgiveness still, though he has no immediate new exercises of them in heaven, in a world where no sinners are: for sin and misery are the only proper occasions of forgiveness and mercy. Thus the saints in heaven are perfect in grace and holiness, even though there are no proper objects or occasions, for this holiness or this grace to manifest it self in such peculiar instances as I have been describing in this discourse.

Objection II. How can it be said, that a living christian has any advantage above the dead? Is not heaven better than earth? And upon that account, is not death often represented to us under most pleasing colours in the gospel, as it is an escape from the sins and sorrows of this present state, and as it conveys us into the world of blessed spirits, where there are infinite advantages above any thing to be enjoyed in this life?

Answer. Though the living saint has some advantages which the dead cannot partake of, yet it is very true, that the honours, the pleasures, the joys, the perfections, and the advantages of heaven, when summed up together, are far more and greater, and are infinitely preferable to those on earth; but they are not all of the same kind. When we compare the state of grace and the state of glory together, we may boldly say, the state of glory has vastly the preference; and St. Paul himself thought so, *Phil.* i. 21, 23. "To be dissolved, and to be with *Christ*, is far better" than to dwell in this sinful world. He asserts it, that death would be his own gain; yet still he allows there are some advantages of this life, which death would deprive him of; for, says he, "for me to live in the flesh, will be for the honour of *Christ* in his churches; and I shall have this fruit of my life, even the furtherance of your faith and joy." verses 22, 25.

When we are encouraging christians to live above the fear of death, we represent to them all the glories and felicities of the future world, which are infinitely superior to all things we can enjoy in this life. But while we continue here on earth, under the difficulties and hardships of the present state, "we have need of patience, that when we have done the will of God, we may receive the promises," *Heb.* x. 36. And we have need of all those peculiar advantages to be set before us, which can belong to our stations here on earth, on purpose to support our patience, to bear us up under present burdens, and make us active in present duties: Although it must be still confessed, that all those advantages of this life, joined with our present sins and sorrows, are much inferior to the actual taste and fruition of the joys of heaven, where sin and sorrow are known no more.

This thought very naturally leads me to the improvement and conclusion of my discourse, which I shall wind up briefly in these four practical inferences.

Inference I. Since there are many virtues and duties which belong only to this present life, "let us lose no opportunity for the practice of them, for the next day, or the next hour, may put it for ever out of our power to practise them." Eternity is a long duration indeed, but it will never afford us one season for visiting the sick, for feeding the hungry, or for charity and meekness towards those who injure us: Eternity it self will never give us one opportunity for the pious labours of love toward the conversion of sinful acquaintance and relatives. O let us not suffer this pre-

scious lamp of life to burn in vain, or weeks, and days, and hours to slide away unemployed and useless. Let us remember, that while we are here, we work for a long hereafter; that we think, and speak, and act with regard to an eternal state, and that in time we live for eternity. Let us call up all our powers to action and diligence, that not a day of our short lives may pass away, but what may turn to our account in the years of eternity. While God is pleased to delay our heaven, let our continuance on earth be filled up with the various exercise of such graces as are suited to our present stations. Let this be a new spring and motive to our zeal, that we are doing such honours to God and our saviour here on earth, of which none of the saints above are capable, and for which this life is the only season: And let it appear in the day of retribution, that the length of our life here on earth, has been a great, and real, and everlasting advantage to us, by preparing us for a higher station after death, and a fairer inheritance in that world which is everlasting.

Inference II. "Though your hopes of heaven be never so well grounded, yet be not too impatient of dwelling longer on the earth: And though your burdens and sorrows may be very great in life, yet be not too hasty and importunate in your desires of death." Support your self under all the fatigues, trials and difficulties of the present state, with this consideration, that you are now employed in such service for God, and paying such a tribute of honour to him in your suffering circumstances, as all the saints in heaven cannot do. Some of the children of God in this world have been too impatient of life, and too eager in their importunities for death and the grave. *Job* and *Elijah* were great favourites of heaven, but they failed a little in this point: And God, in the course of his providence, afterward made it appear what eminent service he had for them both to do before they left this world. *Elijah* was designed to reform the whole nation of *Israel* from idolatry, and *Job* to be the parent of a new large family, and give the world an example of God's rewarding providence. If life be your's, O christian, and be numbered among your possessions, be not too hasty to part with it, nor to throw away that talent which may yet in days to come be employed to the signal honour of thy God and saviour.

Inference III. "If life be almost spent, and you have done little for God, see that in your last, your dying hours, if possible, you speak and act for his glory." Let not the whole season of life quite pass away, and be turned over like a blank leaf which has none of the praises of God \* written upon it. A word of warning from a death-bed may make a deep and happy impression on those that hear it, and through divine grace may save a soul; and if so, thou shalt hear of it again with honour and applause in the great day. The thief that was converted upon the cross, spoke a word for *Christ* in his last moments, and it has been blessed to rescue many from the jaws of despair: That dying creature had done nothing for God in his life; a vicious life, and a wicked creature! But the profession of sincere faith and repentance which he made at his death, hath been richly honoured in the kingdom of grace; and I am persuaded it has helped many a fearful christian on toward the kingdom of glory.

Inference IV. "If so many valuable works are done, and so many graces are exercised on earth which have no place in heaven, then the lives of the saints are worth praying for." Precious in the eye of God is the life of his saints, and they should be precious in the eye of man too. When an active useful christian, when a

pious

\*It was a custom in former days for merchants in their books of accounts to have "laus Deo," or "praise to God," written in the beginning of every leaf, and it stood on the head of the page in large and fair letters, to put them always in mind, that, in their human affairs, they should carry on a divine design for the glory of God.



pious magistrate, when a zealous and faithful minister goes down to the dust, alas, how much good ceases from the earth for ever! The world knows not what it loses by such a death.

Let not children be impatient at the length of life which their holy parents enjoy: You know not, children, what benefit ye may reap from their example, their counsel, their earnest prayers, and secret wrestlings with God for your souls: Let us have a care that we do nothing, that may break the spirits of our pious friends, or that may hasten the departure of holy persons from this lower world, whose virtues and graces are of eminent use among us. Let us rather pray earnestly, that God would lengthen out the days of those, who speak and act with a useful zeal for the honour of *Christ*, and for the welfare of the souls of men. When death once has put a period to their days, all this sort of service is finished for ever; and we our selves may sustain unknown losses by their speedy departure out of this world.

#### THE RECOLLECTION.

“Is not this a strange doctrine which I have heard to-day, that a christian on earth has many privileges which can never belong to the saints in heaven? Is it not strange tidings to hear, that there are many graces to be exercised in this life, which neither saints nor angels can practise in the holy and heavenly world? And yet the evidence is so strong, and the truth is so plain and certain, that I see it, and I must believe it. Remember then, O my soul, thou hast one more motive to diligence in all the duties of life than ever thou hadst before: And thou hast also one more support under all thy sorrows, beyond what thy former days were ever acquainted with. A delightful support it is, under sufferings, and a noble motive to duty. Awake, awake, all my active powers, let every grace be in exercise, and every talent be employed to bring this revenue of honour to my God and my saviour in this life, which the saints above cannot give him, and which, at the moment of death, must for ever cease.”

“Blessed Spirit! lead me to the practice of the most useful duties, that my service may be of a large extent both to God and man. Now let me study and contrive, wherein I may best promote the interest of *Christ* and his gospel here on earth. Let me bear the burdens of life with a holy satisfaction: Let me endure the fatigues of labour with a sacred pleasure: Let me resist the temptations, let me sustain the sorrows of life like a good soldier of *Christ* in the present field of battle. Heaven will have other business for me, and proper work of its own: That is the place of joy and triumph.

“Forgive, O my God, all my slothfulness in duty, and my impatience of suffering. Let this new and glorious motive possess my spirit powerfully, and influence all my future conduct, that when the messenger of death shall tell me, I must be employed in this sort of work no more, I may look back from the borders of eternity, and rejoice that I have been assisted by divine grace, to do so much for God on earth; and when I am called away from the present stage of action, I may be received by my great master at the gates of heaven, with a “well done good and faithful servant, come, enter into the joy of thy Lord.” Amen,

## A HYMN

A  
**H Y M N**  
 F O R  
**S E R M O N XL.**

*The privilege of the living above the dead.*

[ Long metre. ]

1.

**A** WAKE my zeal, awake my love,  
 And serve my favour here below,  
 In works which all the saints above,  
 Which holy angels cannot do.

2.

My faith and hope may see the Lord,  
 Though veils of darkness lie between:  
 Hope shall rest firm upon his word,  
 And faith rejoice in things unseen.

3.

Awake my charity, and feed  
 The hungry soul, and clothe the poor:  
 In heav'n are found no sons of need,  
 There all these duties are no more.

4.

Subdue thy passions, O my soul,  
 Maintain the fight, thy work pursue,  
 Daily thy rising sins controul,  
 And be thy vict'ries ever new.

5.

The land of triumph lies on high,  
 There are no fields of battle there:  
 Lord, I would conquer till I die,  
 And finish all the glorious war.

6.

Let ev'ry flying hour confess  
 I gain thy gospel fresh renown,  
 And when my life and labours cease,  
 May I possess the promis'd crown.

SER-

## S E R M O N X L I

## Death improved to our advantage.

I C O R. iii. 22.

— Whether life or death, — all are your's.

**T**HE chief thing which the apostle has in his eye in these verses, is to represent the glory and grandeur, the treasures and possessions that every believer is a partaker of, by virtue of his interest in *Christ*; and to shew, that whatsoever persons or affairs a christian has to do with in the natural, the civil, and the religious life, they shall all turn to his benefit some way or other. All the circumstances that attend him while he continues here in this world, and even his departure out of it too, shall work for his good. Death is numbered among his possessions as well as life. Death may be terrible to flesh and blood, for it is a curse in it's original nature and design, and sinners will find and feel the curse of it; but it is transformed into a blessing to the saints by the abounding grace of the gospel.

I confess, it is a christian's own death, that the holy writer seems chiefly and most particularly to design and intend here: And this I shall most largely insist upon. But since death in all it's circumstances and attendants, in all the extent of it's dominion, and with all it's power, is under the sovereign management of God our heavenly Father; it is constrained to subserve his kind and gracious purposes to his own people, in all it's forms and appearances. And I think upon this account, that I shall not transgress the apostle's great and general design, if I take the dreadful name of **DEATH**, in it's widest and most formidable extent of power, and with relation to all it's victories; and shew, how even in this largest sense, it is appointed to subserve the glory of God, and the kingdom of *Christ*, and by the grace of the new covenant, it is rendered useful and beneficial to every true christian; on this account therefore it may be numbered amongst his possessions. "Death is your's."

With this view I shall endeavour to run through these five general heads following, and improve each of them, in a few particulars, to the benefit of christians, agreeably to the design of my text.

Death is made useful to a saint when we consider it,

- I. As reigning over all mankind in general.
- II. As seizing on impenitent and unpardoned sinners.
- III. As taking captive the bodies of the saints.
- IV. As depriving us of our dear relations and kindred. And,
- V. As bringing our own bodies down to the dust.

I confess, I was very unwilling to leave the death of *Christ* out of this catalogue; for his death is not only the most eminent blessing to every christian, but it is also the price that purchased all other blessings in time, and in eternity. It is the death of *Christ*

*Christ* that may be called the christian's richest treasure, for it procures for him all the treasures of grace and glory. It is the fruit of his death, that "all things are our's, whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, or things present, or things to come." It is his death that gives truth and virtue to the words of my text, and to all the rich and spreading comments upon it, that faith can make here on earth, and that our souls shall taste and enjoy hereafter in heaven.

Yet when I consider, that the death of *Christ* is more directly expressed in many other scriptures, and does not seem at all to have been the design of *St. Paul* in this text; and when I survey what a vast and copious subject I must enter into, if I recount the riches of blessing that are derived from this spring, I chuse to refer that subject to another season.

I proceed therefore according to the order I have proposed, to treat of the various advantages to be derived from this proposition, "death is your's."

First, The death of mankind in general shall be made profitable to believers. The death of all the sons and daughters of *Adam*, shall promote the improvement of the children of God, in knowledge, grace, and holiness; for it instructs them in three most useful lessons.

i. It gives them a most powerful and sensible lecture on the vanity of man. A burying-place filled with tombs, is a lively book of human frailty: It repeats the melancholy lesson in every leaf. Each little grave-stone becomes a preacher of vanity to the living, even in the profound silence of the dead. This is the doctrine of every rising hillock, this is the universal theme: And every stately monument there strikes the beholder with the same mortifying truth; though perhaps it swells with many pompous titles and images of honour. And this lesson of vanity stands written there still in fair and indelible characters, though the name of the dead, and all their praises be quite worn out. Dust and ashes, even without an inscription, and without a monument, are silent but powerful teachers.

Alas, what is man in his best estate! A poor mortal dying creature! When we read the histories of past ages and foreign nations, and find that those whole nations and ages are all dead, and mingled with the dust, and even those, who once made a great bustle and figure in this world, are now but an empty name; we cry out, "what vain creatures we are!" When we behold our neighbours and our acquaintance on the right-hand, and on the left, dropping away all round us; when we see one following another daily down to the grave of silence, it is a very natural and just reflexion; "Alas! how frail is man!" When we behold the young, the healthy, the fair, and the strong, the rich, and the powerful, together with the poor, the feeble, and the slave, all yielding to the common law of death, and turning into earth and rottenness, we have just occasion to cry out, "What a vain empty thing is human nature, even the best of it: A piece of pretty mouldering clay: These bodies of our's are fine and curious engines, but made of the dust, and to dust they return again."

This is the common state, situation, and view of things in all seasons, and in every generation. But when we fix our thoughts on some special seasons or causes of mortality, when we think of a famine or a pestilence that sweeps away thousands in a few days, that empties the whole streets in a night or two, and lays towns or cities desolate; when we read of wars and battles that overspread the mountains with slaughter, and cover vast plains with human carcases; when we hear of storms at sea that drown many hundreds at once, and perhaps some thousands sink down to death in their floating habitations, then we are more feelingly penetrated with a sense of our vanity,

vanity, then we sigh and groan aloud, and break out into this mournful language? "O Lord! hast thou made all mankind in vain?" *Psal. lxxxix. 49.* How awful is thy government! How terrible are thy judgments, thou almighty sovereign of life and death!

The antient saints have made such remarks often, and mixed these scenes of mortality with their pious thoughts, and turned them into devotion: They have drawn many serious and pathetic inferences from such meditations on death, and vented their musings of thought in holy language.

1. "Shall man compare himself with God? Mortal man that dwelleth in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and who is crushed before the moth! Shall he set himself to contend with the eternal God his maker?" *Job iv. 17—19.* Again,

2. "What little reason have we to be proud and boastful! Poor dying mushrooms, who start up for a few hours, but cannot assure our selves of to-morrow! To-day we swell and look big among men, to-morrow we are a feast for worms. Our days are as a hand's breadth; verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." *Psal. xxxix. 5.* Again,

3. "How vain and fruitless a thing is it to put our trust in princes, or in the son of man in whom there is no help? His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day, his thoughts perish, *Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4.* Man is too weak a thing to encourage or support our confidence." And,

4. "What a necessary duty is it then to fix our constant dependence upon God, even in all the common affairs of life! Let us not say therefore, that to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what will be on the morrow? For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away; for that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live to do this or that," *James iv. 13—15.* And it is the same inference that holy *David* makes more than once upon a survey of the mortality of man, in the *Psalms* just before cited, "Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee. *Psal. xxxix. 11.* Happy is he that hath the God of *Jacob* for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who keepeth truth for ever," *Psal. xlvi. 5, 6.* "The Lord is an everlasting friend, he lives when creatures die, and fulfils his word of truth, when the words of princes perish with their breath."

2. The death of mankind in general shews us the dreadful evil and desert of sin. It discovers to us the awful holiness and terrible majesty of God; and it teaches us what a sublime value he puts upon his own law, and how fearfully he avenges the violation of it. I join these three things together, because they stand so nearly connected in the divine oeconomy.

1. The universal death of mankind shews us, what a dreadful and hainous evil there is in sin, and, what wide destruction it has deserved. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,* *Rom. v. 12.* *For the wages of sin is death,* *Rom. vi. 23.* Man was made innocent, and while he continued obedient, he was immortal: Transgression and death came in together: A formidable pair! Two dreadful names, big with mischief and ruin to human nature!

When we see the dying agonies of poor mankind, our fellow-creatures, our brethren in flesh and blood, let us remember the sin of our common father, that first subjected him and all his posterity to death; and let us reflect upon the dreadful evil that is contained in the nature of every sin; for it deserves death at the hand of God;

Alas, how often has the best of us deserved to die, for our transgressions have been multiplied without number.

2. The death of all mankind makes a solemn discovery to us of the terrible majesty of God, and the justice that attends his government. He will not pass by the guilt of his rebellious creatures, without a due repentment of their crimes. And even though he pardons the sins of his own people, so as to secure them from eternal vengeance, yet they must pass through death, that they may learn what an evil and bitter thing it is to have offended against their maker and their God.

When we see a church-yard filled with little hills of mortality, the ruins of a parish, or a spacious town, and the dust of many generations, we naturally cry out, as in *Deut. xxix. 24.* "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and what meaneth the heat of all this great anger?" The next verse will give you an answer to it; yea, every man may answer himself, "because they have forsaken the Lord their God; they have forsaken his covenant of life, and sinned against him." Those dreadful words, "in the day thou eatest, thou shalt die, have been putting into execution almost six thousand years, and the Lord's anger is not yet turned away, but his hand is stretched out still;" *Isai. v. 25.* the vengeance of the Lord is not yet fully executed according to the just demerit of sin. Though saints are saved from the dismal consequences of death, yet God would not rescue them from dying, that they might always remember what sin deserved.

Thus the death of all mankind discovers to us the awful majesty of God our maker, who will not be affronted by his creatures, without terrible resentment; he is a holy and a jealous God.

3. It teaches us the high value that God has for his own law, that he will rather dash a whole creation to pieces, than suffer his holy law to be insulted and broken, without some reparation of the honour of it. The race of *Adam* is doomed to death, for the sake of sin against this law, and mortality and a curse spread over this lower world.

Let us inure our thoughts to such reflexions as these, that we may ever keep our souls in awe of the majesty of God, and dread the thoughts of breaking his law, which he values above a whole world of men.

O that sin may become the most hateful object in our eyes; it is this that has laid cities desolate, and fills the graves; it is this that has corrupted and destroyed our natures; it has turned millions of strong and well-formed bodies into dust: It has ruined the most beautiful part of God's lower creation, and is sending thousands daily to the pit of corruption and noisome darkness. It is sin that has filled our nature with diseases, and sown the poisonous seeds of mortality and death in every son and daughter of *Adam*. A malignant and fatal poison, that has destroyed all the nations upon earth, and buried them under ground, heaps upon heaps, in above a hundred successions!

But I now go on to another distinct lesson, that the death of all mankind teaches us.

3. It informs us, in a very sensible and affecting manner, that we our selves must shortly die, and awakens the soul to actual preparation for it's departure. *Heb. ix. 27.* "It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment," *Josua* and *David*, saints and kings, tell us, they "go the way of all the earth:" "The grave is the house appointed for all the living," *Job xxx. 23.* When we behold one after another, made of the same flesh and blood as we are, going down to the dust in a long continual succession, we have a solemn warning, that we must shortly

shortly follow: There is no ransom in this case, no hope of safety, no door of escape, and as *Solomon* expresses it, "there is no discharge in this war," *Ecclef.* viii. 8.

A true christian takes notice of this with a pious awe upon his spirit; and when he is ready to grow drowsy and secure, the sight of a funeral, or a grave, shall rouse him out of his sleepy temper, and awaken religion into life again: When he hears of a neighbour's death, he asks his own soul, "Art thou ready? For the next summons may come to call thee away into the world of spirits, to stand before God the judge of all."

Thus a child of God reaps some advantage by the spreading empire of death over all mankind; he makes a sacred improvement of the terrible waste that the king of terrors has made over all the earth: He learns the vanity and emptiness of man in his best estate: He grows humble and dependent on the eternal God: He reads the dreadful evil of sin on every tomb-stone: The death of every man calls him aloud to prepare for his own, and to be in actual readiness for his entrance into the invisible world. Happy souls, who take this warning, and stand ever prepared!

But I proceed to the next general head which I proposed;

Secondly, As the death of mankind in general, gives these divine lessons to a saint, so the death of impenitent sinners, which hath something in it very terrible, may be turned to the advantage and profit of believers, these three or four ways.

1. If we are true christians, and persecuted and injured here on earth, then the death of the wicked delivers us from our enemies, and releases us from the wrath of our oppressors. In the grave "the wicked cease from troubling, as well as the weary are at rest," *Job* iii. 17.

Look back to the distance of three thousand years, and see the children of *Israel* on the banks of the red-sea, rejoicing in the Lord their deliverer, when an army of *egyptian* carcases floated on the waters, or were cast up in heaps upon the shore: These were the cruel oppressors of the people of God: They were drowned in the evening, and the morning light discovered the havock that death had made, and the salvation it wrought for *Israel*, in the xiv. and xv. of *Exodus*.

See the whole city of *Jerusalem*, and *Hezekiah* at the head of them, triumphing in the Lord, when he sent the angel of death, and destroyed the besiegers: "A hundred and fourscore and five thousand *Assyrians* lay dead on the border of the city," *Isa.* xxxvii. 36. "By terrible things in righteousness God answered the prayer of his saints." *Psal.* lxxv. 5.

And at the death of *Herod*, the father and mother of our blessed Lord were glad, for they returned from their flight; they came from the land of *Egypt*, and dwelt in their own land again; and the child *Jesus* was saved from the murderous designs of that cruel man, *Matth* ii. 19.

Such examples of advantage which the saints receive from the death of the men of violence, their impious and bloody enemies, are frequent in sacred history: And we may remark in our day, how many a time God hath saved us in *Great-Britain*, when we have been on the borders of destruction, by the death of persecutors at home and abroad. The monarchs of the earth, have been turned down to their graves, one year after another, and the churches of God, in many nations, have found rest and deliverance.

2. The death of impenitent sinners has been many a time, the happy occasion of the conversion of a saint. There is many a holy soul, now in heaven, that was first awakened to fly from the wrath to come, by the death of some of his wicked com-

panions in his younger years. When a snare falls suddenly, and seizes a little bird or two of the flock, the rest take wing toward heaven, and fly for safety. And happy are those souls, who take the terrible warning, who fly to the sacred refuge, and lay hold on offered grace.

When a vile wretch is seized in the midst of his companions, and his sins, and sent down to hell and destruction in a moment, the very gates of hell seem to open before our faces, to receive the rebels; such a spectacle fills the hearts of those that are near him, with amazement and terror, and hath often been the first means of sending them to the throne of grace; and, by degrees, to the gates of heaven. The story of *Peter Valdo* is famous on this occasion, who was a rich merchant of *Lions* in *France*, but had no sense of inward religion, or true piety. When, in the midst of feasting and merriment, he saw one of his companions struck with sudden death, he was awakened to serious thoughts of eternity: Upon this he applied himself to study the scripture, and discover the errors of the *roman* church; he acquainted his friends with them, and instructed the poor, who were continual partakers of his bounty. Then being excommunicated by the popish clergy, he retired, with some of his disciples, to the vallies of *Piedmont*, where he found some christians of an ancient and primitive stamp, and joining with them, established those churches which are called the *Vaudois*, and are famous in history, even to this day.

Bishop *Burnet* also tells us, in the life of the lord chief justice *Hale*, that in his younger years he gave himself up to much frolic and vanity, till one of his loose companions fell down on a sudden, and they thought him dead: Which surprizing providence sent *mr. Hale* to his knees, to pray earnestly for the recovery of his companion, and laid a foundation for that life of eminent virtue and religion, which is described in those memoirs. Thus not only the death of profligate sinners, but even the appearance of their death, has been blessed to gracious purposes, for the conversion and salvation of others.

3. The death of the wicked gives the children of God glorious matter for praise to his distinguishing grace. When they see or hear of a hardened and impenitent sinner, cut off in his guilt and obstinacy, and in the pursuit of his lusts, the holy soul cries out with thankfulness and zeal, "glory be to that grace which has made the difference betwixt him and me!

And this is still more remarkable, when a sinner dies with all the terrors of God upon him, when the sting of death enters into his heart, and sharpens all his last agonies, when conscience is awakened with all its horrors, and the soul is plunging with its eyes open into a gulf of everlasting misery. O how sensibly does this affect the heart of a true christian! He stands and wonders, and adores that rich mercy that has snatched him as a brand out of the burning. "What am I, says he, by nature more than another, that God should have called me by his grace, and given me repentance unto life, while this poor wretch continued obstinate and impenitent? We were both sons of *Adam* the sinner, alienated from the life of God, and enemies to all that is holy: We were both favoured with the means of grace, and sat under the ministrations of the same gospel. Who, or what am I better than my neighbour, that God should powerfully incline my heart to accept the offered salvation? That he should have prepared me as a vessel of mercy, to be filled with glory, while my old companion has now made himself a complete vessel of wrath, and fitted himself for swift destruction? *Rom. ix. 22, 23.* By nature I was a child of wrath, as well as he, a rebel, and a vile transgressor, without God, without *Christ*, and without hope: And why was not I seized by divine justice, in those days of my rebellion, and



and made a sacrifice to the indignation of God? What merit was there in me, that I should be spared, while my companion suffered under speedy vengeance? Let the freedom and riches of grace be adored for ever: It was rich and sovereign grace that spared me. And now, through the abounding mercy of God, I hope I have fled to lay hold on the refuge set before me; my heart is, in some measure, sanctified, my nature renewed, and my sins pardoned. Blessed be the Lord who hath given me "hope in death, while the wicked are driven away in their wickedness, driven far away from hope and heaven," *Prov. xiv. 32.*

4. The death of impenitent sinners does another service also for the saints, in that it sensibly excites their pity and their prayers for the living. It awakens the exercise of pious charity for the souls of their friends, that are yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. A true christian, that has tasted of the grace of God; can hardly be supposed to see his impenitent neighbour seized with sudden death, and sent away to darkness, but it touches the springs of holy tenderness within him, and constrains him to speak a word to others in the same danger, and to lift up a cry to God upon their account for grace and salvation. Surely that christian is not in a right temper of mind, who can see or hear of impenitent and guilty souls seized away from his neighbourhood or his acquaintance, and plunging into eternity with horror and despair, and yet have no compassion awakened in him, no bowels of pity moving for those of his acquaintance that are involved in the same iniquities, and are yet in the land of the living, and on this side hell. Such an awful providence is like a warning-word which heaven puts into our mouths, that we may echo it with solemn horror round the neighbourhood, and try to rouse stupid sinners from their dangerous and fatal lethargy.

[ Here is a proper pause in this sermon, if it be too long to be read at once. ]

But it is time now to leave this general head, and go on to the next.

Thirdly, If the death of hardened sinners turns to the advantage of the saint, the death of fellow-christians shall certainly work for his benefit too.

You will be ready to say, "What? Can the loss of good men from the earth ever be turned into a benefit? Can the death of saints bring any advantage to the survivors?" Yes, surely, if they die like christians indeed, in the lively exercises of faith and hope; and this will appear in these four particulars.

1. It confirms our faith in the gospel of *Christ*, and supports our holy profession. It gives us an assurance of the truth and power of our religion, above all other religions in the world, when it enables a poor feeble dying creature to face death with courage, to look beyond the limits of life and time, and venture into an unseen world with holy joy and triumph. It gives us a glorious evidence, that the principles of christianity are such, as will justify all the labours of a holy life, and will bear us out in the profession of it, in the midst of ridicule and mockery, of persecution and martyrdom. This surely must be a religion coming down from God, that can give the weak and the unlearned such a courage, as to encounter death itself without fear; and that not from a stupid and senseless temper of spirit, not from a brutal hardness, such as carries the horse and the hero into the battle, but with a clear and full discovery of God and his holiness, of our own sins and his forgiving grace, this religion can enable us to venture into his immediate presence. How glorious is our gospel, how divine a doctrine is this! It has wrought ten thousand such wonders by  
faith

faith in the blood of *Christ*, as the great atonement for sin, and the only way to the Father.

A saint leaving this world, and putting off mortality, with the light of heaven breaking in upon his soul, and the beams of glory shining round about him, with divine joy and transport in his countenance, and the language of heaven upon his lips, brings the invisible world into present view; the pious spectators grow up to a sensible assurance of the glories and felicities of that invisible world; each of them sits on the borders of paradise, each of them gets a glimpse of the new *Jerusalem*, and all the heavenly country, and this adds new strength to his faith and hope.

2. The glorious death of our fellow-Christians, greatly encourages the imitation of their holy life. To see a child of God die from amongst men, leave this world with a holy contempt and sincere pleasure, and enter into the presence of his heavenly Father with a filial confidence; to see him finish his race with joy, and, as it were, lay hold on salvation, and put on his heavenly crown: This calls aloud upon us to tread in the same steps, to pursue the blessed prize, and to be "followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises," *Heb. vi. 12*. When we "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, and see that his end is peace," *Psal. xxxvii. 37*. we are animated to walk with God in the same uprightness, and to press after the same perfection. "Having such a cloud of witnesses that have gone before us, and *Christ* our Lord at the head of them, we run with patience the race that is set before us, till we arrive at the promised glory." *Heb. xii. 1*.

To stand near the bed of a dying saint, and observe the sweet serenity of his soul under the agonies of his flesh, would force *Balaam* himself to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," *Numb. xxiii. 10*. But the Christian goes further, and with holy zeal, and humble dependence upon divine grace, establishes himself in the ways of holiness: He resolves that he will live the life of the righteous too, and tread in the paths of piety with utmost watchfulness and care, that he may lay a foundation for the same peaceful reflexions on his death-bed, and the same joyful prospect.

3. The death of fellow-saints is for our benefit, as it weans us from this world, as it makes earth and this life less pleasant to us, and heaven more desirable. Every holy soul that leaves the world, carries away so much more grace and goodness from it. What would this world be if all the saints had left it, but a cage of unclean birds, a nest of serpents, a wilderness of savage beasts, a habitation of *Satan*, and his sons and daughters; a dwelling of devils, and a region of darkness a-kin to hell? Did not converting grace turn sinners into saints, and make a constant succession of Christians; this would be the dismal character of this world in the space of one generation. But, blessed be God, as bad as this world is, divine grace is still at work, and makes it a sort of nursery for heaven by new conversions.

Yet still the death of the saints is the loss of so much of heaven out of our sinful world; and the fewer friends God has here, there will be the fewer communications between heaven and earth. The absence of *Christ* and his saints, spreads a sort of dim shadow over all the fairest colours of this lower creation; the beauties of it fade, and the flowers of it, in our esteem, languish and hang their head, because *Jesus*, and so many of his holy ones, are departed. When we see one pious friend after another, taking their leave of us, and ascending to the upper world, we are ready to say, "What should we stay here for? Our God is on high, our saviour is on high, multitude of our friends are departed from us, and dwell on high. Farewell earth, and time, and sensible things: We long to be with our best friends, and with our God,

we

we are ready, O *Jesus*, for thy first summons; take us when thou pleasest into heaven and eternity."

4. The comfortable death of a saint instructs us how to die, and make death easy. When we see and hear a fellow-christian examining his heart, searching his soul to the bottom, turning all his secret thoughts outward, and looking over the past conduct of his life; when we behold him reviewing his own follies and iniquities, and recalling to mind also all his sacred transactions with God; when we see him surveying all these most important concerns in the light of the last judgment, and, as it were, under the piercing rays of the great tribunal; when we hear him abasing himself to the dust in the most vilifying expressions, because of his sins, and yet rejoicing in the evidences of his graces, and repeating the promises of the gospel with a pleasant hope, this teaches us to converse with our own souls in a more lively manner, about sin and forgiveness, about death and eternity; for it brings these awful themes into open view, and sets them before us, in their infinite importance. This reads us a glorious lecture upon the gospel of *Christ*, and pardoning grace, and the sanctifying Spirit, and the hope of glory, beyond what we ever found before in the best of sermons, and under the warmest preachers.

Come, my friends, come into the chamber of a dying christian; come, approach his pillow, and hear his holy language; "I am going up to heaven, and I long to be gone, to be where my saviour is. Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming? Then with both arms stretched up to heaven, I desire to be with God. I hope I am a sincere christian, but the meanest, and the most unworthy: I know I am a great sinner; but did not *Christ* come to save the chief of sinners? I hope I shall find acceptance in *Christ Jesus*. I have trusted in him, and I have strong consolation. I have been looking into my own heart, what are my evidences for heaven? Has not the scripture said, "He that believeth shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life," *John* iii. 16. Now, according to the best knowledge I have of what faith is, I do believe in *Christ*, and I shall have life everlasting. Does not the scripture say, "He that hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness, shall be satisfied," *Matth.* v. 6. Surely I hunger and thirst after it, I desire to be holy, I long to be conformable to God, and to be made more like him; shall I not then be satisfied! I love God, I love *Christ*, I desire to love him more, to be more like him, and to serve him in heaven without sin. I have faith, I have love, I have repentance, yet I boast not, for I have nothing of my self, I speak it all to the honour of the grace of God, it is all grace: I say then, I have faith, and repentance, and love; but faith and repentance are all nothing without *Christ*; it is he makes all acceptable to the Father, and I trust in him. My friends, I have built on this foundation *Jesus Christ*, he is indeed the only foundation: Have you not built on the same foundation too? This is my hope. Is it not your hope also? Dear brother, I shall see you at the right hand of *Christ*: There I shall see our friends that are gone a little before: I shall be with them first before you. I thank you, my friends, for all your offices of love; you have prayed with me, you have refreshed me; I love and honour you now, but I shall meet you in heaven, I go to my God and your God, to my saviour and your saviour\*.

Would one think there could be so much pleasure in the dying chamber of a beloved friend? Surely this makes good the words of my text; if we are christians, death

\* These are some of the dying words of the reverend mr. *Samuel Roserwell*, when, with some other friends, I went to visit him two days before his death, and which I transcribed as soon as I came home, by their assistance.

death is our's. O this is a divine entertainment that refreshes our spirits! And while sorrow trickles from our eyes for the loss of a departing christian-friend; there is a sympathy of joy that works powerfully at the heart, and the heaven within us breaks out and shines through our tears. Then, with a wonderful mixture of the painful and the pleasant, with a sweet confusion of pious passions, we bid our dying brother, "Farewel."

At such a season as this, our thoughts are led upward to heaven, and forward to the great resurrection. We open the eye of faith, and see the holy soul ascending to God; we behold the weak and languishing body rising glorious out of the grave, shaking off the dust, and putting on it's immortality: While our faith attends the spirit of our departing friend to heaven, we grow willing and desirous to be gone too; and being brought so near to the gates of glory, we would fain take our leave of mortal things, and accompany the expiring saint to the joyful world of spirits.

The memory of such a scene, and such a hour, will dwell upon our thoughts long, and support our own hope of victory, when we shall be called to conflict with the same enemy. Having such a witness gone before us, we shall not only run our race with patience, through all the stages of it, but finish our course with joy.

There is a sacred courage derived many times to a weak believer, by attending the last moments of a dying saint ascending to the upper world. "I was afraid of death, says a feeble christian, till I saw my neighbour die: He was once a sinner as well as I, and he had his imperfections and failings in this life, as I have mine; I humbly hope I have practised the same repentance as he has done, I have trusted in the same saviour, I have ventured my all upon the same gospel, and travelled on in the same path: surely there is forgiveness for me too; surely the sting of my death shall be taken away also; and, through grace, I shall join in his triumph; "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. xv. 55.

This observation has been most gloriously exemplified in the death of martyrs: When the spectators that have been heathens, or but almost christians, have been strangely animated to profess the gospel boldly, while they have seen the most amazing courage of these glorious sufferers for *Christ*. And those that have been doubtful and trembling believers, whose faith was wavering, and who were ready to let go their profession, have ventured through blood, and torments, and death, with a divine resolution, when they have beheld the martyrs meet the same death and torments with a sacred bravery of soul.

A multitude of fearful christians may be animated and encouraged to travel through the dark valley, and to cross the cold flood of death by the example of a single saint, who has passed that important hour with success and honour. So you have seen a flock of sheep stand doubtful and delaying on the bank of some little brook; but when the first and second have made their way through it, the rest venture over in multitudes, and leap the ditch with the greatest ease; the difficulty and the danger vanish at once, when they have seen a fore-runner leading the way.

Thus it hath been made evident in several instances, that the death of fellow-christians is our's. It shall turn to our great advantage, through the influences of the gospel, and the Spirit of grace, where christians die like themselves, in the exercise of a joyful hope. It confirms our faith in the gospel of *Christ*, it encourages our imitation of their holy life, it makes earth and this life less pleasant to us, and heaven more desirable, and it instructs us how to die.

But if a saint go out of this world under much darkness and terror, this is commonly to be supposed a divine chastisement for the criminal indulgence of some temptation,

temptation, or some unwatchful steps he has taken in the course of his life; for God will make his own people know, many times by painful experience, that it is an evil and bitter thing to backslide and depart from him. A wise and pious spectator, upon this occasion, will take warning by the terrors of the Lord, and by the punishment of his fellow-christian, to avoid that guilt, and those criminal indulgences, which have provoked God to leave his brother to darkness, even in the hour of death: And this may be a means to awaken him to a most watchful course of holiness, lest he fall under the same strokes of anger from his heavenly Father, and suffer his displeasure in that awful moment, when he would most earnestly wish for the sweetest sense of his love.

Thus I have finished the third general head, and shewed that the death of the saints may be richly improved to the advantage of the living.

#### THE RECOLLECTION.

“Come, my soul, who art daily conversing with the affairs and concerns of life, come now, and meditate on the name of death: It is a name that carries much terror in it to nature; come, and see whether thou canst not derive a blessing from it, by the instructions of the gospel, and the aids of grace.

“Thou hast heard the lessons that the death of mankind in general should teach thee: Enquire now what thou hast learned of them: Hast thou seen the vanity of man as a mortal dying creature? It is an easy matter to say, “Alas, we must all die:” But hast thou felt the penetrating force of this truth? And does it influence thy whole conduct? Art thou not still, at every turn, putting thy confidence in one creature or another, whose breath is in his nostrils, and whose death disappoints thy hope? Or hast thou removed thy dependence from all creatures to God, and fixed thy hope in him that lives for ever? O blessed effect of the meditation of death?

“Again, Hast thou seen the hainous evil of sin, in the spreading desolation that death has made over this lower world? Remember that it received it’s commission from the justice of God, almost six thousand years ago, and from his law which sin had broken: The dreadful execution proceeds to this day, and it will proceed till there be no sinner upon earth. Sin is the spring of all this havock of the lives of men. It is sin that has deserved all these tremendous executions of wrath: And yet, O my soul, how often hast thou indulged this mischief, to play about thy bosom, like a harmless thing? Come, view the dismal effects of it, in the death of millions, and learn to hate and renounce it for ever. It is no small evil that could awaken the indignation of God at this rate, and diffuse it so widely, over so large and so glorious a part of his creation, as the whole nature and race of man.

“Again, I would enquire, has the death of mankind taught me effectually, that I must shortly die? And have I been excited, to make a suitable provision for this awful and important hour, since I must not, I cannot escape it?

“Not only the death of mankind in general, but the death of wicked, men may instruct me in some useful lessons too. Here I learn how God rescues his children from the rage of oppressors, when he smites them down to death, and lays all their fury silent in the dust. Thus death it self becomes a deliverer to the saints, by destroying their cruel persecutors.

“I learn also, that when early or sudden death has seized a bold sinner, it is a loud warning-word to all his companions. When I see such terrible examples in the course of providence, let my soul stand in awe and fear.

“And if God has distinguished me by his mercy, if he has pardoned my guilt, and sanctified my corrupt nature, if he has made me one of his own children, and prepared me for dying, when he summons others away unpardoned, un sanctified, unprepared, let all my powers be excited to bless the name of the Lord for his saving love. I was also a child of sin and wrath, but divine grace has made the difference. It is grace that has snatched me, from the very brink of the pit of hell, and is training me up for heaven.

“And while I adore thy distinguishing mercy, O my God, to me, I would pity and pray for poor heedless and regardless sinners, that are following one another in a dismal succession, down to the gates of death. O may their eyes and souls be awakened in their day of life and hope, lest death seize them, and send them farther down to everlasting darkness and despair!

“But if such lessons, as these, may be derived from the death of sinners, how much more benefit may be drawn from the dying hours of a sincere christian, especially if his heart be strong, and his faith lively?

“Here, I see the gospel of *Christ* in some of it's power and glory, when I see a christian under all the weaknesses and languishings of nature, meeting death without terror, and overcoming his last enemy by the blood of the lamb. I see the saint all serene and peaceful, even in the agonies of dying nature, and amidst the sorrows of lamenting friends. He has heaven in view, and he bids farewell to earth with holy joy: Shall I not imitate the faith and holiness of his life, which laid a foundation for so peaceful and glorious a death? Do I not feel my soul a little more weaned from the world, since such a pious friend has left it? Has not death lost some of it's frightful appearances, since I have actually seen it conquered? Do I not feel my heart panting and breathing toward the society above, since I have another friend gone thither? Does it not seem a more easy thing to me to lay down this tabernacle, to part with flesh and blood, and to venture into those unseen regions, since I have beheld my fellow-christian go before me? He has made the great and solemn experiment, and surely I should have courage to follow: He has given evident proof, that there is a sacred power in the gospel, the promises and the grace of *Christ*, to convey the soul safe through the dark shadow of death, without surprize and consternation: And has not my soul the same rich encouragements, the same promises of grace, and the same gospel of hope?

“O my redeemer, and my Lord, hear a humble suppliant, influence my soul by thy rich grace, to keep my faith awake, my conscience undefiled, and my evidences for heaven ever bright and clear: And when my appointed hour comes, that solemn and final hour, “let me die the death of the righteous, and my departure be like his,” *Numb. xxiii. 10.*

“Is death an enemy to nature, and does it carry terror in the name? Yet since thou hast subdued this enemy, and taken it captive, to serve the purposes of thy love, since thou hast numbered it, and written it down among the possessions of thy people; since thou hast taught so many of thy followers to triumph over it; let me also, blessed *Jesus*, let me be enabled to meet it with holy fortitude, and a lively hope. O let me follow the footsteps of the flock, into the world of spirits, with a sacred pleasure, though it be through a dark passage. And as those, who went before me, have taught me to dare to die, so let my dying moments encourage those who come after me, to venture into death at thy call, without terror, and without reluctance.” Amen.

A HYMN

A

# H Y M N

F O R

## S E R M O N XLI.

*Death of mankind, saints and sinners, improved.*

[ Long metre. ]

1.

**H**AS death such vast destruction made?  
Does every hour increafe the dead?  
Here I behold the guilt of sin,  
That brought this spreading mischief in.

Awake, my soul, adore the grace;  
That gave thee a repenting space.

2.

Great God! How awful and how just,  
Thy law, that turns our flesh to dust!  
O let me learn how frail am I,  
And all my life prepare to die.

4.

But when a faint with chearful air  
Meets his last foe, and feels no fear,  
Our faith, our hope, and courage grow;  
We learn to face the tyrant too.

3.

When impious wretches yield their breath,  
And go unpardon'd down to death,

5.

We could renounce our all things here,  
And wish that moment would appear;  
When we shall leave this world, and rise  
To meet the joys above the skies.

O o o 2

S E R M.

## S E R M O N XLII

## The death of kindred improved.

I C O R. iii. 22.

*Whether life or death, — all are your's.*

**H**APPY and immortal had *Adam* been, and all his children, if he had not ventured to break the command of his creator: Life had been their's in the most glorious sense of it; and death had not been known. But when sin entered into the world, death followed close behind it, according to that just and solemn threatening, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die," *Gen. ii. 17.* And what a dismal havock has this enemy made amongst the inhabitants of our world! It has strowed the earth with carcases, and turned millions of human bodies into dust and corruption. The very name of death spreads a terror through all nature: But as dreadful and formidable as it is in it self, the grace of *Christ* makes a blessing of it, and sanctifies it to the advantage of his own people.

In the former discourse on this subject, we have learned some divine lessons from death, in it's widest extent of dominion. The death of all mankind yields some special advantage to a saint: He is taught to reap some benefit from the death of impenitent sinners, though it carry along with it, such a fearful train of attendants, and draw after it a long eternity of torments. He knows how to derive some advantage from the death of his fellow-christians; and whether they die in the joy of faith, and serenity of spirit, or whether their fun sets in a cloud, and fears and doubts attend them, in that important hour, still he is taught to profit by it. In these three instances, it appears that death is our's; death is in this respect made the treasure and property of a christian, as he is instructed to improve it, to his own sacred interest, and to the welfare of his soul.

We proceed now to the

Fourth general head, and shall endeavour to shew, how the death of our relations and kindred in the flesh shall turn to our benefit.

I. It shews us the emptiness and insufficiency of our dearest created comforts, of all blessings that are not immortal.

We have lost, perhaps, an inferior relation, a son, a daughter, a nephew, a pleasing entertainment and comfort of life: But death tells us, it was a poor dying comfort, a pretty piece of brittle clay, broken and dissolved, and mouldering to the dust. Our love and our grief, it may be, join together, to recal the past days of fondness and delight, short-lived delight, and empty vain fondness, that ends in tears and long mourning!

We have lost a superior relation, or perhaps, an equal, a father, a wife, a husband, or a brother: We have lost a guide, a support, a helper, a dear affectionate friend, entirely loving, and entirely beloved.

He



He was a kind and a skilful guide, but death teaches us the insufficiency of his guidance, who left us in the mid-way, and lets us travel through all the remaining part of this dark wilderness alone. He has given us sweet counsel and direction in days past; but he can now direct us no more, we can consult him no more: Those lips of advice, on which we hung, are closed and silent in death: That voice will be heard no more: We must walk without this counsellor all the rest of our way, be it never so long, and never so dangerous.

He was our helper, and our support under daily difficulties; but it was a weak support, that could not stand himself, when death shook him: A poor helper, and a sorry defence, that could not resist the powers of disease and mortality, nor defend himself from the assaults of death.

He was a friend, and a faithful one too; but it was a feeble, a failing friend, even in the midst of his love and faithfulness; for he was called away, and constrained to depart from us in a dark and sorrowful minute, and hath left us to mourn alone. He could not abide with us a moment beyond his summons; he forsook us while we were drowned in grief, and could give us no more consolation. Our fathers, where are they? Our prophets, our instructors, our guides, and helpers are gone down to the land of silence, they lie asleep in the dust and darkness, *Zech. i. 5.*

Thus death is made of advantage to us, even when it strikes us in so tender a part: For it teaches us this sacred lesson, how vain and empty are all our hopes in creatures! The dart of death is like a pen of iron in his hand, and he writes emptiness and vanity on every friend, on every relative that he takes from our family, from our side, from our bosom: He writes it in deep and painful characters, and holds our souls to the solemn lesson. The same truth stands written in many a part of the book of God, in divine and golden letters; but perhaps, we would never have learned it, had not death copied it out for us in letters of blood.

II. The death of our kindred drives us to a more immediate and constant dependence on God. When the stream is cut off, what should we do but run to the fountain? If the stars vanish, we seek the sun-beams. And O may the sun arise, and shine upon our souls with growing light and comfort as the stars disappear!

While our friends or kindred were alive, we made them our refuge in every distress; we have trusted in them perhaps too much; we have lived too much upon them, with the neglect of God. A parent, a brother, or perhaps a dearer relative; these were our high tower, our defence, our sun, and our shield: These assumed that station in our hearts, and that high place in our esteem, which is due to God only. But, when this tower is battered down to dust, when the shield of clay is broken to pieces, and this dim and feeble sun turned into darkness, then we make God alone our sun, our shield, and our high tower of defence. Then we search out earnestly, what kind and condescending characters and relations God has assumed in his word; and we read and survey the gracious titles of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, with new and unknown delight.

Have any of you lost your earthly parents? Then you read with pleasure those words of the *Psalmist*, "If my father or my mother forsake me, as they must do at the hour of death, then the Lord will take me up," *Psal. xxvii. 10.* And you rejoice in that glorious promise, "Be ye separate from idols, saith the Lord; that is, separate your selves from the sinful practices of the world, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord almighty," *2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.* Has death entered into a family, and taken the

head,

head, the husband away? The words of *Isaiab* grow sweeter than ever; *Isa.* liv. 5. "Thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, even the God of the whole earth." Are the widows and the fatherless children in danger of oppression, because they have lost their defender? They run to the lxxviii. *Psal.*, and live upon the 5. verse of it; "A Father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." Is a brother summoned away by the stroke of death? But the Lord *Jesus* is alive still: He that took flesh and blood upon him, that he might be made like the rest of the children of God, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren," *Heb.* ii. 11. This is a brother that was born for the day of our adversity; this is the friend that sticks closer than a brother, and abides with us when a brother departs, according to the expression of the wise man, *Prov.* xvii. 17. and xviii. 24. Thus the names, and characters, and relations of God the Father, and of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, acquire a new sweetness, and appear with greater love and glory in them, at the death of our earthly relatives.

There is many a christian can speak feelingly, and say, "Never did I live so much upon my God, I never knew nor loved my saviour so well, never conversed so much with his word, never did I find such sweetness in his names, nor his promises, nor such pleasure in secret converse with him, as I have done since the day I lost such a friend, or such a dear relation by the stroke of death: I have learned now to put no trust in creatures; "for their breath goeth forth, and that very day their thoughts of kindness perish," *Psal.* cxlvi. 3—8. Now refuge fails me, no man seems to be concerned for me, since the death of such a friend; "I say, therefore, to my God, thou art my refuge," *Psal.* cxlii. 4, 5.

III. The death of our dearest friends calls us to a noble trial of our love to God, and our submission to his sovereignty. Human nature indeed is afraid of trials; but when the present aids of divine grace give us the victory, then "blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him," *James* i. 12. And upon this account, he exhorts christians in the second verse, to a very sublime and difficult practice, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience; and if it endures the trial, it will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of *Jesus Christ*," *1 Pet.* i. 7.

When God sends his messenger of death, and takes a dear and beloved creature from our arms, or our bosom, the divine question is like that of our Lord to *Peter*, "Simon, lovest thou me?" *John* xxi. 15—17. "Christian, lovest thou me more than thou lovest this creature? Art thou willing to resign this comfort at my call? Hast thou not given thy self to me, and does thy heart refuse to give up thy son, thy brother, or thy dearest friend? Hast thou not called me thy sovereign? I am come now to enquire into thy sincerity. Dost thou resign thy most beloved objects to my disposal? I gave up my Son to death for you; and have you any thing so dear to you as my Son was to me? What says your heart in answer to these solemn questions? Do you love me above all things, or no? Is your will bowed down to my foot? Can you now repeat from your very souls the same language, in which you have often addressed me in your closets, and in my sanctuary, "I am thine, Lord, I am thine; all that I have is thine?" Or do you murmur and quarrel at my providence, when I send my servant death to your house, to try whether these professions of your's were sincere or no?"

Happy

Happy the christian that comes off with honour in this hour of trial, and who can say heartily, "Lord, I resign what thou demandest, and am angry with my self that I should find so much reluctance in my heart, to surrender any thing at the call of God." What a shining evidence of our sincerity is obtained at such a season? What a noble proof of our supreme love to God? And it shall be recorded in heaven for our honour, and produced in the day of the Lord Jesus.

There is nothing in all the history of *Abraham*, the father of the faithful, that gives him a more shining character on earth, or perhaps, in heaven, than that he gave up his son *Isaac* at the command of God, and "took the wood, and the fire, and the knife in his hand," and devoted his beloved, his only son to death; though it was in a way so terribly painful, and so shocking to nature, that he himself must be the executioner. He had offered the precious sacrifice already in his heart, when the angel of the Lord came down and stopped his hand: "Now I know that thou fearest God, and I know that thou lovest him too, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son from me," *Gen. xxii. 9—12.*

Thus the death of the dearest relation turns greatly to our advantage, when it gives us so bright an evidence of our own graces, and assures us that we are hearty lovers of God.

IV. The death of a beloved relative, has often wrought for the good of a sinner, when the long and painful sorrow which has attended it, has shewn us how dangerous a thing it was to love a creature too well.

"O! What a wound do I feel at my heart, says a christian, since the death of so near a relation: It pains me all the day: It fills my eyes with tears, and forbids my rest in the night: I am so troubled that I cannot sleep: It unfits me for the present duties of life, and hangs too heavy upon me, in the midst of the duties of religion. Surely, that creature dwelt too near my heart, and was joined in too close a union, since my heart bleeds and smarts so long after the parting stroke. Let me watch my affections for time to come, and set a guard upon my love, that it never, never tie my soul so fast to a creature again. Come down, blessed saviour, and take faster hold of my heart; let thy own hand heal the wound that death has made, and let thy mercy pardon the guilt of my excessive creature-love: Dwell thou in my soul, my Lord and my God, and fill up all the unhappy and painful vacancy: Keep my affections for ever true to thee, and let my love to thee be supreme and unrivalled; nor let the softer passions of my nature wander and lose themselves amongst creatures again, lest they contract new guilt; lest they provoke thee to repeat the same smarting tragedy, and to renew these scenes of mourning."

V. The death of our kindred is for our advantage, when it awakens us to review our own conduct toward them, whether we have behaved aright or no, and when it quickens our duty to surviving relatives.

While they are alive, and present with us, our neglect of duty towards them does not so soon strike our consciences; but when the stroke of death divides them from us in this world for ever, we are ready then to bethink our selves, whether our carriage toward them has been just and kind: And if our enquiry finds out our guilt, our hearts are tender at that season, and we soon yield to the conviction. "Did I pay that duty to a father, which he well deserved, and which God required? Did I treat a mother with that filial affection, and submissive tenderness that became a child? Did I pay that just deference and honour to the counsels and advice of my parents

parents as I should have done? Did I treat my sisters with that decent affection and respect that became me? And did I exercise brotherly love toward all my equal relatives? Or has my conduct been undutiful, unkind, and unbecoming?"

And especially if we have this to charge our selves with, that we took no care for the welfare of the souls of those that are dead. Such thoughts as these will hang heavy about the heart, and press hard upon the conscience in that day. "Did I not see my child, or my brother walk in the ways of sin: and yet did I ever give him a hint of his dreadful danger? Did I fear that he was a stranger to the grace of God, and yet did I not neglect to invite him to receive the gospel? Had I not reason to question whether he was a sincere convert or no? But how little have I done toward his conversion?"

"Or if he was ever concerned about the affairs of his soul, and awakened and thoughtful about death and hell, did I direct him in the way of peace? Did I endeavour to lead him to *Jesus* the saviour? Or did I let him go on without instruction, and without comfort, till death laid it's cold hands upon him, and he plunged into the eternal world at a mournful uncertainty? O my heart! my heart! The anguish of it pains me beyond what I am able to bear. O that I could recal my brother, or my son from the grave! How would I follow him with counsels and intreaties? And neither give him nor my self any rest, till I had good hope, through grace, that he had fled for refuge to lay hold on *Christ* and his salvation. I would never be at ease, nor would I cease pleading for him at the throne of grace, till I had found some evidences of a new nature in him, and a change of heart from sin to repentance and holiness.

"Or suppose my departed relative was a true christian, what did I do toward the increase of his faith? Did I ever allure him to holy conversation? Did I take occasion now and then to introduce religious discourse? Did I converse with him ever about the matters of our common salvation, that as iron sharpens iron, so we might have quickened each other's zeal and love, and helped each other onward in our way to heaven?"

"Surely I have found my self too guilty, in some of these instances. Forgive my criminal negligence, O my God, and through thy grace, I will apply my self to double diligence, with regard to my relatives that yet survive: I will enquire, as far as it is proper, into the state of their souls: I will seek the most powerful and the kindest methods, to awaken the thoughtless sinners amongst them; and I will study, and pray, and ask God what I shall say to make a deep impression upon their hearts: And though I have no office in the church, yet what I have learned there, I will talk over at home: I will preach *Christ* crucified, and all his gospel to them, as God shall give me proper opportunity. I will converse more freely with my pious kindred about the things of God, and learn their inward sentiments of religion and experimental godliness. Thus will I bring holy discourse into the parlour and the chamber; and every soul in my house shall be a witness of my endeavours to promote the eternal welfare of those that are near me."

Now when the death of a near relation attains such an end as this, and raises our repentance and holy zeal at this rate, we cannot doubt but that we receive sensible advantage by it.

VI. The death of our friends, who were truly religious, inclines us to review their instructions and their virtues, and sets them before our eyes, in a fresh and lively manner, to influence our own practice.

We

We are too ready to forget their advice, while they are living and daily present with us, and we take too little notice of those virtues, in which they were eminent. We beheld their humility toward God and men, their condescension to their inferiors, their love and hearty friendship toward their equals, and their sweetness of temper toward all around them. We beheld it, and perhaps we loved and honoured them for it; but we took but little pains to copy after them. We saw their pity to the poor and the miserable, their charity to persons of different sects and sentiments in religion; their readiness to forgive those that offended them, and their good-will and obliging carriage to all men. There was a beauty and loveliness in this conduct, that rendered them amiable indeed, but how little have we transcribed of their example, either into our hearts or our lives? We observed their constant tenderness of conscience, their devotion toward God, and their zeal for the honour of *Christ* and his gospel in the world. O that we had made these graces the matter of our imitation! What can we do now more to honour their memory, than to speak, and live, and act like them?

It may be we have got their pictures drawn by some skilful hand, and their images hang round us in their best likenesses, as tender memorials of what we once enjoyed, to give us now and then a melancholy delight, and awaken in us the pleasing sadness of love. These we call our most precious pieces of furniture, and our hearts rate them at an uncommon price. But it would be much richer furniture for our souls, to have the best likenesses of our pious predecessors and kindred copied out there, Let us now and then reflect what were their peculiar virtues, and the remarkable graces that adorned them; and if we could imagine the spirit of each of them to look down upon us, through those eyes which the pencil has so well imitated, and to speak through those lips, each of them would say, in the language of the softest and most sacred affection; "Be ye followers of me as dear children, so far as I was a follower of *Christ*."

And this thought I would more especially impress on those who were most unhappily negligent of the pious counsel of their ancestors, or ran counter to their holy advice and example in their life-time. "I was too regardless, may a young christian say, of the wise and weighty sayings of my father deceased, they return now upon my thoughts, with a fresh and living influence. I have been too ready to neglect what a kind mother taught me; but the instructions that I received from her dying lips, had such an air of solemnity and tenderness in them, that they have made a deep impression upon my heart; and I hope I shall never forget them. The prudent and pious rules that my elder relations have often set before me, recur to my thoughts with double efficacy since their death: I shall hear them speak no more, I shall see their holy examples no more: I will gather up the fragments of their religious counsels, and make them the rule of my conduct: I am well assured their souls are happy, and by the grace of God I will tread in their steps, till I arrive at those blessed regions, where I hope to meet them."

This thought leads me on to the last instance of benefit which we derive from the death of our kindred in the flesh.

VII. The death of dear and near relations calls our thoughts in a more powerful and sensible manner, to converse with the grave and eternity.

When our neighbours, or our common acquaintance die, we attend the funeral, and cast an eye into the grave; we spend a thought or two on the pit of corruption, and the mouldering dust: We awaken a meditation or two on things heavenly and the world to come; and we return quickly, and busily to this world again: But

when God sends death into our chambers, and it makes a slaughter there, it awakens us more effectually from a drowsy frame, and it nails our thoughts down to our most important and everlasting concerns. "Part of me is gone to the dust already, it is not long ere the surviving part shall go also. Death has smitten the desire of my eyes, and the partner of my joys, it will strike me ere long, and am I ready?" This thought dwells upon the heart of a true christian at such a season, and while the Spirit of God assists the work, it is not in the power of all the trifles in this earth to banish the holy thought, and carnalize the mind again. As when a man is seized with the dead palsy, or has a limb cut off, and buried in the dust, how sensibly does this awaken in him the thought of death and futurity? "The sentence of death is begun to be executed on me already, and the whole execution will be quickly fulfilled; it is time now to be ready, for death is in good earnest, and has begun his work."

And if our departed relative were a christian indeed, and gave us comfortable hope in his death, then it leads our thoughts naturally to heaven, and most powerfully touches the springs of our heavenly hopes. It raises our pious wishes to the upper world, and we say, as *Thomas* did at the death of *Lazarus*, "Let us go, that we may die with him," *John xi. 16.* Let us go to our God and our holy kindred, and enjoy their better presence there. Let us not "sorrow for the dead as those that mourn without hope," *1 Thess. iv. 13.* but look upward to things unseen, and forward to the great rising-day, and rejoice in the promised and future glories that are beyond life and time."

Every dear relative that dies and leaves us, gives us one motive more to be willing to die: Their death furnishes us with one new allurements toward heaven, and breaks off one of the fetters and bonds that tied us down to this earth. Alas! we are tied too fast to these earthly tabernacles, these prisons of flesh and blood. We are attached too much to flesh and blood still, though we find them such painful and such sinful companions. We love to tarry in this world too well, though we meet with so many weaning strokes to divide our hearts from it. O it is good to live more at a loose from earth, that we may be ready for the parting hour: Let us not be angry with the sovereign hand of God that breaks one bond after another; though the strokes be painful, yet they loosen our spirits from this cottage of clay, they teach us to practise a flight heaven-ward in holy meditations and devout breathings; and we learn to say, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

#### THE RECOLLECTION.

"Have any of us lately felt such parting strokes as these? Have we lost any of our beloved kindred? God calls upon us now, and enquires, "What have you learned of these divine lessons?" I would ask my self this day, Have I seen the emptiness and the insufficiency of creatures, and recalled my hope and confidence from every thing beneath and beside God? Have I past through this solemn hour of trial well, and shewn my supreme love to God, and my most entire submission to his sovereignty, by resigning so dear a comfort at his demand? Have I been taught by the inward pain which I felt at parting, and by the smart which still remains, how dangerous a thing it is to love a creature too well? Have I duly considered my past conduct toward my relations deceased, and does it approve it self to my conscience at the review? Or have I found matter for self-condemnation and repentance? Have I treasured up the memory of their virtues in my heart, and set them before me as the copy of my life? Have

Have my thoughts followed the soul of my dear departed friend, and traced it with pleasure to the world of blessed spirits; and does my own soul seem to fix its hope and joy there, and to dwell there above? Are my thoughts become more spiritual and heavenly? Do I live more as a borderer on the other world, since a piece of me is gone thither? And am I ready for the summons, if it should come before to-morrow?

“Happy christian, who has been taught by the Spirit of grace to improve the death even of the dearest relative to so divine an advantage! The words of my text are then fulfilled experimentally in you: “Death is your’s:” Death itself is made a part of your treasures. The parting stroke is painful indeed, but it carries a blessing in it too; for it has promoted your heavenly and eternal interest.” Amen.

A  
H Y M N  
F O R  
S E R M O N XLII.

*Death of kindred improved.*

[ Common metre. ]

1.  
**M**UST friends and kindred drop and die?  
Must helpers be withdrawn?  
While sorrow, with a weeping eye,  
Counts up our comforts gone.

2.  
Be thou our comfort, mighty God,  
Our helper and our friend:  
Nor leave us, in this dang’rous road,  
Till all our trials end.

3.  
O may our feet pursue the way,  
Our pious fathers led!  
While love and holy zeal obey  
The counsels of the dead.

4.  
Let us be wean’d from all below;  
Let hope our grief dispel;  
Death will invite our souls to go,  
Where our best kindred dwell.

## S E R M O N XLIII.

## Death a blessing to the faints.

I C O R. iii. 22.

— *Whether life or death, — all are your's.*

**W**E have already seen many divine comforts, and a rich variety of blessings derived from the formidable name of DEATH: One would scarce have thought, that a word, of so much terror, should have ever been capable of yielding so much sweetness; but the gospel of *Christ* is a spring of wonders: It has consecrated all the terrible things in nature, even death it self, and every thing beside sin, to the benefit of the faint.

Death, in all it's appearances, may furnish the mind of a believer with some sacred lesson of truth or holiness. When it appears in the extent of it's dominion, and bringing all mankind down to the dust; when it lays hold on an impenitent sinner, and fills his flesh and soul with agonies; when it assaults a faint, and is conquered by faith; when it makes a wide ravage among our acquaintance, when it enters into our families, and takes away our near and dear relatives from the midst of us, still the christian may reap some divine advantage by it.

But can our own death be ever turned into a blessing too? Nature thinks it hard to learn such a strange lesson as this, and has much ado to be persuaded to believe it. How dismal are it's attendants to flesh and blood! What languishings of the body! What painful agonies! What tremblings and convulsions in nature frequently attend the dying hour even of the best of christians! Can that be a blessing which turns this active and beautiful engine of the body into loathsome clay; which closes these eyes in long darkness, and deprives us of every sense? Can death become a blessing to us, which cuts us off from all converse with the sun and moon, and that rich variety of sensible objects which furnish out such delightful scenes all around us, and entertain the whole animal creation? Can that be a blessing which divides asunder those two intimate friends, the flesh and the spirit, that sends one of them to the noisome prison of the grave, and hurries away the other into unknown regions? Yes, the gospel of *Christ* has power and grace enough in it to take off all these gloomy appearances from death, and to illuminate the darkest side of it with various lustre. So the sun paints the fairest colours upon the blackest cloud, and while the thick dark shower is descending, it entertains our eyes with all the beauties of the rain-bow; a most glorious type and seal of the covenant of grace, that can give a pleasing aspect to death it self, and spread light and pleasure over the darksome grave.

If we are believers in *Christ*, death is our's as well as life. These two contrary states may each of them derive peculiar benefits from the new covenant. The christian may be taught so to value and improve life, that he may be not only patient, but chearful and thankful in the continuance of it. This has been made evident in a large discourse already: And yet it must be confessed, that the advantages which  
death



death brings to a believer are still greater and more glorious, and this will appear in the following particulars.

I. Death finishes our state of labour and trial, and puts us in possession of the crown and the prize. St. Paul was appointed to die by the sword of Nero, and to end his labours and his race in blood; yet he rejoices to think that his race was just at an end, and triumphs in view of the glorious recompence. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." There is a voice from heaven that proclaims the dead happy; upon this account, that their toil and fatigue is come to an end. Rev. xiv. 13. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them; that is, the prize of everlasting happiness which Christ has promised to his labouring saints. Rev. ii. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." So the weary traveller counts the last hour of the day the best; for it finishes the fatigue and toil of the day, and brings him to his resting-place. So the soldier rejoices in the last field of battle; he fights with the prize of glory in his eye, and ends the war with courage, pleasure, and victory.

II. Death frees us for ever from all our errors and mistakes, and brings us into a world of glorious knowledge and illumination. The vale of death is a dark passage indeed, but it leads into the regions of perfect light. "Now we know but in part, says the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Now we see but through a glass darkly, then we shall see God and our saviour face to face, and know them even as we are known;" not in the same degree of perfection indeed, but according to our measure and capacity, we shall know them, in a way of vision, or immediate sight, as God knows his creatures, as one man knows his friend, whose face he beholds with his eyes; or as one spirit knows another, by some unknown ways of perception which belong to spirits.

O what a new and unspeakable pleasure will it be to the disciples of Christ, and the ministers of the gospel, that have been tired and worn out in tedious controversies in this world, and sorely perplexed amongst the difficult passages of scripture, when they shall arrive at that region of light and glory, where the darkneses of the mind shall be all scattered, the vail shall be taken off from sacred things, and doubts and difficulties shall vanish for ever!

Alas! What desolation and mischief has the noise and clamour of controversy brought on the church of Christ in all ages! What quarrels and sharp contests has it raised among fellow-christians, and especially, where zeal and ignorance have joined together, and brought fire and darkness into the sanctuary! This has banished charity and love out of the house of God, and made the Spirit of God himself to depart grieved. Surely death carries a considerable blessing in it, as it delivers us from these disorders, these bitter quarrels, and appoints us a place in the temple of God on high, where the axe and the hammer never sound, where the saw of contention is never drawn, where the noise of war is heard no more, but perfect light lays a foundation for perfect and everlasting love.

III. Death makes an utter end of sin, it delivers us from a state of temptation, and conveys us into a state of perfect holiness, safety, and peace. The spirits of the just are made perfect in holiness, when they leave this sinful and mortal flesh, they stand without spot or blemish, without fault or infirmity of greater or lesser size,  
and

and appear pure and undefiled before the throne of God; *Rev. xiv. 5.* "Their robes are washed and made white in the blood of the lamb, and they serve him without sin, day and night, in his temple," *Rev. vii. 14, 15.* When death carries them away from this world, it carries them out of the territories of the devil; for he has no power in that land whither happy souls go: And all the remaining lusts of the flesh, that had their death's wound given them by renewing grace, are now destroyed for ever; for the death of the body is the final death of sin, and the grave is, as it were, the burying-place of many unruly iniquities, that have too often defiled and disquieted the spirit.

And as the corrupt affections which are mingled with our flesh and blood, and which are rooted deep in animal nature, are left behind us in the bed of death, so when we ascend to heaven, we shall find no manner of temptation to revive them. There is no malice or angry resentment to be awakened there, no incitements to envy, intemperance, or the cursed sin of pride, that cleaves so close to our natures here on earth.

When we are encompassed with those blessed creatures, angels and saints made perfect, we shall meet with no affront, no reproach, no injury, to provoke our anger, or kindle an uneasy passion. Most perfect friendship is ever practised there; it is a region of peace, a world of immortal amity.

Nor shall we find any temptation to envy, in that happy state; for though there are different ranks of glorified creatures, yet each is filled with a holy satisfaction, and hath an inward relish of his own felicity suited to his own capacity and state, and they have all a general relish of the common joy, and a mutual satisfaction in each other's happiness. Envy, that fretful passion, is no more.

In heaven there are no provocations to those unruly appetites, which break in upon our temperance, and pollute our souls.

Pride and haughtiness of spirit have no room in that blessed world: The superior order of saints, which are nearest the throne, shall not despise the meanest; for the nearer they approach to the perfect image of *Christ*, the more intense and diffusive is their love. Besides, every saint in glory shall see himself in his own nothingness, and infinitely indebted to divine grace for all things: This shall for ever forbid all vanity and conceit of merit. In heaven we shall see God in the fulness of his glory, and shall have so penetrating a sense of his saving grace, that a creature rescued from hell cannot be proud there.

Rejoice then, ye poor feeble christians, that have been long wrestling with your indwelling sins, and maintaining a holy and daily fight, with strong and restless corruptions in your nature: Lift up your heads at the thoughts of death, for the day of your redemption draws nigh, *Luke xxi. 28.* Death is your deliverer. It is like the angel that *Christ* sent to *Peter*, to knock off his fetters, and release him from the prison; it may smite and surprize you, and it has indeed a dark and unlovely aspect; but its message is light and peace, holiness and salvation.

IV. Death is our's, for it takes us away from under all the threatenings of God in his word, and places us, in the actual possession of the greatest part of the blessings, that God has promised us. The saints that are dead are thus described; they are "those, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises," *Heb. vi. 12.*

Whilst we are in this life, there are many threatenings in the bible, that belong to the saints as well as to sinners. I shall mention that great and general one that is annexed to the covenant of grace, *Psal. lxxxix. 30.* "If the children of *Christ* forsake my

my law, and walk not in my judgments, then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes ;” but when death has conveyed them into the presence of their heavenly Father, they shall forsake his law no more, there are no more transgressions for the rod to correct, the stripes of chastisement cease for ever, and their Father and their God shall be angry no more.

The best part of the promises are fulfilled when a soul arrives at heaven. The promise of the resurrection of the body, yet remains unaccomplished indeed ; but every separate spirit in heaven waits for it, with full assurance of accomplishment. “ I have found, says the holy soul, so many rich promises of the covenant fulfilled already, and I am in the possession of so many divine blessings, that God once foretold, that I am well assured, that my God is faithful who has promised, and the rest shall be all fulfilled.

V. Death raises us above the mean and trifling pleasures of the present state, as well as delivers us from all present pains, and brings us into a world of perfect ease, and superior and refined delight. It divides us from the pains and pleasures, that we derive from the first *Adam*, and sets us in the midst of superior blessings, which the second *Adam* has purchased for us. “ We shall hunger no more, we shall thirst no more, neither shall the scorching heat of the sun light upon us, or any painful influence from the elements of this world : The lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us with celestial food, suited to our purified natures, and lead us to drink full draughts of unknown pleasure, which is described by living fountains of water.” We shall see God himself, the original beauty, and the spring of all delight : We shall see our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the most illustrious copy of the Father, “ the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes,” *Rev. vii. 16, 17.* “ Though the wages of sin is death by the appointment of the law of God, *Rom. vi. 23.* yet this very death is constrained to serve the purposes of our great redeemer ; and it brings us into the possession of that eternal life, which is the gift of God through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.”

VI. Death not only gives us possession of promised blessings, but it banishes all our fears and doubts for ever, by fixing us in a state of happiness unchangeable. They that are once entered into the temple of God on high shall no more go out of it, *Rev. iii. 12.* For they are established in the house of God, they are as pillars there, they become a part of that vast and living temple, in which God dwells for ever in all his glory.

Death is our's ; for it finishes our fears, it fulfils our wishes and our hopes, and leaves us no more room to fear to all eternity. When we behold the face of God in righteousness, and awake out of this world of dreams and shadows, in the world of happy spirits with the likeness of God upon us, we shall find sweet satisfaction ; *Psal. xvii. 15.* “ I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” Death leaves a faint, as it were, but one thing to wish or hope for, and that is the resurrection, or the accomplishment of this text in it's completest sense, *viz.* that their bodies may awake out of the grave with the likeness of *Christ* upon them, and be made conformable to his glorious body, in vigour, beauty, and immortality.

VII. Death is a happiness to a christian ; for it divides him for ever from the company of sinners and enemies, and places him in the society of his best friends, his  
God

God, and his favour, his fellow-saints, and the innumerable company of angels. O how sorely has the soul of many a saint been vexed here on earth, as the soul of *Lot* was in *Sodom*, with the conversation of the wicked! How have they often complained of the hidings of the face of God, of the absence of *Christ* their Lord, and the sensible withdrawings of the influences of the blessed Spirit!

There is a great partition-wall betwixt us and the happy world, whilst we are in this life; the vail of flesh and blood divides us from the world of spirits, and from the glorious inhabitants of it. With what surprizing joy shall a poor, humble, watchful christian, that has been teized long, and long tormented with the company of the wicked, enter into that illustrious and blessed society, when death shall break down the partition-wall, and rend the vail of flesh and blood that divided him from them, and kept him at a painful distance! "It is better, infinitely better, shall the departed soul say, to see God without the medium of such ordinances, as I have used on earth: It is better to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord *Jesus*. It is better to ascend, and worship in the midst of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, and amongst that blessed assembly of the first-born, than to be joined to the purest churches on earth, or to be engaged in the noblest acts of worship, which the state of mortality admits of. Farewel sins and sinners for ever: Temptations and tempters, farewell to all eternity. And ye my dear holy friends, beloved in the Lord, my pious relatives, my companions in faith and worship, farewell, but for a short season, till you also shall be released from your present bondage and imprisonment by the messenger of death: Fear it not, for it is your Lord, and my Lord, your favour and mine, who sends it to release you from all the evils which you have long groaned under, and to bring you to our Father's house, where the busineses, the pleasures, and the company are infinitely agreeable and entertaining."

Thus have I shewn in various instances, how the death of a believer in general is appointed to work for his good, and becomes an advantage to him through the grace of *Christ*. I proceed to shew how the death of a christian in all the particular circumstances that attend it, has something in it that may be turned to his benefit.

"*Christ* has the keys of death and the grave; he was dead, and is alive, and behold he lives for evermore;" *Rev. i. 18*. And he knows how to manage all the circumstances of the death of his saints for their profit: He appoints the time when, the manner how, and the place where they shall die, and determines all these things by rules of unfearchable wisdom, under the influence of his faithfulness and his love.

1. The time when we shall die is appointed by *Christ*. If he calls us away in the days of our youth, he secures us thereby from many a temptation, and many a sin, for our life on earth is subject to daily defilements. He prevents also many a sorrow and distress of mind, many an agony and sharp pain to which our flesh is subject, and saves us from all the languishing weaknesses of old age, and from tasting the dregs of mortality.

When our blessed Lord foresees some huge and heavy sorrows ready to fall upon us, or some mighty temptations approaching toward us, he lays his hand upon us in the midst of life, and hides us in the grave. This has been the sweet hiding-place of many a saint of God, from a day of public temptation and over-spreading misery.

If he lengthens out our life to many years, we have a fair opportunity of doing much more service for our God, and our redeemer; and we also enjoy the longer experience of his power, his wisdom, and his faithful mercy, in guiding us through many a dark difficulty, in supporting us under many a heavy burden, and delivering our

our souls from many a threatening temptation. Oftentimes he sweetens the passage of his aged saints through the dark valley, with nearer and brighter views of the heavenly world: He gives them a strong and earnest expectation of glory, and some sweet foretastes of it, to bear them up under the languors of old age and sickness. The haven of rest becomes sweeter to them, when they have passed through many tedious storms: The hour of release into the world of light, is more exquisitely pleasing, after a tedious imprisonment in the flesh, and long years of darkness.

2. The manner, how we shall die, is appointed also by *Christ* our Lord, for the benefit of his saints. If death smite us with a sudden and unexpected stroke, then we are surprized into the world of pleasure at once, and, ere we are aware, our souls find themselves in the midst of the paradise of God, surrounded with joys unspeakable. If our mortal nature decay by slow degrees, we have a precious opportunity for the more lively exercises of faith; we may then converse with death before-hand, and daily grow in preparation for our departure. We see our selves launching down the stream of time, and if our faith be awake and sprightly, we rejoice in the sensible and hourly approaches of heaven and eternity. We may speak many useful dying sentences for the glory of our Lord, and make happy impressions upon the souls of those we leave behind: We may invite and require, we may allure and charge our dear relatives to follow us in the same path, and to meet us before the throne.

3. Our Lord also designs our benefit, when he appoints the place of our death, whether we shall quit the body at home or abroad; for some of us he sees it best, that our friends should stand round us and close our eyes, and, as it were, see our spirits take their flight into the invisible world, that they may assist and support us with divine words of consolation, or that they themselves may learn, and dare to die, and be animated by our example to encounter the last enemy. Our Lord sees it proper, for others of his saints, to die in the midst of strangers, or perhaps, amongst enemies, and by a violent death, that he may thereby give a glorious testimony to their faith and piety, as well as to the power of his own gospel. Whether we breathe our last at land or at sea, in our native country, or in a foreign climate, "all shall work together for the final welfare of those that love God, and are called and justified and sanctified according to his holy purpose," *Rom. viii. 28.*

There are, doubtless, some peculiar and secret reasons, in the grand comprehensive scheme of the counsels and decrees of God, why the death of every saint is appointed at this season, and not at another; why some young buds are cropped ere they blossom on earth, and transplanted to open and unfold themselves, and shine in the garden of God on high, while others are brought home into the heavenly garner, like fruit well-grown, or like a shock of corn fully ripe. There is a divine reason why some are hurried away by a violent death, and others are permitted naturally to dissolve into their dust: Why some must die on this spot of ground, and others on that; for the vast scheme of his counsels has a glorious consistency in it with the covenant of his grace: And indeed, the covenant of grace runs through the whole scheme of divine counsels, and mingles it self with them all. We rejoice in this meditation, while we believe the truth of it. We are persuaded, that we shall know, hereafter, the various and admirable designs of divine providence and love, in all the infinite variety of the deaths of his saints; and this shall make part of our songs in the upper world, and give a joyful accent to our hallelujahs there.

Let us maintain therefore, a blessed assurance of the wise and gracious designs of our Lord, in all the circumstances of the death of his people. Let us learn to say with that aged saint, and eminent servant of *Christ*, the reverend mr. *Baxter*, when

under many weaknesses of nature, and long and sore agonies of pain, he spake concerning his death, "Lord, when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt." Let us ensure our souls in his hands for eternity, and not be over-solicitous about the circumstances of our death, about the place, the manner, or the hour when we shall take our leave of life and time.

[ " If this sermon be too long, it may be divided here." ]

Having made it appear, in these several sermons, that death is our's, or shall turn to our advantage, not only when it strikes our friends or strangers, but when it seizes our own flesh also : I desire to conclude this subject of discourse with various inferences, of which some may be called doctrinal, and others practical.

The doctrinal inferences are these :

Inference I. How different is the judgment of sense, from the judgment of faith ! The eye of sense looks upon death as a sovereign and cruel tyrant, reigning over all nature and nations, and making dreadful havock among mankind, as it were, after his own will and pleasure ; but faith beholds it as a slave subdued to the power of *Christ*, and constrained to act under his sovereign influence for the good of all his saints. Sense teaches us look upon our selves, as the possession and food of death ; but faith assures us, that death is our possession, and a part of our treasure. Death is your's, O christians, for all things are your's.

When sense has the ascendant over us, we take death to be a dark and dismal hour ; but in the speech and spirit of faith, we call it a bright and glorious one. Sense esteems it to be the forest of all afflictions, but faith numbers it among the sweetest of our blessings, because it delivers us from a thousand sins and sorrows.

It has been reported, that *Socrates* called " death a birth-day into eternal life." A most glorious thought, and a very inviting name ! But it is strange, that a heathen philosopher should ever hit upon it, it is so much like the dialect of the gospel, and the language of faith. He had learned to talk more nobly than the sensual world, though he was not favoured with the light of the gospel. It is so much the more shameful for christians, to talk and live below the character of this philosopher.

O when shall we get above this life of sense ? When shall we rise in our ideas and our judgment of things ? When shall we attain to the upper regions of christianity, and breathe in a purer air, and see all things in a brighter and better light ? When shall we live the life of faith, and learn it's divine language ? Death is like a thick dark vail, as it appears to the eye of sense ; when shall our faith remove the vail, and see the light, the immortality, the glory that lies beyond it ? Death, like the river *Jordan*, seems to overflow it's banks, when we approach it, and divides and affrights us from the heavenly *Canaan* : When shall we climb to the top of *Pisgab*, that we may look beyond the swelling waves of this *Jordan*, and take a fair and inviting prospect of the promised land ?

Inference II. How glorious and how dreadful is the difference, between the death of a saint and that of a sinner, a soul that is in *Christ*, and a soul that has no interest in him ! The death of every sinner, has all that real evil and terror in it, in which it appears to an eye of sense ; but a convinced sinner beholds it yet a thousand times more dreadful. When conscience is awakened upon the borders of the grave, it beholds death in it's utmost horror, as the curse of the broken law, as the accomplishment of the threatenings of an angry God. A guilty conscience looks on death with all it's formi-

formidable attendants round it, and espies an endless train of sorrows coming after it. Such a wretch beholds death riding towards him on a pale horse, and hell following at his heels, without all relief or remedy, without a favour, and without hope.

But a true christian, when he reads the name of death among the curses of the law, knows that *Christ* his saviour and his surety, has sustained it in that dreadful sense, and put an end to it's power and terror. He reads it's name now in the promises of the gospel, and calls it a glorious blessing, a release from sin and sorrow, an entrance into everlasting joy. The saint may lie calm and peaceable in the midst of all the attendants of death; like *Daniel* in the den of lions, for it cannot hurt or destroy him: But when a sinner is thrown to this devourer, it does, as it were, break all his bones; it tears both his flesh and his spirit as it's proper prey: "Death feeds upon him," as the scripture expresses it, *Psal.* xlix. 14. and fills his conscience with immortal anguish. Who can bear the thought of dying in such a state under the dominion of death, without *Christ*, and without hope.

Inference III. How much does the religion of the new testament transcend all other religions, both that of the light of nature, and all the former revelations of grace; for it better instructs us how to die. The religion of the ancient patriarchs, the religion of *Moses* and the *Jews*, as well as the religion of the philosophers, all come vastly short of christianity, in the important business of dying.

The philosopher, by the labours of his reason, and by a certain hardiness of spirit, persuades himself not to tremble at the thoughts of death; for it may be, there is no hereafter; or if there be, he would fain hope for an happy one: And thus he ventures into death, with some sort of courage and composure of mind, like a bold man, that is taking an immense leap, in the dark, out of one world into another; but he can never know certainly, that there are no terrible things to meet him in that unseen state.

The religion of the *Jews* and patriarchs, which God himself revealed to men, enabled many of them to resign their lives with patience and hope, and to walk through the valley of death without much dismay, when the appointed hour was come. A few of them, I confess, have been elevated by a noble faith above the level of that dispensation: Yet some of them seem to make bitter mourning, because of the shadows of darkness that covered the grave, and all the regions beyond it. "They were all their life-time subject to bondage, through the fear of death," *Heb.* ii. 14.

It is our *Jesus* alone, who has "brought life and immortality into so glorious a light by the gospel; *2 Tim.* i. 10. He dwelt long in heaven before he came into our world, and again he went as a fore-runner into those unseen worlds, and came back again and taught his disciples, what heaven is: And thus we learn to overcome death with all it's terrors, by the richer prospect, which he has given us, of the heavenly country that lies beyond the grave: He has taught his followers to rejoice in dying, and to possess the pleasures that are to be derived from death, as it is an entrance into the regions of light and joy. Blessed be God! that we were born in the days of the *Messiah*, since *Christ* returned from the dead, and that we are not sent either to the schools of the philosophers, or even to *Moses*, to teach us how to die.

Inference IV. Learn from these discourses, what a sweet and delightful glory belongs to the covenant of grace, that turns a curse into a blessing. When the broken law, or covenant of works, attempts to curse thee with death, O believer, as *Balaam* did *Israel*, "the Lord thy God turns the curse into a blessing to thee by this new covenant, because the Lord thy God loved thee," *Deut.* xxiii. 5. So afflictions are

are turned into mercies, by the virtue of this covenant, they mortify our sins, they wean us from the world, they bring our hearts near to God, they make us partakers of his holiness. So death, which is the greatest affliction to nature, and has such a formidable aspect to a sensual man, is made subservient to the eternal welfare of a christian. It is this sweet covenant that has wrought the change; *Christ* has conquered it, and the believer enjoys the triumph.

Does the eye of nature behold death as a serpent? Our Lord *Jesus* has broken it's teeth, and taken away it's sting; for by his sacrifice he has abolished sin, which is the sting of death. Does nature look upon death as a lion? Our redeemer has slain it, and the covenant of grace has furnished the carcase of it with honey, and stored it with delicious food for the entertainment of a christian; thus, "out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness," *Judges* xiv. 14. The riddle of *Sampson*, when applied in this manner, carries a diviner beauty in it, and more exquisite delight. And as that *jewish* champion feasted his father and his mother, with delicacies taken out of the lion he had slain, so does our Lord feast his brethren and his friends, with sacred pleasures derived from death, our vanquished enemy.

O how unspeakable is the privilege of those that belong to *Christ*! If you are his, then death is your's: *Christ* is the only begotten son, and he inherits all things; not only as a son, but as the first overcomer: "Ye all are the sons of God by faith in *Christ Jesus*;" *Gal.* iii. 26. "Ye shall also be overcomers, and shall inherit all things," *Rev.* xxi. 7. "Whether life or death, things present or things to come, all are your's, for ye are *Christ*'s."

I proceed to the practical uses.

I. If death, in every sense, may be turned to the advantage of the saints, as I have proved in the former discourse, let us see then, that, in all it's appearances, we gain some advantage by it. Let us not act like fools, who have a prize put into their hands, and know not how to use it.

If our fellow-creatures die and go down to the dust, and the nations of mankind perish from the earth, let us learn thereby the frailty of our natures; let us learn to "number our days, as to apply our hearts to wisdom," *Psal.* xc. 12. and be awakened to an active and immediate preparation for the day of our own death. If we see impenitent sinners dying under the anguish of a guilty conscience, let us gain a sensible lesson of the dreadful evil of sin; let it raise such a religious fear of the wrath of God, and such a sacred gratitude for our deliverance, from the torments of hell, as may quicken every grace into it's warmest exercise, and it's brightest evidence. If death seize upon our Lord *Christ* himself, his dying groans lay a foundation for our immortal hopes: Let us meditate on the thousand blessings we receive from his cross and his tomb. Do the saints around us lie down and die? We should learn to follow them boldly into the dark valley, and to fall asleep in the dust with the same chearful hopes of the joyful rising-day. Does death come near us into our own family, and tear our dear relatives from our arms? Even this may be turned to our advantage too: it should render the world and the pleasures of it more insipid and worthless; it should loosen our heart-strings from the fond embraces of the creature; for it calls our eyes and our souls heaven-ward and home-ward, and that with a loud and sensible voice, if nature and grace are awake to hear it.

If death and the grave be our's, and we make no use of this privilege, we are like misers, who have treasure in their possession, but never employ it to any valuable purpose. Has *Christ* our Lord taken death among his captives, and made it his own  
pro-



property? Let us look upon our selves as humble sharers in the victory; he has appointed it to serve the interest of all his followers: He has put it into the inventory of our treasures. Let us improve it then to these divine purposes, let us seize and enjoy the spoils which *Christ*, the captain of our salvation, has taken from the hands of the prince of darkness.

II. Is death become your possession, O believers, through the grace of the covenant: Fear it not then, but ever look upon it with an eye of faith as a conquered adversary: Behold it, as reduced to your service; wait for it, with holy courage and pleasure; it is a messenger of mercy to your souls from *Christ*, who hath vanquished it in the open field of battle, and reduced it to his subjection. When you labour and groan under sins and temptations, under pains and sorrows, remember *Christ* has appointed death to be his officer for your relief. It is like the porter that opens the door of his repository, the grave, where your bodies shall take a sweet slumber till the resurrection-day; and it is appointed also to open the gates of heaven for your spirits, and to let them into a world of unknown felicity.

Death has so many things belonging to it, which are afflictive to nature, and formidable to the eye of sense, that we have need of all manner of assistance to raise our souls above the fear of it. The very thought of dying makes many a christian shudder, and sweat, and tremble, and awakens all the springs of human infirmity; O may the grace of faith gain a more glorious ascendancy in our souls! We should often meditate on such doctrines as these, which place that dreadful thing death in the most easy and pleasing light; we should behold it as changed from a curse into a blessing, and numbered among our treasures. Christians should accustom themselves to look at it through the glass of the gospel, which casts fair colours upon what is in it self so dark and formidable. It is the gospel is that glass which discovers to us the flowery blessings that grow in that gloomy valley, and gives a fair and delightful prospect of those hills of paradise and pleasure that lie beyond the grave. Why should we let this blessed gospel lie neglected, and live still in bondage to the fear of dying?

#### THE RECOLLECTION.

“Come now, and let us learn by this discourse, to shame our selves out of these weaknesses, these unreasonable fears. Let us talk to our own souls in the language of faith. Why, O my soul, why art thou afraid to let this body die? Hast thou not endured labours and trials enough, and art thou unwilling to come to the end of them? Hast thou not yet been tempted enough? Hast thou not been foiled too often, and too often thrown down in the conflict? Think of thy many wounds of conscience, the bruises of thy spirit, the defilement of thy garments, and the loss of thy purity and thy peace. Canst thou bear, that all these should be repeated again and again? Art thou unwilling this war should have an end? Art thou afraid of victory and triumph? What dost thou labour and fight for? Dost thou not run to obtain the prize? Dost thou not wrestle and fight to gain the crown? And hast thou not courage enough to go a-cross the dark valley, to take possession of this crown and this prize.

“Think, O my spirit, think of thy painful ignorance whilst thou dwellest in this region of shadows: Is not knowledge thy natural and delicious food? Hast thou not lived long enough in darkness, and been involved too long in mistakes and errors?

rors? And art thou willing to dwell in a land of darkness still, a land of dreams and disguises, where truth is hardly found? Art thou afraid of the borders of that world, where light and knowledge grow, and where truth, and realities appear all unveiled, and without disguise? Where thou shalt be cheated no more with the sound of words, but shalt see all things just as they are, in a clear light, without error, and without confusion? O happy period of thy mistakes and wanderings, of all thy learned mazes in quest of truth! And art thou still afraid to come near it?

“Has it not been the matter of thy sacred mourning, that thy God is so much concealed from thee, that greatest and best of beings? That the Son of God, “the brightness of the Father’s glory,” *Heb. i. 3.* is so much a stranger, and thy saviour is so little known? That thy faith has been labouring and wearied in many enquiries about the glories of his person as god-man, about the wonders of his united natures, and the mysteries of his gospel; about the power of his death, the virtue of his righteousness, and the sovereignty of his grace? And art thou afraid of the sunshine, and that perfect day that shall scatter all these clouds of doubt and mistake, and let thee see thy saviour and thy God face to face, as they are seen by angels? O that surprising hour, of unknown delight, that shall place thee, O my soul, in the midst of the world of spirits, surrounded with the light of heaven, and in the open presence of God, even thy God! When thou shalt gain swift and transporting acquaintance with the almighty being that made thee, and the Son of God, who dwelt once in mortal flesh, and died to save thee! When the divine irradiations of the eternal Spirit shall unfold those mysteries to thy view, which had so much darkness about them in these lower regions! What an illustrious scene of light and joy shall arise all around thee as thou enterest into that unknown state! What strange new ideas of things, what new worlds of knowledge shall throng in upon thee, and thy enlarged understanding shall receive them all with infinite satisfaction, and with ever-growing pleasure! Art thou not already on the wing, my soul, at such a divine prospect as this? O stupid creatures that we are! we seek after the light of truth here below, and croud about a little glimmering spark of knowledge, we wrangle all around it with endless contention, and yet when death would open the gate of glory, and admit us into regions of light, we start back, and retire, contented to abide among twilight and shadows.

“But, O my soul, if truth and knowledge are not sufficient to allure thee, has holiness no constraining power? Hast thou not sinned enough and broken the laws of God often enough already? Hast thou not brought guilt enough, and grief enough, upon thy self, that thou art afraid of a state of perfect holiness? What is it that has given thee such inward pain as the perpetual workings of thy native iniquity? What is it that has made thee cry out, “O wretched creature that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” *Rom. vii. 24.* From the temptations and the sins which are mingled with flesh and blood? And art thou afraid to have thy groans ended, thy complaints removed, and thy deliverance appear? Art thou unwilling to accept of the release? Dost thou shrink back from the sight of the deliverer? Has not thy faith often seen the spirits of the just made perfect standing before the throne, rejoicing before God, worshipping in the complete beauty of holiness? And has not this thy faith awakened thy desires and thy sacred wishes? O that I were in the midst of them! Why then art thou so unwilling to leave this body of sin and darkness, and to go out of this troublesome and impure prison into that glorious world, that blessed assembly, and to worship amongst them without imperfection, and without weariness? Consider, O my soul, are thy complaints of indwelling corruption

ruption sincere? Are thy groans for deliverance honest and hearty? Why then art thou afraid to let this tabernacle be dissolved, and to gain a blessed release from these inbred and restless enemies? Has not the lustre of perfect holiness attraction and force enough in it, to awaken thy longings, and stretch thy wings for a flight to heaven?

“Remember also whilst thou art here, and art often sinning, many of the threatenings of God in his word stand bent against thee, his arrows sometimes stick in thy flesh, and pierce thy very soul. I confess these are not the sword of his vindictive justice, thy afflictions are but the corrections of his rod: But is it not better to dwell in that world where thou shalt feel no such correcting strokes, and deserve chastisement no more, where the Lord thy God shall lay aside every frown, and remove his anger for ever?

“Thy best life now is to live upon the promises; but does not all the excellency of a promise consist in the hope of performance? And is not the performance then so much better than the promise it self? Is not possession better than hope? Is not an assured and an unchangeable possession better than this state of doubts and fears? Is it not much more agreeable to “dwell in the house of God for ever,” *Psal.* xxiii. 6. than only to make a visit to it now and then? Is it not infinitely better to be fixed in a state of perfect felicity, without the least fear or apprehension of losing it? To be as “a pillar in the temple of God, thy God, and to go no more out,” *Rev.* iii. 13.

“Think again, Hast thou not sustained sufficient pains and sorrows both of flesh and mind in this lower world? Death shall put an end to them all; and art thou unwilling to have a full release from sorrow and pain? Has this flesh of thine been complained of so often as thy clog and thy painful prison, and art thou afraid to have thy fetters knocked off? Has not thy body given thee smart and anguish enough? And has it not tempted thee enough away from thy God, and thy truest happiness? Has thy sinful sickly flesh been so charming a companion that thou art not yet willing to part with it? Dost thou not desire to have all thy diseases healed at once? Wouldst thou not be glad to have all thy torments of body and mind for ever eased, and all the uneasinesses of flesh and spirit removed for ever?

“It is true, the mere desire of ease should not be the chief reason why thou shouldst desire death, nor shouldst thou seek it with an impatient spirit: It is thy duty to bear sufferings and sorrows with holy patience, as a good soldier of *Christ*; it is thy duty to abide in thy post during his pleasure, to fill up the hours with service, and to sustain the fatigues and burdens of the mortal state to the glory of God thy favour: But he does not require that thou shouldst fall in love with a state of guilt and pain, a state that has so much sin and temptation, so much burden and fatigue in it; he gives thee leave to groan after the hour of release and deliverance. “In this tabernacle we groan earnestly being burdened,” *2 Cor.* v. 2.

“Consider further, O my soul, what is there in this world that should make thee fond of continuing among the inhabitants of it? Has not the world, thou dwellest in, sufficiently discovered it self to thee, as a land of mere vanity and vexation, and art thou fond of the tents of *Meshech* and *Kedar*, where thy soul has so little peace? Art thou afraid to change thy dwelling-place? Hast thou not been teized long enough with the company of sinners, or the foolish and unfriendly carriage of those who are imperfect saints? Hast thou not been often ready to say, “O that I had the wings of a dove, to fly away from the windy storm and tempest!” *Psal.* lv. 6, 7. to get a far off from the rage and malice of enemies, from the troublesome infirmities of friends, a far off from the peevishness, the envy and the passion of some of thy fellow-christians?

christians? How often hast thou wished even for a wilderness where thou mayst be at rest? Behold the door of death will shortly open it self to thee, and would let thee in, not to a wilderness, but to a paradise, to a place of eternal rest and freedom from all uneasy society; and yet thou delayest and hangest backward, and art afraid to go.

“In that upper world the saints have no follies about them, no vicious and fretful humours, no springs of vexation; they leave all their weaknesses, their envy, and their anger behind them in the grave. In the heavenly country, every companion is an everlasting friend, and all thy dear and pious kindred, who are departed, have put off every thing that once made thee or them uneasy. They are far better company above than ever they were, or could be, here on earth; and dost thou not want to see them all in their best raiment of grace and glory; and to hold sweet communion with them in the purest intercourses of love?

“But there are still sweeter allurements to a holy soul; God, even thy God, dwells in the midst of his saints on high, and that in the full glories of his love: *Jesus* thy saviour, whom thou hast known, and whom thou hast loved, though thou hast never seen him; *Jesus* is Lord of that country, he waits for thee there: God himself dwells there as the fountain of felicity, and shall be no more absent from thee. Thou shalt no more complain of the withdrawings of the light of his countenance, or the short visits of his grace: Thou shalt sit solitary no more, nor mourn under the dark eclipses of the sun of righteousness: It is the pleasure of that heaven thou hopest for, “to be for ever with thy Lord, to behold his glory, to see him as he is, and to be made like him, and wilt thou not enter in at the gate into the new *Jerusalem* when he calls thee, but tremble and start backward, because there is a short dark valley that lies on this side of it?

“Remember, O my soul, death is thine: There is nothing in that dark valley shall hurt thee. Lift up thy head, arise, and shake thy self out of the dust. Let thy faith take a sweet prospect over the little hills of time, and beyond the vale of death: Look far into the invisible world, and banish all thy fears under the strong allurements of the joys that are prepared for thee; wait with pleasure for the hour of thy departure, and rejoice and triumph when the divine message shall come. While thou continuest here, “life is thine; when thou goest hence, death is thine; things present and things to come are thine;” and the invisible world, to which thou art hastening, has everlasting joys in reserve for thee: Heaven it self is thine: Heaven is the inheritance of all the saints: The glories laid up there are waiting for thy possession: The dissolution of thy earthly tabernacle, shall convey thee into the midst of them.

“Awake, arise and meet the happy moment, when thou shalt be undressed of this sinful flesh and blood: O let these defiled garments ever sit loose about thee, that they may be cast off without pain and regret: Go, my soul, at the summons of thy God and Father, and when the symptoms of dying nature shall say, “Hark, he calleth thee,” let thy faith, and thy love, and thy joy answer, “Lord, I come.” Go, my soul, at the invitation of thy redeemer, at the voice of thy beloved: Behold, he appears, he comes; go forth, and meet him. Drop this fleshly clothing with holy delight; arise, put on thy beautiful garments, and shine, for the glory of the Lord is rising upon thee: Go, shine among the spirits of the just made perfect, thy self a spirit released from earth, and divested of all imperfection. O happy farewell to life and time! O glorious entrance into immortality!

A HYMN

A  
H Y · M N  
F O R  
S E R M O N XLIII.

*Death a blessing to the saints.*

[ Long metre. ]

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| <p style="text-align: center;">1.</p> <p><b>D</b>O flesh and nature dread to die?<br/>And timorous thoughts our minds<br/>    enlave?<br/>But grace can raise our hopes on high,<br/>And quell the terrors of the grave.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">5.</p> <p>When we put off this fleshly load,<br/>We're from a thousand mischiefs free;<br/>For ever present with our God,<br/>Where we have long'd and wish'd to be;</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">2.</p> <p>What? Shall we run to gain the crown,<br/>Yet grieve to think the goal so near?<br/>Afraid to have our labours done,<br/>And finish this important war?</p>                         | <p style="text-align: center;">6.</p> <p>No more shall pride or passion rise,<br/>Or envy fret, or malice roar,<br/>Or sorrow mourn with down-cast eyes;<br/>And sin defile our souls no more,</p>      |
| <p style="text-align: center;">3.</p> <p>Do we not dwell in clouds below,<br/>And little know the God we love?<br/>Why should we like this twilight so,<br/>When 'tis all noon in worlds above?</p>                          | <p style="text-align: center;">7.</p> <p>'Tis best, 'tis infinitely best,<br/>To go where tempters cannot come,<br/>Where saints and angels ever blest,<br/>Dwell and enjoy their heavenly home;</p>    |
| <p style="text-align: center;">4.</p> <p>There shall we see him face to face,<br/>There shall we know the great unknown:<br/>And <i>Jesus</i>, with his glorious grace,<br/>Shines in full light amidst the throne.</p>      | <p style="text-align: center;">8.</p> <p>O for a visit from my God,<br/>To drive my fears of death away,<br/>And help me through this darksome road,<br/>To realms of everlasting day!</p>              |

## S E R M O N XLIV.

## The doctrine of the trinity, and the use of it.

E P H E S. ii. 18.

*Through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

**T**H E R E is hardly another text in the bible, of so short an extent, that contains in it so much of the substance and glory of our holy religion. Here we have,

- I. The doctrine of the blessed trinity plainly represented. The Father and the holy Spirit are expressly named, and the little word, "him," most evidently refers to *Christ* the Son of God, who is mentioned before, verse 13.
- II. We read also, in this verse, the important use of this great doctrine: We must have access to God the Father, through the mediation of his Son, by the aids of the holy Spirit: And,
- III. There is the union of all nations, and the harmony of all the true worshippers of God, held forth in the words, "we both have access." This is the common and universal method of approach to God, for it is provided for the whole world, which is here distinguished into *Jews* and gentiles. "We "both" have access to the Father by one Spirit, through one Lord *Jesus*."

These three shall be the chief divisions of my discourse, and I shall consider each of them distinctly.

First, The doctrine of the blessed trinity is here represented to us, the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit: And in order to set this article of our faith in the most plain and easy light, for the use of common christians, I would draw it out, as far as scripture evidently leads the way, into several propositions.

But here let it be observed, that I am not going to present you with any of those particular schemes of explication of this doctrine, which have divided the trinitarian writers, but nakedly to represent it according to it's most obvious appearances in scripture, and yet in such a manner as almost all our divines have received, and delivered it, who may differ in particular schemes of explication.

Proposition I. God is a spirit, allwise, and almighty, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and incomprehensible by any creature; the first, the greatest, and the best of beings.

Since the word of God assures us, that he is a spirit, *John* iv. 24. since men are called his offspring, *Acts* xvii. 28. since man is the image of God, *1 Cor.* xi. 7. it is evident, that God teaches us to conceive of himself, in a way of resemblance to our own souls, which are spirits. We are therefore to conceive of him as a being, which has understanding, or consciousness and knowledge, which has a free will, and power of operation; for these are the clearest and best notions that we have of a spirit:

And

And the scripture it self frequently applies them all to God, and speaks of his understanding, will, and power.

Yet still let us remember, that we must conceive of these things in God, in the highest and greatest perfection possible; removing always, from our idea of God, every thing that is imperfect, and raising this idea infinitely above every power and quality that is in our own souls. He hath infinite wisdom, or understanding, to know, contrive, and decree all his works, and infinite power, to execute and effect his decrees. Every thing in God transcends the highest conceptions of man.

Proposition II. There is but one only, the living, and the true God. There is but one godhead, one divinity; for since God is the first, the greatest, and the best of beings, there can be but one that is the very first, the very greatest, and the very best.

Besides, God is a self-sufficient being, and can want nothing from another, *Acts* xvii. 25. He is an all-sufficient being, and can do every thing of himself, *Job* xlii. 2. and therefore, he cannot possibly stand in need of any other being beside himself. Within himself the one God possesses all possible perfection.

Two such all-sufficient beings could do no more than one could do, either with regard to their own blessedness, or with regard to creatures; for if two could make each other more blessed, or do any thing more toward creatures, than one could do, then each of them alone could not be self-sufficient, nor all-sufficient; each of them could not be a God, if they could want any help from another.

Thence it follows, that there cannot be two Gods; for since each of them must be self-sufficient, that is, sufficient for himself, and all-sufficient, that is, sufficient for all other purposes whatsoever, one of these two Gods would be utterly needless and useless: But it is absurd to imagine, that a God is an useless, or needless being; therefore there can be no other God but one.

This is the great and universal dictate of the light of nature, and this is the constant doctrine of scripture in the old and new testament: And indeed, this unity of the godhead, is, a peculiar glory of all the religions, that God hath given to men, and whereby they are distinguished, from the false religions of the heathen nations, who did generally profess more gods than one. God hath always taken care, to secure to himself an unrivalled dignity and majesty, in all his dispensations. This is the language of God by *Moses*, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*, *Deut.* vi. 4. And *Christ* confirms this doctrine, most abundantly, in the new testament, and that in the very same words, *Mark* xii. 29. And he commends the scribe for affirming, *There is one God, and there is none other but he*. This is the foundation and basis of all that can be called true religion, in every nation, and in every age since the world began. And when a multitude of nations had lost this doctrine of the one God, and fell into the worship of many, whom they called gods, it was one great design of christianity, to destroy polytheism, or the doctrine of many gods, among the nations of the world, and to reduce them more universally to that ancient and eternal truth, which some of their own philosophers professed, *viz.* that there is but one true God.

Hence it follows, by plain consequence, from these two propositions, that since God is a spirit, eternal, allwise, and almighty, &c. and since there cannot be more gods than one, there cannot be more than one eternal, allwise, and almighty spirit; there can be but one eternal and almighty being. Let this then be fixed as an unchangeable truth.

Proposition III. This one God hath revealed himself by the light of nature, as well as by scripture, to be the first cause of all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, the creator and governor, the original possessor, and the sovereign Lord of all other beings whatsoever. And as he is the original Lord of all, he requires the worship and homage of all his intelligent creatures: He demands holy obedience to his laws, and humble submission to his providences; and upon this account, even some of the ancients, by the light of nature, have called him, "Father of all."

Proposition IV. The great God hath more clearly made himself known in his word, under the personal and relative character of a Father, that is, as a person bearing the relation of a Father, and that not only to angels and men, who are called the sons of God; but he is a Father also to our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself, though in a far more excellent and superior way, for *Christ* is the only begotten Son. Yet it may be noted, that God is never called the Father of the holy Ghost.

Under this personal character of the Father, the great God appears, in scripture, as the prime agent and ruler in all the kingdoms of nature, and grace, and glory: The Father is eminently Lord of heaven and earth, as *Christ* himself calls him\*. He sustains the dignity and majesty of godhead, and maintains the divine rights and prerogatives of it in heaven, earth, and hell.

It is under this personal character that he appears, in my text, as that God and Father, who receives the homage and worship of sinful men, returning and approaching to him through *Jesus Christ* his Son, and by his holy Spirit.

Proposition V. God the Father is revealed in scripture, as transacting his affairs that relate to his creatures through *Jesus Christ* his Son, and by his holy Spirit. It is by his Son "he made the worlds," *Heb.* i. 2. It is by his Spirit he "formed the host of heaven," *Psal.* xxxiii. 6. It is by his Spirit he "renews the face of the earth, and covers it with living creatures," *Psal.* civ. 30. It is by his Son he redeems sinful mankind from hell, and by his Spirit he sanctifies them, and makes them fit for heaven.

Note, The Son of God is sometimes called the word of God, and God is said to act by his word, as well as by his Son, in several places of scripture †.

These are the blessed three, who, by the christian church, for many ages, have been called the holy trinity. The clear and distinct revelation of them, and their various offices to us in the gospel, is the chief glory of the christian religion, and therefore we are initiated or admitted into the profession of this religion, by being baptized into the name of the sacred three, "the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit."

Having surveyed the scriptural representations of God the Father, in the foregoing propositions, let us now consider what is the first, the most plain and obvious manner, wherein the scripture represents to us the Son of God, and the Spirit of God, and, by degrees, rise up to the several and more complete descriptions of them in the bible.

Propo-

\* *Matth.* xi. 25: "*Jesus* said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth;" verse 27. "All things are delivered to me of my Father."

† I do not here assert any thing, or make any enquiries, whether, or how far the idea of the word of God, may differ from the idea of the Son of God, because this has been controverted among orthodox writers. It is very plain and certain, that both these names belong to *Jesus Christ*, the second person in the sacred trinity; and this is sufficient for my present purpose, since I design to avoid all particular controversies about modes of explication in this place.



Proposition VI. The Son of God is spoken of generally, in the new testament, as a very glorious person, an immortal spiritual being, who was some way begotten of the Father, that is, derived from God the Father, or hath some special relation to him, as an "only begotten Son," *John* i. 18. as the "first begotten of God," *Heb.* i. 6. as "the first-born of every creature," *Col.* i. 15. "who was with God, and had glory with the Father before the world was," *John* i. 1. xvii. 5. "By whom God made the worlds, and created all things, visible and invisible, *Col.* i. 16. *Heb.* i. 2, 3. "Who came forth from the Father, and came into this world," *John* xvi. 28. who "took flesh and blood" upon him seventeen hundred years ago, *Heb.* ii. 14. and thus became a complete man: He was "made of a woman," *Gal.* iv. 4. was "born of the virgin *Mary*," in an extraordinary manner, without an earthly father, *Luke* i. 35. and was for this reason also called the Son of God. He lived above thirty years a man among men, taught divine doctrine here on earth, and wrought various divine wonders to confirm it, was crucified by the *Jews* and *Romans*, rose again from the dead, "left this world, and ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God," *John* xx. 17. even where he was before he appeared in flesh, *John* vi. 62.

Proposition VII. As this description raises *Jesus Christ* far above the dignity of angels, and carries something divine in it, so there are several express ascriptions of true and proper divinity or godhead to him. This glorious person *Jesus*, the Son of God, hath divine names, titles, attributes, operations, and worship ascribed to him, even such whereby God the Father himself is known and distinguished to be the true God, &c.

Is the Father called the Lord our God often in scripture? So *Thomas* calls *Christ*, "My Lord, and my God," *John* xx. 28. Is the Father called "the first and the last," *Isa.* xlv. 6. So is the Son, *Rev.* i. 17. and xxi. 13. Is the Father called *Jehovah*, "the mighty God, and God blessed for ever?" So is *Christ*, *Jer.* xxiii. 6. *Isa.* ix. 6. *Rom.* ix. 5. *Christ* is that *Jehovah*, whom all "the angels of God must worship," *Psal.* xcvi. 17. compared with *Heb.* i. 6. *Christ* is that God, that *Jehovah*, who "laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands," *Heb.* i. 10, 12. compared with *Psal.* cii. 22, 25. He is that Lord and God, who "ascended on high, and led captivity captive," *Psal.* lxxviii. 18. compared with *Eph.* iv. 8. He is that *Jehovah*, on whose "name, those who call, shall be delivered, or saved," *Joel* ii. 32. compared with *Rom.* x. 13.

These, and many other scriptures prove, that *Jesus Christ* may be properly called true God: For our "God is a jealous God," jealous of his honour and divine prerogatives, *Exod.* xxxiv. 17. *Jehovah* is his name, and he will not give his name and glory, his peculiar titles and attributes, to another," *Isa.* xlii. 8. Therefore since *Christ*, the Son of God, has these divine names, titles, and glories attributed to him, he must have true godhead, in some way or manner, belonging to him also.

Proposition VIII. Since *Jesus Christ*, considered as man, cannot have these divine names and titles belonging to him; therefore the man *Jesus* must be united to God, or one with God, to have a right to these names, &c. Thus the Son of God plainly appears to be a complex person, who has two distinct natures united in him, viz. God and man: And, under this character, he is several times represented in scripture, in the old and new testament. He is the "child, who is born, and yet the mighty God," *Isa.* ix. 6. He is "the righteous branch of *David*, whose name is *Jehovah* our righteousness, &c." *Jer.* xxiii. 5, 6. He is *Emmanuel*, or God with us, *Matth.* i. 23. He is the "Word, who was with God, who was God, and was made flesh,"

flesh," *John* i. 1, 14. He is "God, even the living [God, manifest in the flesh, who was taken up in glory," *1 Tim.* iii. 15, 16. He is a man, "in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily," *Col.* ii. 9. "A man of the seed of *David*, and yet God over all, blessed for ever, *Rom.* ix. 5.

True God and true man are united in this wonderful person, as one complex principle of doing and suffering, even as the body and the soul are united in every man to make one complex agent. And thereby *Christ* is divinely fitted for those blessed offices which he sustains, the work which he performs, and the worship which he receives. "God redeemed his church with his own blood:" *Acts* xx. 28. "Worthy is the lamb, that was slain, to receive glory and blessing," *Rev.* v. 12.

This is the most plain and clear account, which the scripture gives us of *Christ* the Son of God. Now let us enquire what is the most easy and obvious notion of the blessed Spirit in scripture.

Proposition IX. The Spirit of God seems to be most usually represented, in the old testament and in the new, as a distinct, eternal, essential principle in the godhead\*, even as the spirit of a man is a natural, essential principle in man. This is the comparison used in scripture, *1 Cor.* ii. 11. "As none knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man, which is in him; even so the things of God, knoweth none but the spirit of God." A number of other texts seem to conspire in this representation, *Psal.* cxxxix. 7. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, whither shall I flee from thy presence?" where the term spirit signifies God himself, or a distinct principle in the divine essence. *Psal.* cvi. 33. "The children of *Israel* provoked his spirit." *Isa.* lxi. 10. "They rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit," even as the spirit of a prince is provoked and vexed by the rebellion of his subjects. So *Eph.* iv. 30. "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed." "These have quieted my spirit in the north country, &c," *Zech.* vi. 8.

As the spirit of a man, or of any living creature, does not imply another being, derived from that creature, but a natural principle of operation in the very essence of that creature, and whereby that creature acts, so the holy Spirit is generally called the Spirit of God, not to denote another inferior being derived from God, but some eternal glorious principle in the very essence of God, some principle or power in and of the true and eternal godhead, by which God operates †. So *Psal.* xxxiii. 6. "The hosts of heaven are formed by the breath, or Spirit, of God, *Job.* xxvi. 13. "By his Spirit he garnished the heavens." *Psal.* li. 12. *David* prays, that God would "uphold him by his free Spirit." *Rom.* viii. 11. "God shall quicken your mortal bodies, that is, raise you from the dead, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Thus God createth

\* The pious and venerable doctor *Owen*, in his "discourse of the holy Spirit," in his little book of the trinity, makes no scruple to use the term, "a distinct principle of operation," and represents it, "as subsisting in one godhead, in the divine essence or being;" and this he does in several places of that discourse.

† Note, I have, in some of my writings, used the word "power," to denote this principle of operation in the godhead, since this word is very much used in scripture to describe the holy Spirit. *Luke* i. 35. "The holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee." *Acts* x. 38. "Jesus of Nazareth was anointed with the holy Spirit, and with power." *John* iii. 34. "He had the Spirit given him without measure;" and it was by this Spirit he wrought miracles, and cast out devils, and healed diseases, which, in other places, is called the finger of God, and the power of God, *Matth.* xii. 28. *Luke* xi. 20. and v. 17. The apostles waited at *Jerusalem* for the promise of the Spirit, which, *Luke* xxiv. 49. is called their "being endued with power from on high:" the word is *δυναμις*, power, not *ἐξουσία*, or authority: And many other scriptures might be cited for this purpose.

Let it be noted also, that the word "power" does not lead us, into the idea of another distinct substance, in the godhead, as the word "principle" might chance to do.

createth the world, and raiseth the dead by his Spirit, as an almighty principle of operation\*.

Proposition X. This divine principle, the Spirit of God, is sometimes represented in a personal manner, as a divine person, or sovereign intelligent agent, even as the true eternal God himself with divine names, titles, attributes, &c. So the spirit of a man, though it be but one distinct principle in man, yet is sometimes represented as the man himself: And this is very common in the *hebrew* idiom, and sometimes in other languages. There are several instances of this representation of the Spirit of God in scripture. Is God the Father the God of *Israel*? And is not the holy Spirit so too? *2 Sam.* xxiii. 2, 3. "The Spirit of *Jehovah* spake by me, the God of *Israel* said." The holy Ghost is that *Jehovah*, who was tempted by the *Jews* in the wilderness: Compare *Psal.* xcv. 3. with *Heb.* iii. 7—9. He is that God, that dwells in the saints, as in his temple, *1 Cor.* iii. 16, 17. and vi. 19. He is that God to whom *Ananias* told a lie; *Acts* v. 3, 4. "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. He is that divine person, who said, "Separate to me *Paul* and *Barnabas* for the work whereunto I have called them," *Acts* xiii. 2. He is that divine agent, who sent *Peter* to *Cornelius*, *Acts* x. 20. "The Spirit said to him, behold two men seek thee, go with them, for I have sent them †."

Here note, That there are some places of scripture, wherein it is pretty difficult to determine, whether the holy Spirit be represented as the sovereign divine agent, that is, God himself; or, as a distinct power, or principle in the godhead, by which God the Father acts. And, upon this account, some texts may be fairly interpreted both ways, without any inconvenience: Yet, in other places, this distinction is plainly observed, as may appear by several of these scriptures which I have cited.

Proposition XI. Sometimes this divine principle, the holy Spirit, is represented in a personal manner, but in a subordinate character, and as a person more directly acting according to the oeconomy of the gospel. Then he is set forth, not only as proceeding || from the Father, and given to the Son, but he is described also as sent both by the Father and the Son, to perform various offices and operations in the world, and especially in the church. *John* xv. 26. "When the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And though under this idea in the christian oeconomy, the Spirit is represented in a subordinate manner, yet in his divine nature or godhead, he is truly, essentially, and eternally one with God the Father.

If

\* It might be added, perhaps under this proposition, that, when the Spirit of God is represented as speaking or acting in believers, he seems to be described as the Spirit of the Father, or a divine almighty principle really belonging to God, which operates in them, but is entirely distinct and different from their own spirits, so *Matth.* x. 20. "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." It is this same Spirit of God, which taught their tongues to speak strange languages, and wrought miracles by their lips and their hands. It is manifested as a divine principle of agency speaking and acting in them, infinitely different from all their human principles of acting: This appeared eminently in the primitive and inspired christians, and in the ancient prophets; they were acted as by another spirit, or a divine active principle, distinct from, and vastly superior to their own.

† Here I take occasion to correct a mistake of my memory, in my last "dissertations on the trinity," page 196. where I did not remember, that the pronoun I, was applied to the holy Spirit, in the new testament.

|| I do not here enter into that question, whether the holy Spirit, considered in his own divine essence, or subsistence, is derived from the Father, or from the Son, or both? But I content my self here to declare, that, as to the oeconomy of the gospel, and the manner of operation, the Spirit proceeds from the Father, and is sent both by the Father and the Son. This is plain scripture, and beyond all dispute.

If this proposition does not give full satisfaction, concerning the representation of the holy Spirit, in a subordinate manner, in some scriptures, perhaps, the next proposition may relieve those difficulties.

Proposition XII. The term Spirit, and holy Spirit, in scripture, does not always signify the divine agent himself, but sometimes it means his gifts, graces, and influences, the virtue or efficacy of this divine principle in godhead. Nor is this at all strange, for *Jesus Christ* himself is called the word of God, because he reveals the will of God to men; and yet the very laws and revelations, which God hath given to men by *Jesus Christ*, are sometimes also called the word of God; so, though the Spirit of God himself distributes gifts, and graces, and divine influences among men, yet these very gifts, and graces, and divine influences, which are given by the Spirit, are also sometimes called the holy Spirit. This has been always granted by our best writers.

And perhaps, this may be the meaning of that term, in some of those places of scripture, where the Spirit is said to be poured out upon men, to be shed down on the apostles, to be given to believers by laying on the hands of the apostles, where men are said to have a portion of the Spirit, whether greater, or less, or double; or perhaps, where the Spirit is said to be, or not to be given by measure, or where persons are said to be filled, or anointed with the Spirit. Perhaps, I say, some of these scriptural phrases may be better explained concerning the gifts, graces, and influences of the holy Spirit, than concerning the divine agent himself, who is true God. It seems to be much more proper to say, divine influences are shed down, poured out, and given to men, by laying on of hands, &c. than to say, that the true God himself is shed down, is poured out, or is given, to some men, by other men's laying hands upon them; or than to say, we are anointed with God, or God is given, or not given, by measure, &c.\*

This has been the general sense of all our divines in this matter, and I thought it necessary to insert this proposition here, that it might more evidently appear, that though, in some scriptures, the term Spirit, and holy Spirit, may signify his gifts, graces, and influences, yet this does not at all derogate from the true and eternal godhead, which is plainly ascribed to the holy Spirit in other places.

Here note, though it is hard to determine always with certainty, when the holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, signifies the divine agent himself, and when it denotes his influences; yet there are some texts, wherein the sense is plain and evident.

Proposition XIII. Though the Son, and Spirit, are true God, as well as the Father, yet all our divines universally acknowledge, that the language of scripture seems

to

\* There are several other scriptures that confirm this proposition. It is evident, that it was the holy Spirit by which *Elijah* spoke and acted, and yet it is called the spirit of *Elijah*, that is, his gifts, 2 *Kings* ii. 9, 15. It is the holy Spirit by which the *Carinthians* spake, yet it is called the spirits of the prophets, and these are said to be subject to the prophets, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 32. which would hardly be said concerning the divine agent, or God himself. See *Pool's* annotations.

This proposition does by no means deny, or diminish the truth and glory of the Spirit of God dwelling eminently in the human nature of *Christ*, who was anointed and filled with the Spirit, and subordinately in every true christian: For God himself is said to dwell in his people, as in his temple, and the "Spirit of God dwells in them, and abides with them for ever," *John* xiv. 16, 17. For he "that hath not the Spirit of *Christ*, is none of his," *Rom.* viii. 9. But this proposition relieves those harsh and unwarrantable expressions, of being anointed with God, of receiving a double portion of God, of God being shed, or poured down on men, which would be the plain consequence of interpreting such scriptures concerning the divine agent himself, or the holy Spirit, who is true God; and for that reason our divines have generally thought it proper and necessary to interpret many of these expressions, rather concerning the gifts, graces, and influences of the Spirit.

to ascribe some sort of peculiar eminence, or special prerogative, to the Father, in such respects as these.

1. The Father, as I hinted before, is always represented as the first and chief agent in creation, in providence, and in the affairs of salvation; the Father is described and exhibited as acting by his Son, or word, and by his Spirit, as sending them, and employing, or using them, as mediums of his agency: Whereas the Son, and Spirit, are never represented as chief agents, in comparison with the Father; nor are they said, in this manner, to act by the Father, or to send, or use, and employ him as such a medium of their acting.

2. When the name of God is used absolutely in scripture, it generally relates to the Father. This appears in innumerable instances: As, for example, where *Christ* is called the Son of God, the word God plainly signifies the Father: And indeed, this idea of God, as the Father, or prime agent, is much the most frequent and general sense of the word God, in the old and new testament, as all men confess.

3. The Father is described as the only true God, as the one God, even the Father; and that in such scriptures, where the Son, or Spirit, are named, and plainly distinguished from him, *John xvii. 3. Christ* saith to his Father; "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and *Jesus Christ*, whom thou hast sent," *Eph. iv. 6.* "There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all." *1 Cor. viii. 6.* "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord, *Jesus Christ*, by whom are all things."

Proposition XIV. Since there is but one God, even the Father, according to *St. Paul*, and since the Father is the only true God, according to *Christ's* own expression, then the Son and Spirit cannot have another, or a different godhead from that of the Father: But since the Son and Spirit, also, are true God, it must be by some communion in the same true godhead, which belongs to the Father: For if it were another godhead, that would make another God; and thus the christian religion would have two or three Gods, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel\*.

This might be proved from many scriptures, and many reasonings drawn from scripture: I shall mention two or three of them.

1. *Christ* himself saith, *John x. 30.* "I and my Father are one," that is, one in divine power and godhead, as the context leads us to expound it: And this has been the most general sense of all our trinitarian writers. *1 John v. 7.* The apostle saith, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one;" which is usually explained, these three are one in deity, or have one and the same godhead. Nor do I know any better exposition.

2. The godhead of the Father, and the godhead of the Spirit, is the very same godhead which is in *Christ*, and which wrought his miracles. *John xiv. 10.* "I am

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\* Here, let it be observed, that I do not enter into that question, whether the godhead, which is ascribed to the Son, does always signify the full, complete, and adequate idea of the godhead, which is in the Father; or whether, in some scriptures, it may mean only an inadequate idea of godhead, which may be supposed to be called the word, or wisdom of God; or whether it be not rather the intire godhead under the special idea of wisdom: For I would not enter, into any particular schemes of explication, in this sermon: But, in general, it is evident from scripture, that the godhead of *Christ*, and that of the Father, must be one and the same godhead, since there are not two deities.

Let it be observed, again; that, supposing the godhead of the Father and the Son, to be the very same, then, though the Father has the only true godhead in him, the Son and Spirit are not excluded from a communion therein. For thus it may be made to appear, that, though the Father be called the only true God, *John xvii. 3.* the Son and Spirit may be true God also; yet, perhaps, this text might receive a much clearer explication, by applying some particular scheme, in order to interpret it; but this is not my present work.

in the Father, and the Father is in me: It is the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works," that is, the godhead of the Father. And this language is so strong, as if *Christ* and God, in these miraculous actions, were to be esteemed one complex agent, since he elsewhere says, *John* x. 30. "I and my Father are one." Again, *Matth.* xii. 28. "*Jesus*, by the Spirit of God, cast out devils." Now if there were any other distinct godhead in the Son, besides the godhead of the Father, or of the Spirit, it seems to be somewhat strange and unaccountable, that the miracles of *Christ* should never be, plainly, ascribed to that peculiar distinct godhead of the Son, but that scripture should so often tell us, he wrought his miracles by the holy Spirit, or by the aid of his Father. I think, therefore, it must at least imply thus much, that the godhead of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is but one and the same godhead. And it is this same one godhead, or divine essence, that is united personally to the man *Jesus Christ*, and wrought his miracles: It is the same godhead that subsists in the Father, and in the Son, whatsoever personal distinctions are between them, which shall be considered immediately.

3. Many of those scriptures, in the old testament, which apparently refer to God the Father, that is, to the great God, considered and exhibited as the prime creator, and Lord of all, the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; I say, many of these very scriptures are ascribed to *Christ*, in the new testament, and interpreted concerning *Christ*; particularly in *Rom.* x. 11—13. xiv. 10—12. *Eph.* iv. 8—10. *Phil.* ii. 6—11. *Heb.* i. 10—12. which, I think, could not be a just interpretation, if the godhead of *Christ*, and the godhead of the Father, were not one and the same godhead.

I add after all, this hath been the common and general sense of all our protestant divines, at home and abroad, that the godhead of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is but one and the same godhead, or divine essence.

Proposition XV. Yet, there is a plain distinction held forth in scripture, between the sacred three, the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, as I have already declared; even so plain and strong, as that they are all several times represented, in a personal manner, and are spoken of, as three distinct persons\*, who have different works or offices, attributed and assigned to them.

The Father is represented, as the prime agent, in our creation, and redemption, our sanctification, and salvation: It was he sent his Son *Jesus Christ* to redeem, and save us from hell: It is he sends his holy Spirit to enlighten, sanctify, and comfort us, and to prepare us for heaven.

The Son is represented as sent by the Father into this world, to take our flesh and blood upon him, that he might die to redeem us: He becomes our prophet, our priest, and our king, to complete our salvation: He sends the holy Spirit, from the Father, to dwell in his people.

The holy Spirit is represented as sent, by the Father and the Son, to confirm the truth of the gospel, to guide us into all truth, to change our sinful natures into holiness, and to witness with our Spirits, that we are the children of God: He is expressly called a witness, and a comforter, or advocate.

Propo-

\* Though they are generally called "three distinct persons," by our divines, yet there are no writers, either abroad or at home, that ever pretended this to be the express language of scripture: And there are very few, if any, of our most orthodox writers, who ever supposed the word "person," was to be taken here in the full, common, and literal sense of it, for a distinct conscious being; but only in a qualified and restrained sense, or a sense that is analogous, or a-kin to the common meaning of it, among men: For three distinct persons, in the common and literal sense of it, would be three distinct Spirits, which very few Unitarians allow.

Proposition XVI. Upon the whole it appears, that there is, and there must be, some real union and communion in godhead between the sacred three, the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, to answer and support the divine names, titles, and attributes, &c. which are ascribed to them all: And, there is, and there must be, some sufficient distinction between them, to sustain these distinct personal characters and offices, and to answer to these distinct representations of scripture: Though how far this oneness of godhead, and this personal distinction extend, may not be easy for us, to find out exactly, and to describe to the understanding and satisfaction of our fellow-christians.

This is that very question, which has so much difficulty in it to answer: This has been the hard problem of christianity, in almost all ages, how to reconcile, and adjust this article: This has been the solemn labour of our several schemes and hypotheses, wherein some of us would be glad to arrive at clearer conceptions, by a further search of the holy scriptures. But, among the many attempts that have been made to adjust this matter, there is not one which is universally approved.

Proposition XVII. Though perhaps, we may not find, nor determine clearly and precisely, how far the sacred three are the same, as to their oneness of godhead, nor, how far they are different, as to their distinct personal characters; yet it is our duty to honour them, according to the revelation, which scripture has made; that is, we must pay all of them divine honours, since they have communion in godhead; and we must transact our important affairs of salvation with them, according to their distinct offices, as our Father, our saviour, and our sanctifier.

Thus I have given a plain scriptural account of the doctrine of the trinity, without entering into those particular explications, whereby trinitarian writers have unhappily divided themselves, into several contending parties. And, I have done my endeavour to express what appears to be the first, the most plain, and obvious representation of things in scripture, and that, so inoffensively, to my brethren, who own and believe this doctrine, that, I am persuaded, there have been but few trinitarians these hundred years past, who would deny any one of all these propositions: Nor am I conscious to my self, that I have ever written any thing inconsistent with them, in any of my discourses on this divine subject.

[ “ Here is a proper division of this sermon into two parts.” ]

The second thing contained in the text, is, the important use of this great doctrine of the trinity, and that is, We have an access to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

I shall not stand here to debate, whether the access, which we have to the Father, in my text, refers to any particular act of worship, or to our general return to God from a state of sin, guilt, and distance. The text is a divine truth in both these senses: But since it seems to be the chief design of the whole chapter, to shew the way of our return to the favour of God, and a state of peace and friendship with him, since we are said to be “ brought near to God by the blood of *Christ*,” verse 13. I suppose, it cannot be improper to take this verse, in the same extensive sense\*.

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But

\* I might take notice here, in order to confirm my extensive sense of the text, that the word access, in one or more copies, is *εἰρήνη*, peace: And the inference, which the apostle makes in the next verse, “ Therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,” is very naturally drawn from our access to God, as a state of peace with God, but not from a particular act of worship.

But, if the apostle should mean our access to God, in particular acts of worship, here, in my text, yet, I am sure, this glorious sentence is justly applicable to the general access of a sinner to God, and his introduction into a state of divine favour: For it must be confessed, that our first general return to God from a state of sin, and all our gradual advances to greater nearness, must be still expected, and obtained through *Christ*, and by the holy Spirit.

Here let us consider the different stations, or characters, in which the sacred three are represented in this great and important concern of our salvation, and at the end of each representation, I shall shew briefly, what our duties are to the sacred three, in our approaches to God, correspondent to the stations, in which the gospel places them.

I. God, the great God, and Father of all, is here represented as sustaining the majesty of godhead, as the sovereign Lord, and governor of his creatures, and my text, compared with the foregoing verses, discovers him to us in these four views.

1. As offended with his creature man, on the account of sin, verse 3. for we are, "by nature, the children of his wrath, we are strangers and enemies in our minds, and by wicked works," *Col. i. 21*. We are "afar off from God, without God, and without hope in the world," *Eph. ii. 12*. Though this be spoken particularly of the *ephesian* idolaters, yet, in a sense, it is true of every man, in a state of nature.

2. God appears willing to be reconciled, ready to receive us upon our return to him, in this chapter. In other places of scripture, he is represented sitting on a throne of grace, approachable by sinful creatures; and this is sufficiently implied in verse 4. "He is rich in mercy, and has loved us with great love."

3. He has appointed his own beloved Son, *Jesus Christ*, to be the reconciler. We are utterly unworthy of his favour or love; nor will a holy God suffer guilty creatures to come near him, without a proper and honourable mediator; and since we could not provide our selves of such a friend, he has appointed his own Son to that office. "God has set him forth to be a propitiation."

4. He makes us willing to be reconciled: He saves us by free grace, and when he has ordained faith to be the way of our return to him, he works that faith in us, by his own Spirit. Verse 8. "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God."

Let us consider now, what are our duties, according to this representation of the character, which God the Father sustains here. From all these things it plainly follows, that, in our religious transactions, we are eminently to look to God the Father, as the person, who is our original maker, Lord, and sovereign; whose laws we have broken, whose anger we have incurred, and from whom we have separated our selves by sin: We are to seek peace with him, and reconciliation to him. We must return to him as our rightful Lord, and address our selves to him, by humble repentance, as sitting on the throne of majesty, and vindicating the rights of godhead: To him we must pray, and apply our selves, eminently, to him as the first Spring of mercy, the author of all grace, and ascribe to him the glory of his condescending wisdom and love; we must offer him our thanks and praises, that he is willing to be reconciled, that he has sent his Son to be the reconciler, and appointed a way of reconciliation. This is the general current of scripture-language, both in precept and in example: and the chapter, where my text is, as well as the whole epistle, plainly leads us to this practice.



II. We come next to enquire, more particularly, how *Christ*, the Son of God, is represented as the medium, through whom we have access to the Father, for our reconciliation is attributed to him, "he is our peace," verse 14. Now *Christ* becomes our mediator of reconciliation, eminently, these five ways.

1. By his incarnation, that is, by taking our flesh and blood upon him: And thus he became a man amongst men: The Son of God, who is one with the Father in godhead, became one with us in human nature. "The word, who was God, and who was with God, the same word was made flesh, and dwelt with us," *John* i. 1, 14. When he became *Emmanuel*, God with us, he did not only unite God and man in his own person, but since he came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," *Rom.* viii. 3. he did, as it were, exemplify an union of peace and reconciliation between a holy God and sinful man. His very incarnation gave us a pledge of that friendship, which he came to restore between God the creator and his guilty creatures, who were before at enmity, and strangers, both by the apostasy of our first parents, and our own continued rebellions.

2. *Christ* came to reconcile us to God, by fulfilling perfect obedience to the law, which we had broken, and by sustaining the punishment and death, which was due to our sins. This we could never suffer, and out-live the suffering; for the broken law threatened death, but provided no resurrection. *Christ Jesus*, the Son of God, taking flesh and blood upon him, took our sins also, and became a sacrifice for sin; "he bare our sins in his body on the cursed tree," *1 Pet.* ii. 24. and, by his blood, has made complete atonement for sin, has repaired the honour of the law, and government of God, which we had highly dishonoured; and thus he has made a way for the exercise of the mercy and forgiveness of God, without any disgrace to his governing justice; and has laid a happy foundation for our approach to God the Father, though we are, by nature, strangers and rebels, guilty and condemned.

3. *Christ* ascended to heaven, to present his own sacrifice before the throne of God, even as the high-priest, under the *jewish* dispensation, went into the holy of holies, to present the blood of the sacrifice of atonement, and sprinkle it before the mercy-seat. This was the chief glory and perfection of the priesthood of *Aaron*, and, according to the apostle's reasonings, in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, chapters vii. viii. ix. This seems to be the ultimate glory and perfection of the priesthood of *Christ*, viz. his "entrance into heaven with his own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us," *Heb.* ix. 11, 12, 24. There he presents himself, not only as the lamb that has been slain, but he appears, in his own pure and perfect mediatorial righteousness, before God, in the name of sinful man; as *Aaron* the high-priest, in the name of the people of *Israel*, appeared in the most holy place before God; not only, with the blood of atonement, in his hand, but with holiness to the Lord, inscribed on the mitre, on his forehead, *Exod.* xxviii. 36. God the Father beholds his only begotten Son there, as the great representative of all his children: He beholds his own law satisfied and fulfilled, in his perfect obedience, even to death: and this is an everlasting foundation for reconciliation and peace between God and sinners.

4. *Christ* lives for ever to intercede for sinful man, to plead with God, for mercy to his guilty creatures. Perhaps, in the nature of things, this is not much different from the former particular; for his presenting of his sacrifice, as for ever fresh in the virtues of it, before the Father, is a sort of intercession. His blood has a voice in it, and his very appearance there, is a powerful pleading. But however, since the high-priest of old, not only presented the atoning blood, but also offered incense in the holy of holies, which is a type of intercession, we may, properly enough, make some distinction.

distinction, between them, and represent these two transactions of *Christ*, as our high-priest, in a distinct light. "He is able to save, to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, since he lives for ever to make intercession for them," *Heb. vii. 25.*

5. He is represented as dwelling in heaven, as our great high-priest, not only to present our services, our prayers, and our praises to God, and make them acceptable to the Father, through his infinite merit, notwithstanding all their imperfections, but also "to introduce our departing souls, into the presence of God, without spot or blemish," *Eph. v. 27.* and "to present his whole church, at the great day, before his own and his Father's glory, with exceeding joy," *Jude 24.* This is the last great act of his mediatorial office, and by this, we obtain a full and complete access to God, to dwell with him for ever, in the regions of light and joy.

Now let us consider, how we ought to regulate our practice in our return from sin, and our approaches to God, in a correspondency with these instances of the mediation of *Christ*.

From this account of things, it follows, that whensoever we, sinful and guilty creatures, address our selves to God the Father, it must be done in, and by the name and interest of *Jesus Christ*, as our only mediator. We must humbly ask forgiveness of our sins, for the sake of the sufferings of the Son of God; we must depend entirely for our acceptance with the Father, on the virtue of his perfect obedience, even to death; and entreat of the Father, that he would be reconciled to us, upon the account of his own Son *Jesus*, utterly disclaiming all merit and worthiness of our own, renouncing all other favours, and all other hopes, for *Christ* alone is the way to God; "no man cometh to the Father but by me," *John xiv. 6.*

We must give thanks to the Son of God, for his amazing condescension to take our nature on him, and dwell in flesh and blood; and for his voluntary submission to death, to redeem such guilty creatures as we are. We must trust in him for complete salvation, both from sin and hell, and resign our selves, as guilty, sinful, and perishing creatures, into his hands, and to his methods of relief. All our prayers, and acts of worship and obedience, must be recommended to the Father by his name, and through his intercession.

After every fresh instance of sin, we must fly to him as our faithful advocate in heaven, and have daily recourse to him, as our great sacrifice, and our mediator; because our sins are daily renewed in this imperfect state. In short, we must surrender our selves up to him, that he may bring us as near to God, as this present state of things will admit; and, when we are dying, we must commit our departing spirits to him, as *Stephen* did, that he may present us to his Father, when we leave this sinful and wretched world. Thus we have access to God the Father, by his Son *Jesus Christ*, who is our great peace-maker.

I grant, that several other necessary duties, which we owe to *Christ* our Lord, might be mentioned in a more distinct and explicit manner, *viz.* the acknowledging him as our great prophet, receiving his divine instructions, with an humble faith, and imitating his sacred example, with holy care; the submission to him as our Lord and king, yielding a ready and chearful obedience to his commands, and a humble subjection to his providential dispensations; to which I may add, depending on him for daily grace, and the promised aids of his blessed Spirit, as being appointed of the Father to bestow them; for he is exalted to be a prince, as well as a saviour; and indeed, *Christ* doth promote this great work of the salvation of men, by his universal government of the visible and invisible worlds, with this view and design, by giving and continuing his gospel, to particular nations, by sending forth his ministers and messen-

messengers, to invite sinners to be reconciled to God, and by the communication of his Spirit to men! But these things do not appear, directly, to be the present view of the apostle in my text, while he is describing *Christ* as a medium of our access and reconciliation to God, chiefly by his death and it's influences. And as for the work of the Spirit, that comes next in course to be mentioned.

III. Having shewn the glorious service, which the second person, in the holy trinity, performs for our salvation, according to my text, we come now to speak of the third, that is, the blessed Spirit of God, who is here represented as one, who helps our return or access to God the Father, through *Jesus Christ*; and this he does, eminently, in the ways following.

1. He convinces us of sin. He makes us see, and feel our dreadful state of wretchedness, because of our guilt in the sight of God. Mankind, by nature, are insensible of their own misery, till the Spirit of God is sent to awaken them, out of their dead sleep, and make them look after a reconciliation to the infinite majesty of God, whom they have offended. It is the powerful and inward operation of the Spirit, that makes sinners cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?"

2. The spirit discovers the mercy of God the Father to us, and assures us, that he is willing to be reconciled. This he has done in the word of the gospel, and the promises of grace, which are written and recorded in the bible by the holy men, whom he inspired; and this he reveals also with power and pleasure to the mind of an awakened sinner. Then the guilty soul rejoices, that there is forgiveness with God, and conceives some glimmerings of hope.

3. It is the Spirit, who effectually reveals *Christ Jesus* to the soul, as the great reconciler. He discovers who *Christ* is, and what he has done for us, and sets him before us in all the glories of his mediation. He makes the soul see the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice to atone for sin, the efficacy of his intercession to prevail with God, and his power to save to the uttermost. And all this is according to the promise of *Christ*, *John xvi. 14.* "He shall glorify me; for he shall take the things, that are mine, and shew them unto you:" All the teachings of men, and all the words in the bible, cannot make a sinful creature see such glory in *Christ*, such grace, and so desirable a salvation, as is done by the enlightening work of the holy Spirit.

4. It is the holy Spirit, that makes us willing to return to God, in this way of his own appointment. It is he that powerfully persuades, and inclines us to part with every sin. He works in the heart, of a sinner, holy repentance for his past follies; and renews, and changes the corrupt nature of man. It is he forms us after the image of God, and gives us a new and divine spirit and temper. "That, which is born of the spirit, is spirit," *John iii. 6.* He works faith in us with power, even that living faith, whereby we are interested in *Christ* the reconciler, and which is the spring of all holiness. It is through the divine operation of the Spirit of God, on our hearts, that we are taught to resign our selves up to *Christ*, and to commit all our concerns of salvation into his hands. Hereby we become partakers, of the benefits of the life and death of *Christ*, on earth, and of his intercession in heaven; for it is the appointment of God, that faith in *Christ* shall be our only means of drawing near to the Father.

5. The holy Spirit preserves, and carries on his own divine work, in the soul. What he begun in faith, he carries on in love: What he begun in repentance, he carries on by daily mortification of sin. "Faith and love are the fruits of the Spirit," *Gal. v. 22.* And it is "by the Spirit, that we must mortify the deeds of the body."

if we would live," *Rom.* viii. 13. He sanctifies us more and more, and draws our hearts still nearer to God. It is "by the sanctification of the spirit, and by the belief of the truth, that we are brought to partake of salvation," *2 Thess.* ii. 13. He restores us when we wander, and brings us back, when we have gone astray: He fits us for converse with God, and awakens every grace, which he has wrought in us, into proper and seasonable exercise.

He assists the soul, in all its devout addresses to God, as a Spirit of prayer and supplication. By him we draw near to the Father. He gives us to taste the pleasure of religion, and prepares us daily for the full enjoyment of God. He dwells in us, as a living spring of holiness, and keeps alive his own work in our hearts, through all the oppositions of indwelling sin, through all the various temptations we meet with, from *Satan*, and from this present world, till we are brought safe to the heavenly kingdom. He gives all the final strokes of sanctification, which may be needful at our death, freeing us from every remaining sin, and completing his own work of holiness in us. Then our blessed mediator, *Christ Jesus*, at the right hand of God, "presents us, without spot or blemish, before the presence of his own, and his Father's glory," and gives us that sensible enjoyment of those everlasting pleasures, he hath prepared for us, in that holy and happy world.

Now the duties that arise, from this account of the operations of the holy Spirit, are as follow.

In our approaches to God, in order to obtain peace and favour with him, we must pray, and wait, and hope for the divine influences of this blessed Spirit, to convince us of sin, to make us sincerely willing to be reconciled to God, to give us a clear and affecting sight of *Christ*, in all the power and glory of his mediatorial office, and to enable us to apply our selves to *Christ*, by a living faith, that we may, by him, be brought into the favour of God.

We must pray earnestly to the God of all grace, that he would work deep and unfeigned repentance in us, by his holy Spirit, that his Spirit might change our natures into his own likeness, and restore his image, which is defaced by sin; that he would send his Spirit to mortify all the corrupt principles that are within us, to lead us into all needful truth, and incline our hearts with power to the practice of every duty. We must ask, that he would assist us, by his Spirit, in all the holy and devout exercises of our souls, and enable us to worship God the Father aright, through *Jesus Christ*, in all his own appointments. We are to pray, that the Spirit of God may preserve the divine seed of grace alive in our souls, that he may recover us, whenever we go astray from God, and carry on his own heavenly work in us to perfection.

We must seek, and wait for the divine influences, of this blessed Spirit, continually, to give and to maintain holiness and comfort: And we must take the utmost religious care, lest, at any time, we grieve him, and cause him to depart, by resisting his sacred influences: And thus, with a daily dependence on the grace of the holy Spirit, we must perpetually approach nearer to God, both in the temper of our souls, and in holy converse with him, till our state of trial be finished, and till the work of holiness is complete in heaven.

It is a very natural enquiry here, whether we may directly address our selves, in prayer, to the Son, or the Spirit of God, to bestow these divine influences upon us? To which I answer, that the scripture, which is indited by the Spirit himself, generally instructs us to make God the Father the more direct object of our addresses in prayer, and to entreat the Father, to bestow his Spirit on us, because it is he sustains the supreme dignity and majesty of godhead, as the Lord and sovereign

of all, as the prime agent in our salvation, and prime object of worship. It is the "Father of lights, that is the giver of every good and perfect gift," *James* i. 17. It is "the Father, that gives his holy Spirit to them that ask it," *Luke* xi. 13. It is "the God, and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to whom *St. Paul* bowed his knees, that he would strengthen his faints, by his Spirit, in the inner man," *Eph.* iii. 16. And he "prays, that the God of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Father of glory, would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation," *Eph.* i. 17. It is evident, by the general current of scripture, both in it's counsels and in it's examples, that we are chiefly to seek the aids of the blessed Spirit, from God the Father, through the mediation of his Son *Christ Jesus*; and, doubtless, this always has been, and this will be, the most usual practice of christians, who make the word of God the rule and guide of their worship\*.

Yet since *Christ*, the Son of God, has true godhead belonging to him, and is a proper object of worship, since he is exalted to bestow the promised Spirit on men, it cannot be improper to offer up our addresses to *Christ Jesus* our Lord, to send us his Spirit according to his promise. "I will send the comforter to you from the Father," *John*. xv. 26. And it is manifest, that, in the day of temptation, *St. Paul* addressed our Lord *Jesus Christ*, for grace to resist it, *2 Cor.* xii. 8, 9. And, perhaps, when he triumphed in this, that "the power of *Christ* should rest upon him, verse 9. he means the Spirit of *Christ*, in his powerful influences, to resist temptation.

Now though it be generally agreed, that there are no plain and express precepts, or examples of prayers, or praises, so directly addressed to the holy Spirit, in all the new testament, yet since the holy Spirit is true God, since he is represented, in scripture, in a personal manner, or as a divine person, and since, in the sacred oecconomy, he is appointed to enlighten, to sanctify, and to comfort us, I think we may, by just inference, derive sufficient ground from scripture, upon some occasions, to offer petitions to the holy Spirit for his sacred influences, and to give him praise when we have received them. "Enlighten our darkness, O blessed Spirit, guide us into all truth: Sanctify our sinful natures, and fill us with joy and hope in believing. Blessed be the holy Spirit of God for his divine work, that he has begun in our souls: May it be carried on and perfected unto the great day."

Thus I have finished the second general head of discourse, and shewn that these are the glorious and divine methods, whereby, such guilty and sinful creatures, as we, have access to God the Father: This is the mediation of his Son *Jesus Christ*, who procures peace and reconciliation for us; and these are the inward and powerful operations of his holy Spirit, whereby our hearts are reconciled to God, and trained up to a fitness for his heavenly presence. "In that presence there is a divine fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore," *Psal.* xvi. 13.

The third general head, contained in my text, is the union of all nations in this last and best of religions, which God ever taught the children of men: Both *Jews* and *gentiles* have access to the Father in this way, that is, through this one mediator, and by one Spirit.

From the first apostasy of *Adam*, till the days of *Abraham*, all the forms and instituted ordinances of religion, which were given to men, were designed as a general

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\* As the second person is considered as vested with the office of mediation, and the holy Ghost, as the sanctifier and comforter, so God the Father is, in a peculiar manner, the object of our faith, love, and worship. So *Peter* tells us, *1 Pet.* i. 21. "Through *Christ* we believe in God." So writes doctor *Owen*, in his sermons lately published, and so all our divines practise in their holy ministrations.

instruction for all the nations of the earth, to shew them, in what manner, such guilty and sinful creatures might have access to God, and find acceptance with him. And these forms and ordinances, which were of such infinite importance, should have been preserved alive, by constant tradition, amongst all mankind. Whatsoever divine instructions God gave to *Adam* and *Noah*, were the appointed methods of worship and access to God for all their posterity, that is, for all the world, till God should reveal some new methods to them: for each of those two patriarchs were the fathers of all mankind; one before, and the other after the flood.

But when God called *Abraham*, he favoured him, and his household, with peculiar privileges, and appointed to them new and peculiar forms of worship, and access to himself. And here began the distinction of the world into two parts: Some were obliged to the religion of *Abraham*, the rest left to the religion of *Noah*. But as most of the posterity of *Noah* soon forgot the true God, and degenerated into various forms of idolatry, so the religion of *Abraham* was also, for the most part, lost among the families of *Ismael*, and the sons of *Keturah*, and was chiefly retained and practised in the household of *Isaac*, and in the tribes of *Jacob*, surnamed *Israel*.

In the days of *Moses* large additions were made to the religion of *Abraham*, and then the family or nation of *Israel* was, in a special manner, separated to be a peculiar people to God. Their methods of access to God, by priests and sacrifices, by blood and incense, by sprinklings and washings, were very numerous, and continued to be practised in the *jewish* nation for many ages, even till the *Messiah* came, while the gentiles had utterly lost the religion of *Noah* their father.

But here observe, that all the chief rites and ceremonies of worship, which were ever given to *Adam* or *Noah*, to *Abraham* or *Moses*, pointed to the great *Messiah*, and to the religion of *Christ*. These ceremonies had no power to save, but by virtue of their relation to *Christ*, the seed of the woman, the great reconciler, who was to come. It was, therefore, through the mediation of *Christ*, and by the influence of the blessed Spirit, that *Adam*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Israel*, that sinful mankind in all nations, and in all ages, had ever any true access to God, or were received into his favour; though the person and offices of *Christ* were, in those days, concealed under ceremonies, figures, and shadows, and the influences of the blessed Spirit, were not quite so clearly revealed. "To them was the gospel preached, as well as unto us," *Gal.* iii. 8. *Heb.* iv. 2. the same gospel, and the same salvation, but covered with many veils.

It is no wonder then, that, when *Christ* himself, the Son of God and of man, the great reconciler, was come into the world, and had revealed to men, in a clearer light, the doctrine of his own mediation, and taught, and promised the necessary influences of the Spirit of God; it is no wonder, that all other instituted rites and forms of worship should cease, which were only figures and signs of the glorious religion of the new testament. It is no wonder, that all nations should be now required to draw near to God the Father, by the mediation of his own Son, and through the aids of his own Spirit: All nations, I say, wheresoever the sound of this religion has reached, wheresoever this gospel has been published to mankind. This is the universal rule of approach to God, for every sinful man, in order to obtain the divine favour. All other forms are, as it were, dissolved, and melted down into this one glorious appointment: This is the divine uniformity of religion and worship, which God has now ordained among all his saints. Through one Lord *Jesus*, both *Israel*, and the rest of the nations, must have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father. "By one Spirit, we are all baptized into one body, whether we be *Jews* or gentiles, whether we be

be bond or free," 1 Cor. xii. 13. And one Spirit, where it prevails gloriously, will lead us into one religion. As "there is but one God and Father of all, so there must be but one Lord and mediator, and one holy Spirit: For there must be one faith, one hope, one baptism," into the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy Ghost, to whom be glory and praise for ever.

Let us conclude with three remarks, answerable to the three things contained in my text, which have been the distinct heads of my discourse.

Remark I. With what rich grace and glory has God condescended to reveal himself to us in the new testament! It is here God the Father appears eminently to begin, and carry on the divine affairs of his kingdom, of nature, providence, and grace, by his only begotten Son, and his eternal Spirit. It is here we learn the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. It is here God hath made known to us, more of his own incomprehensible nature, and his ways of operation among his creatures, than ever the light of nature could find out, or than all the former dispensations of grace did clearly reveal. The great God, the Father of all, manifests himself, as the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and, in him, as our God, and our Father; hereby he descends into a nearer relation to poor apostate mankind, in order to restore them to his favour, and to his image, to holiness, and eternal peace. He approaches near to us in his Son *Jesus*, who is the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," *Heb. i. 3*. He approaches near us indeed, by sending his Son, who is one with himself, to dwell in flesh; he comes down to us, and visits us, by the influences of his blessed Spirit, and causes our souls to ascend toward him, What rich and condescending love is this? By the same word, and the same Spirit, by which he created the heavens and the earth, does he transact the grand and important affair of peace and reconciliation with his guilty creatures. How divinely glorious is this doctrine of the blessed trinity! And what an astonishing favour is it, that the sacred three should join in the work of our salvation!

Remark II. How happily is the gospel suited to the recovery of fallen man, by supplying all his wants in a most divine manner?

Is the great God offended by the sin of man? Behold, he takes upon him in the gospel, the name and title of a Father, to invite perishing rebels to return to his mercy, and he employs his Son, and his Spirit, to give sinners a near access to himself.

Are we guilty criminals, condemned rebels, and afar off from God? Behold, the Son of God himself, who is one with the Father, takes flesh and blood upon him, and so far becomes one of us, that he may sustain the punishment of our iniquities, and mediate a peace between God and sinners: and this he does by his powerful intercession, in the virtue of his bloody sacrifice.

Is our nature corrupted by sin? Are we grown strangers and enemies to God by our continued rebellions? Behold, the blessed Spirit of God comes into our hearts: His almighty operations can enlighten our dark minds, bend our obstinate wills, change our corrupted affections, and make us willing to return to God in his own way, and to accept the reconciliation. He sends his own Spirit, to create us anew in his own image, and make us fit for his service, and his enjoyment.

We are, by nature, children of *Satan*, and children of wrath; the great God becomes a Father to us: We are condemned, and the Son of God, dwelling in the flesh, becomes a reconciler: We are unholy, and the Spirit of God becomes our sanctifier. We have destroyed our selves beyond all possibility of created help, and

God himself becomes our saviour, and he will be seen in every part of our salvation, a divine Father, a divine reconciler, and a divine sanctifier.

Remark III. How well has the blessed God provided for love and union amongst all his true worshippers! He has left them no just ground to contend, and quarrel, or break themselves into little angry parties, for he has now appointed but one religion for them all, one general method of access to him. He has ordained but one mediator, *Jesus Christ*, and has appointed one Spirit, to draw their hearts near to himself. A glorious religion indeed, that unites *Jews* and gentiles, and mankind of all nations, to the great and blessed God! And what a disgrace is it to this religion, that we should not be more united to one another? "We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God:" *Eph. ii. 19*. What a most absurd and grievous thing it is, that we, who are brought into such a state of friendship by divine grace, should obey the corrupt dictates of nature, and the lusts of the flesh! that we should quarrel and fight, even in the presence of that God, to whom we have access by the blood of one mediator, and by the influence of one Spirit! Surely this must be a Spirit of union, and peace, and love, this one Spirit, which reconciles God and man, who were at a dreadful distance; this Spirit which reconciles *Jew* and gentile, who were mutual strangers and enemies. And how can we suppose we are governed by this uniting Spirit, this Spirit of gentleness, meekness and friendship, if we indulge the ferments of wrath and revenge in our bosom, if we resolve to carry on strife and contention with the language of railing, and reviling against those, who worship the same God, by the same mediator? How can we hope, that this Spirit has ever reconciled us to God, if we persist in enmity against our brethren? Should we "have all faith, and remove mountains, if we have not love, we are not christians," *1 Cor. xiii. 2*. The very nature and life of christianity, is faith working by love, faith leading the soul to God the Father, through the mediation of *Jesus Christ* his Son, by the aid of the holy Spirit, and producing all works of holiness, by the influence of love to God and man. May this be wrought in our hearts, and practised in our whole course of life!

#### THE RECOLLECTION.

"Hast thou heard, O my soul, hast thou learned, the glorious discoveries, that God has made of himself to fallen creatures, and does not thy heart rejoice within thee, at the sound of such a doctrine, and such a salvation? Has the blessed God revealed himself to thee in his beloved Son, and by his holy Spirit? And does he invite thee to approach him as a Father, by such a divine mediator, and such a divine sanctifier? O let all the powers of thy nature submit with joy to all the discoveries of such grace. Go, humble thy self before an offended God, who is willing to become a Father and a friend: Go, in the name of *Jesus*, the great mediator, and make thy approaches to the throne. Seek the influences of the holy Spirit to enlighten thy dark understanding, to conquer the obstinacy of thy will, and subdue all thy affections, to a sincere compliance with this method of divine love: And let the constraining force of this sweet doctrine, unite thy heart to all thy fellow-christians, who sincerely worship the same God, who seek for acceptance through the blood of the same mediator, and who depend upon the aids of the same Spirit.

"Happy day, when faith, and holiness, and love, shall be found shining, and reigning amongst all that profess the religion of *Christ*! O when shall that promised hour appear, that "the Lord *Jehovah* shall be king over all the earth, and there shall be



be one Lord, and his name one?" *Zech. xiv. 9.* Blessed *Jesus*, hast thou, by thy death, "broken down that middle wall of partition, that stood between the *Jews* and the gentiles? Hast thou reconciled both unto God in one body by thy cross, and slain the enmity thereby?" *Ephes. ii. 16.* What wretched creatures are we then to build up new walls of partition our selves, by inventing, and imposing new forms of faith and worship, which thy word has not taught us, and for which it has given us no foundation! What wretched creatures are we, to raise up so many new enmities in the christian church, and support them with fierce and implacable zeal and fury! This is to walk as enemies, even to the cross of *Christ*, and contrary to the compassionate designs of a dying saviour. One would think, the blood of the Son of God crucified should teach us kinder lessons. O when shall all these enmities be abolished by the over-powering influence of the Spirit of light and love? When shall these unhappy walls of partition be broken down, and the whole flock of *Christ* become one blessed fold under *Jesus* the universal shepherd? When shall we arrive at the "perfect unity of the faith, and maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of love?" *Eph. iv. 3, 13.* When shall the glory and beauty of the primitive church be restored, where "the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and one soul," *Acts iv. 32.* united in one faith and hope, by the almighty influences of one Spirit? Come, blessed redeemer, come and accomplish thy own gracious words of promise: Let there be one fold and one shepherd; and let thy blood and thy Spirit, by which we have access to one God, even the Father, cement all our hearts to each other in such an union as shall never be dissolved. Then shall we join with all the creation in one eternal song, even the song which thy word has taught us: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb, for ever and ever." *Rev. v. 13.* Amen.

A HYMN

A  
H Y M N  
F O R  
S E R M O N XLIV.

*The doctrine of the trinity, and the use of it: Or, access to the Father, through Christ, by the holy Spirit.*

[ Common metre. ]

1.

**F**Ather of glory, to thy name,  
Immortal praise we give,  
Who dost an act of grace proclaim,  
And bid us, rebels, live.

2.

Immortal honour to the Son,  
Who makes thy anger cease;  
Our lives he ransom'd with his own,  
And dy'd, to buy our peace.

3.

To thy almighty Spirit be  
Immortal glory giv'n,

Whose influence brings us near to thee,  
And trains us up for heav'n.

4.

Let men, with their united voice,  
Adore th' eternal God,  
And spread his honours, and their joys,  
Through nations far abroad.

5.<sup>1</sup>

Let faith, and love, and duty join,  
One general song to raise,  
And saints in earth and heav'n combine,  
In harmony and praise.

The

**The World to Come:**  
**O R,**  
**DISCOURSES**  
**O N T H E**  
**JOYS or SORROWS**  
**Of departed souls at**  
**D E A T H,**  
**A N D T H E**  
**GLORY or T E R R O R**  
**O F T H E**  
**R E S U R R E C T I O N.**

Whereto is prefixed

**An ESSAY toward the proof of a SEPARATE STATE of SOULS  
after D E A T H.**



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T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**A**MONG all the solemn and important things, which relate to religion, there is nothing that strikes the soul of man, with so much awe and solemnity, as the scenes of death, and the dreadful or delightful consequents, which attend it. Who can think of entering into that unknown region, where spirits dwell, without the strongest impressions upon the mind arising from so strange a manner of existence? Who can take a survey of the resurrection of the millions of the dead, and of the tribunal of *Christ*, whence men and angels must receive their doom, without the most painful solicitude, "What will my sentence be?" Who can meditate on the intense and unmingled pleasure or pain in the world to come, without the most pathetic emotions of soul, since each of us must be determined to one of these states, and they are both of everlasting duration?

These are the things, that touch the springs of every passion, in the most sensible manner, and raise our hopes and our fears to their supreme exercise. These are the subjects, with which, our blessed saviour and his apostles frequently entertained their hearers, in order to persuade them to hearken, and attend to the divine lessons, which they published amongst them. These were some of the sharpest weapons of their holy warfare, which entered into the inmost vitals of mankind, and pierced their consciences with the highest solicitude. These have been the happy means to awaken thousands of sinners, to flee from the wrath to come; and to allure and hasten them to enter into that glorious refuge, that is set before them in the gospel.

It is for the same reason, that I have selected a few discourses, on these arguments, out of my public ministry, to set them before the eyes of the world in a more public manner; that, if possible, some thoughtless creatures might be roused out of their sinful slumbers, and might awake into a spiritual and eternal life, through the concurring influences of the blessed Spirit.

I am not willing to disappoint my readers, and therefore I would let them know before-hand, that they will find very little, in this book, to gratify their curiosity about the many questions relating to the invisible world, and the things, which God has not plainly revealed: Something of this kind, perhaps, may be found in "two discourses of death and heaven," which I published long ago\*: But, in the present discourses, I have very much neglected such curious enquiries. Nor will the ear, that has an itch for controversy, be much entertained here, for I have avoided matters of doubtful debate. Nor need the most zealous man of orthodoxy, fear to be led astray into new and dangerous sentiments, if he will but take the plainest and most evident dictates of scripture for his direction into all truth.

VOL. I.

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My

\* See volume the second, page 129.

My only design has been, to set the great and most momentous things of a future world, in the most convincing and affecting light, and to inforce them upon the conscience with all the fervour, that such subjects demand and require. And may our blessed redeemer, who reigns Lord of the invisible world, pronounce these words with a divine power, to the heart of every man, who shall either read, or hear them.

If this volume shall find any considerable acceptance among christians, there are several more discourses, on the same themes, lying by me, which may, in time, be communicated to the world.

The treatise, which is set as an introduction to this book, was printed several years ago, without the author's name, and there in a short preface, represented to the reader these few reasons of it's writing and publication, *viz.*

The principles of atheism and infidelity have prevailed so far upon our age, as to break in upon the sacred fences of virtue and piety, and to destroy the noblest and most effectual springs of true and vital religion; I mean those, which are contained in the blessed gospel. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and the consequent states of heaven and hell, is a guard and motive of divine force; but it is renounced by the enemies of our holy christianity: And should we give up the recompences of separate souls, while the deist denies the resurrection of the body, I fear, between both, we should sadly enfeeble, and expose the cause of virtue, and leave it too naked and defenceless. The christian would have but one persuasive, of this kind remaining, and the deist would have none at all.

It is necessary, therefore, to be upon our guard, and to establish every motive, that we can derive, either from reason or scripture, to secure religion in the world. The doctrine of the state of separate spirits, and the commencement of rewards and punishments immediately after death, is one of those sacred fences of virtue, which we borrow from scripture, and it is highly favoured by reason, and therefore it may not be unseasonable to publish such arguments, as may tend to the support of it.

In this second edition of this small treatise, I have added several paragraphs and pages, to defend the same doctrine, and the last section contains an answer to various new objections, which I had not met with when I first began to write on this subject. I hope it is set upon such a firm foundation of many scriptures, as cannot possibly be overturned, nor do I think it a very easy matter any way to evade the force of them. May the grace of God lead us on further into every truth, that tends to maintain and propagate faith and holiness. Amen.

Note, Where these discourses shall be used, as a religious service, in private families on Lord's-day evenings, each of them will afford a division near the middle, lest the service be made too long and tiresome.

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A N  
E S S A Y

Toward a PROOF of a

SEPARATE STATE

O F

S O U L S

B E T W E E N

DEATH and the RESURRECTION,

A N D

The commencement of the rewards of VIRTUE and VICE  
immediately after death.

S E C T I O N I.

*The introduction, or proposal of the question, with a distinction of the persons  
who oppose it.*

**I**T is confessed, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, at the last day, and the everlasting joys, and the eternal sorrows, that shall succeed it, as they are described in the new testament, are a very awful sanction to the gospel of *Christ*, and carry in them such principles of hope and terror, as should effectually discourage vice and irreligion, and become a powerful attractive to the practice of faith, and love, and universal holiness.

But so corrupt and perverse are the inclinations of men, in this fallen and degenerate world, and their passions are so much impressed and moved, by things that

are present, or just at hand, that the joys of heaven, and the sorrows of hell, when set far beyond death and the grave, at some vast and unknown distance of time, would have but too little influence on their hearts and lives. And though these solemn and important events are never so certain in themselves, yet being looked upon as things a great way off, make too feeble an impression on the conscience, and their distance is much abused to give an indulgence to present sensualities. For this we have the testimony of our blessed saviour himself, *Matth. xxiv. 48.* "The evil servant says, my Lord delays his coming; then he begins to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken:" And *Solomon* teaches us the same truth, *Eccles. viii. 11.* "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." And even the good servants, in this imperfect state, the sons of virtue and piety, may be too much allured to indulge sinful negligence, and yield to temptations too easily, when the terrors of another world are set so far off, and their hope of happiness is delayed so long. It is granted, indeed, that this sort of reasoning is very unjust; but so foolish are our natures, that we are too ready to take up with it, and to grow more remiss in the cause of religion.

Whereas, if it can be made to appear, from the word of God, that, at the moment of death, the soul enters into an unchangeable state, according to it's character and conduct here on earth, and that the recompences of vice and virtue are, in some measure, to begin immediately upon the end of our state of trial; and if, besides all this, there be a glorious and a dreadful resurrection to be expected, with eternal pain or eternal pleasure, both for soul and body, and that in a more intense degree, when the theater of this world is shut up, and *Christ Jesus* appears to pronounce his public judgment on the world, then all those little subterfuges are precluded, which mankind would form to themselves, from the unknown distance of the day of recompence: Virtue will have a nearer and stronger guard placed about it, and piety will be attended with superior motives, if it's initial rewards are near at hand, and shall commence as soon as this life expires; and the vicious and profane will be more effectually affrighted, if the hour of death must immediately consign them to a state of perpetual sorrows, and bitter anguish of conscience, without hope, and with a fearful expectation of yet greater sorrows and anguish.

I know what the opposers of the separate state reply here, *viz.* that the whole time from death, to the resurrection, is but as the sleep of a night, and the dead shall awake out of their graves, utterly ignorant and insensible of the long distance of time that hath past since their death. One year, or one thousand years, will be the same thing to them; and therefore they should be as careful to prepare for the day of judgment, and the rewards that attend it, as they are for their entrance into the separate state at death, if there were any such state to receive them.

I grant, men should be so in reason and justice: But such is the weakness and folly of our natures, that men will not be so much influenced, nor alarmed by distant prospects, nor so solicitous to prepare for an event, which they suppose to be so very far off, as they would for the same event, if it commences as soon as ever this mortal life expires. The vicious man will indulge his sensualities, and lie down to sleep in death with this comfort, "I shall take my rest here for a hundred; or a thousand years, and, perhaps, in all that space my offences may be forgotten, or something may happen that I may escape; or, let the worst come that can come, I shall have a long sweet nap before my sorrows begin:" Thus the force of divine terrors are greatly enervated by this delay of punishment.

I will



I will not undertake to determine, when the soul is dismissed from the body, whether there be any explicit divine sentence passed, concerning it's eternal state of happiness or misery, according to it's works in this life; or whether the pain or pleasure, that belongs to the separate state, be not chiefly such as arises, by natural consequence, from a life of sin, or a life of holiness, and as being under the power of an approving, or a condemning conscience: But it seems to me more probable, that, since "the spirit returns to God that gave it," *Eccles. xii. 7.* to "God, the judge of all, with whom the spirits of the just made perfect dwell," *Heb. xii. 24.* and since the spirit of a christian, when "absent from the body, is present with the Lord, that is, *Christ,*" *2 Cor. v. 8.* I am more inclined to think, that there is some sort of judicial determination of this important point, either by God himself, or by *Jesus Christ,* into whose hands "he has committed all judgment," *John v. 22.* "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" *Heb. ix. 27.* whether immediate, or more distant, is not here expressly declared, though the immediate connexion of the words, hardly gives room for seventeen hundred years to intervene. But if the solemn formalities of a judgment be delayed, yet the conscience of a separate spirit, reflecting on a holy, or a sinful life, is sufficient to begin a heaven, or a hell, immediately after death.

Amongst those, who delay the season of recompence till the resurrection, there are some, who suppose the soul to exist still, as a distinct being from the body, but to pass the whole interval of time, in a state of stupor, or sleep, being altogether unconscious and unactive. Others again imagine, that the soul it self has not a sufficient distinction from the body, to give it any proper existence when the body dies; but that it's existence shall be renewed at the resurrection of the body, and then be made the subject of joy or pain, according to it's behaviour in this mortal state.

I think there might be an effectual argument against each of these opinions, raised from the principles of philosophy: I shall just give a hint of them, and then proceed to search what scripture has revealed in this matter, which is of much greater importance to us, and will have a more powerful influence on the minds of christians.

I. Some imagine the soul of man to be his blood, or his breath, or a sort of vital flame, or refined air or vapour, or the composition and motion of the fluids and solids in the animal body. This they suppose to be the spring and principle of his intellectual life, and of all his thoughts and consciousness, as well as of his animal life. And though this soul of man dies together with the body, and has no manner of separate existence, or consciousness, yet, when his body is raised from the grave, they suppose this principle of consciousness is renewed again, and intellectual life is given him at the resurrection, as well as a new corporeal life.

But it should be considered, that this conscious or thinking principle having lost it's existence for a season, it will be quite a new thing, or another creature at the resurrection; and the man will be properly another person, another "self," another I or "he:" And such a new conscious principle, or person, cannot properly be rewarded, or punished, for personal virtues or vices, of which it self cannot be conscious by any power of memory or reflexion, and which were transacted in this mortal state by another distinct principle of consciousness. For if the conscious principle it self, or the thinking being, has ceased to exist, it is impossible that it should retain any memory of former actions, since it self began to be but in the moment of the resurrection. The doctrine of rewarding or punishing the same soul or intelli-

intelligent nature, which did good or evil in this life, necessarily requires that the same soul, or intelligent nature, should have a continued and uninterrupted existence, that so the same conscious being, which did good or evil, may be rewarded or punished.

II. Those, who suppose the soul of man to have a real distinct existence when the body dies, but only to fall into a state of slumber, without consciousness or activity, must, I think, suppose this soul to be material; that is, an extended and solid substance.

If they suppose it to be inextended, or to have no parts or quantity, I confess I have no manner of idea of the existence, or possibility of such an inextended being, without consciousness or active power, nor do they pretend to have any such idea, as I ever heard, and therefore they generally grant it to be extended.

But if they imagine the soul to be extended, it must either have something more of solidity or density than mere empty space, or it must be quite as unsolid and thin as space it self: Let us consider both these.

If it be as thin and subtle as mere empty space, yet while it is active and conscious, I own it must have a proper existence; but if it once begin to sleep, and drop all consciousness and activity, I have no other idea of it, but the same which I have of empty space; and that I conceive to be mere nothing, though it impose upon us with the appearance of some sort of properties.

If they allow the soul to have any, the least, degree of density above what belongs to empty space, this is solidity in the philosophic sense of the word, and then it is solid extension, which I call matter: and a material being may indeed be laid asleep; that is, it may cease to have any motion in it's parts; but motion is not consciousness: And how either solid or unsolid extension, either space or matter, can have any consciousness or thought belonging to any part of it, or spread through the whole of it, I know not; or what any sort of extension can do toward thought or consciousness, I confess I understand not; nor can I frame any more an idea of it, than I can of a blue motion, or a sweet-smelling sound, or of fire, air, or water reasoning or rejoicing: and I do not affect to speak of things, or words, when I can form no correspondent ideas of what is spoken.

So far as I can judge, the soul of man, in it's own nature, is nothing else but a conscious and active principle, subsisting by itself, made after the image of God, who is all conscious activity; and it is still the same being, whether it be united to an animal body, or separated from it. If the body die, the soul still exists an active and conscious power or principle, or being; and if it ceases to be conscious and active, I think it ceases to be; for I have no conception of what remains.

Now if the conscious principle continue conscious after death, it will not be in a mere conscious indolence: The good man, and the wicked, will not have the same indolent existence. Virtue or vice, in the very temper of this being, when absent from matter or body, will become a pleasure or a pain to the conscience of a separate spirit.

I am well aware, that this is a subject, which has employed the thoughts of many philosophers, and I do but just intimate my own sentiments, without presuming to judge for others. But the defence or refutation of arguments, on this subject, would draw me into a field of philosophical discourse, which is very foreign to my present purpose: And, whether this reasoning stand or fall, it will have but very little influence on this controversy with the generality of christians, because

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it is a thing rather to be determined by the revelation of the word of God. I therefore drop this argument at once, and apply my self immediately to consider the proofs, that may be drawn from scripture, for the soul's existence in a separate state after death, and before the resurrection.

## SECTION II.

## Probable arguments for the separate state.

**T**HERE are several places of scripture, in the old testament, as well as in the new, which may be most naturally and properly construed, to signify the existence of the soul in a separate state, after the body is dead; but since they do not carry with them such plain evidence, or forcible proof, and may possibly be interpreted to another sense, I shall not long insist upon them: however, it may not be amiss just to mention a few of them, and pass away.

*Psalms lxxiii. 24, 26.* "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory: My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." In these verses, "receiving to glory," seems immediately to follow a guidance through this world; and when the flesh and heart of the psalmist should fail him in death, God continued to be his portion for ever, God would receive him to himself as such a portion, and thereby he gave strength, or courage to his heart, even in a dying hour. It would be a very odd and unnatural exposition of this text, to interpret it only of the resurrection, thus, "thou shalt guide me, by thy counsel, through this life, and, after the long interval of some thousand years, thou wilt receive me to glory."

*Eccles. xii. 7.* "Then shall the dust return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it." It is confessed, the word "spirit," in the *hebrew*, is the same with "breath," and is represented, in some places of scripture, as the spring of animal life to the body: Yet it is evident, in many other places, the word spirit signifies the conscious principle in man, or the intelligent being, which knows and reasons, perceives and acts. The scripture speaks of being "grieved in spirit," *Isa. liv. 6.* "of rejoicing in spirit," *Luke x. 21.* "The spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man," *1 Cor. ii. 11.* "There is a spirit in man;" that is, a principle of understanding, *Job xxxii. 8.* And this spirit, both of the wicked and the righteous, at death, returns to God, *Eccles. xii. 7.* to God, who, as I hinted before, is the judge of all in the world of spirits, probably to be further determined and disposed of, as to it's state of reward or punishment.

*Isa. lvii. 2.* "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come, he shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." The soul of every one, that walketh uprightly, shall, at death, enter into a state of peace, while their body rests in the bed of dust.

*Luke ix. 30, 31.* "And behold there talked with him; that is, with *Jesus*, two men, which were *Moses* and *Elias*, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at *Jerusalem*." I grant it possible, that these might be but mere visions, which appeared to our blessed saviour, and his apostles: But it is a much more natural and obvious interpretation, to suppose, that the spirits of these two great men, whereof one was the institutor, and the other the reformer of the *jewish* church, did really appear to *Christ*, who was the reformer of the world, and the

the institutor of the christian church, and converse with him about the important event of his death, and his return to heaven. Perhaps, the spirit of *Elijah* had his heavenly body with him there, since he never died, but was carried alive to heaven; but *Moses* gave up his soul, at the call of God, when no man was near him, and his body was buried by God himself. See 2 *Kings* ii. 11. and *Deut.* xxxiv. 1, 5, 6. and his spirit was probably made visible, only, by an assumed vehicle, for that purpose.

*John* v. 24. "Who so heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, — is passed from death to life:" *John* vi. 47, 50, 51. "This is the bread, which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." *John* xi. 26. "Who so liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die:" To which may be added the words of *Christ* to the woman of *Samaria*, *John* iv. 14. "The water, that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." 1 *John* v. 12. "He that hath the Son, hath life," &c. The argument, I draw from these scriptures, is this. It is hardly to be supposed, that our saviour, in this gospel, and *John*, in his first epistle, imitating him, should speak such strong language concerning eternal life, actually given to, and possessed by the believers of that day, if there must be an interruption of it by total death, or sleep, both of soul and body, for almost two thousand years, that is, till the resurrection.

*Acts* vii. 9. "And they stoned *Stephen*, calling upon God, and saying, Lord *Jesus*, receive my spirit." These who deny a separate state, suppose that *Stephen*, here, commits his spirit, or principle of human life, into the hands or care of *Christ*, because the life of a saint is said to be "hid with *Christ* in God," *Col.* iii. 3, 4. that he might restore it at the resurrection, and raise him to life again. But, I think, this is an unnatural force put upon these words, contrary to their most obvious meaning, if we consider the context: for *Stephen* here had a vision of the son of man, or *Christ Jesus*, "standing at the right hand of God, and the glory of God near him;" see verses 55, 56. Whereupon *Stephen*, being conscious of the existence of *Christ* in that glorious state, desired, that he would receive his spirit, and take it to dwell with him in his Father's house: not to lie and sleep in heaven, for there is no night there, but to behold the glory of *Christ*, according to the many promises that *Christ* had made to his disciples, that he "would go and prepare a place for them in his Father's house, and that they should be with him there to behold his glory," *John* xiv. 3. and xvii. 24. which I shall have occasion to speak of afterward.

*Rom.* viii. 10, 11. And if *Christ* be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness;" that is, if *Christ* dwell in you, by the sanctifying influences of his spirit, it is true indeed, your body is mortal, and must die, because it is doomed to death, from the fall of *Adam*, on the account of sin, and because sinful principles still dwell in this fleshly body; but your soul or spirit is life, or, as some copies read ζῷ, instead of ζῶν, your spirit lives when the body is dead, and enjoys a life of happiness, because of the righteousness imputed to you; that is, your justification unto life, *Rom.* v. 17, 18, 21. I know there are several other ways of construing the words of this verse by metaphors; but the plain and most natural antithesis, which appears here between the death of the body of a saint, because of sin or guilt, and the continuance of the spirit, or soul, in a life of peace, because of justification, or righteousness, and that even when the body is dead, gives a pretty clear proof, that this is the sense of the apostle. This is also further confirmed by the next verse, which promises the resurrection of the dead body in due time. "If the  
spirit

Spirit of him, that raised up *Christ* from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up *Christ* from the dead, that is, God the Father, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit, that dwelleth in you." The spirit, or soul of the faint, lives without dying, because of it's pardon of sin, and justification, and sanctification, in the tenth verſe; and the body, not the spirit or ſoul, ſhall be quickened, or raised to life again, by the bleſſed Spirit of God, which dwells in the faints, verſe 11.

2 *Cor.* v. 1, 2. "For we know, that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of God, a houſe, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan earneſtly, deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe, which is from heaven. Verſe 4. We, in this tabernacle, groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be ſwallowed up of life." It is evident, that this houſe from heaven, this building of God, is ſomething, which is like the clothing of a ſoul diveſted of this earthly tabernacle, verſes 1, 2. or it is the clothing of the whole perſon, body and ſoul, which would abrogate the ſtate of mortality, and ſwallow it up in life, verſe 4. For though in verſe 4. the apoſtle ſuppoſes, that the ſoul doth not deſire the death of the body, or that it felt ſhould be unclothed, and, therefore, he would rather chuſe to have this ſtate of bleſſed immortality ſuperinduced on his body and ſoul, at once, without dying, yet, in the firſt verſe, he plainly means ſuch a houſe in, or from heaven, or ſuch a clothing, which may come upon the ſoul immediately, as ſoon as the earthly houſe, or tabernacle of his body, is diſſolved. And how dubious ſoever this may appear to thoſe, who read the chapter only thus far, yet the 8. verſe, which ſuppoſes good men to be preſent with *Christ*, when abſent from the body, determines the ſenſe of it, as I have explained it; of which hereafter.

Perhaps, it is hard to determine, whether this ſuperinduced clothing be like the ſhekinah, or viſible glory, in which *Christ*, *Moses*, and *Elias* appeared at the tranſfiguration, and which ſome ſuppoſe to have belonged to *Adam* in innocency; or whether it ſignify only a ſtate of happy immortality, ſuperinduced, or brought in upon the departing ſoul at death, or upon the ſoul and body united, as in this life, and with which thoſe faints ſhall be clothed, who are found alive at the coming of *Christ*, according to 1 *Cor.* xv. 52—54. which will not kill the body, but ſwallow up it's mortal ſtate in immortal life.

Let this matter, I ſay, be determined either way, yet the great point ſeems to be evident, even beyond probability, that there is a conſcious being ſpoken of, which is very diſtinct from it's tabernacle, or houſe, or clothing, and which exiſts ſtill, what ever it's clothing, or it's dwelling be, or whether it be put off, or put on; and that when the earthly houſe, or veſture, is diſſolved, or put off, the heavenly houſe, or clothing, is ready at hand to be put on immediately, to render the ſoul of the chriſtian fit to be preſent with the Lord.

2 *Cor.* xii. 2, 3. "I knew a man in *Christ*, above fourteen years ago, whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth: how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unſpeakable words." I grant, this ecſtaſy of the apoſtle, does not actually ſhew the exiſtence of a ſeparate ſtate, after death, till the reſurrection; yet it plainly manifeſts *St. Paul's* belief, that there might be ſuch a ſtate, and that the ſoul might be ſeparated from the body, and might exiſt, and think, and know, and act in paradise, in a ſtate of ſeparation, and hear, and, perhaps, converſe in the unſpeakable language of that world, while it was abſent from the body.

And, as I acknowledge, I am one of thoſe perſons, who do not believe, that the intellectual ſpirit, or mind of man, is the proper principle of animal life to the body

dy, but that it is another distinct conscious being, that generally uses the body as a habitation, engine, or instrument, while it's animal life remains; so I am of opinion it is a possible thing, for the intellectual spirit, in a miraculous manner, by the special order of God, to act, in a state of separation, without the death of the animal body, since the life of the body depends upon breath, and air, and the regular temper and motion of the solids and fluids of which it is composed \*. And St. *Paul* seems here to be of the same mind, by his doubting, whether his spirit was in the body, or out of the body, while it was rapt into the third heaven, and enjoyed this vision, his body being yet alive.

*Phil. i. 21.* "For me to live is *Christ*, and to die is gain." The apostle, whilst he was here upon earth, spent his life in the service of *Christ*, and enjoyed many glorious communications from him. "For him to live was *Christ*." And, on this account, he was contented to continue here in life longer: yet he is well satisfied, that death would be an advantage or gain to him. Now we can hardly suppose, what gain it would be for St. *Paul* to die, if his soul immediately went to sleep, and became unactive and unconscious, while his body lay in the grave, and neither soul nor body could do any service for *Christ*, or receive any communications from him till the great rising-day. This text seems to carry the argument above a mere probability.

*I Thess. iv. 14.* "For if we believe, that *Jesus* died, and rose again, even so them also, which sleep in *Jesus*, will God bring with him." The most natural and evident sense of these words, is this, that when the man *Jesus Christ*, in whom dwells the fulness of the godhead, shall descend from heaven, in order to raise the dead bodies of those that died, or went to sleep in the faith of *Christ*, God dwelling in him will bring with him the souls of his saints, who were in paradise, down to earth, to be re-united to their bodies, when *Jesus* raises them from the dead, of which the apostle speaks in the 6. verse: This, I say, is the most natural and obvious sense; other paraphrases of the words seem strained and unnatural.

*I Thess. v. 10.* "*Jesus Christ*, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." Sleep is the death of good men, in the language of the apostle, in chapter iv. verses 13—15. and sleep, in this verse, can neither signify natural sleep, as verse 7. nor spiritual sloth, as verse 6. therefore it must signify death here. Now they, who are asleep in *Christ*, in this sense, do still live together.

\* It would be thought, perhaps, a little foreign to my present purpose, if I should stay here to prove, that it is not the conscious principle in man that gives or maintains the animal life of his body. It is granted, that, according to the course of nature, and the general appointment of God therein, this conscious principle, or spirit, continues it's communications with the body, while the body has animal life, or is capable of it's natural motions, and able to obey the volitions of the spirit; and, on this account, the union of the rational spirit to the body, and the animal life of the body, are often represented as one and the same thing.

But if we enter into a philosophical consideration of things, we should remember, that animals of every kind, in earth, air, and sea, and even the minutest insects, which swarm in millions, and worlds of them, which are invisible to the naked eye, have all an animal life, but no such conscious or thinking principle as is in man: And why may not the body of man have the same sort of animal life quite distinct from the conscious spirit?

Besides, if this conscious principle give life to the body, medicines and physicians, whose power reaches only to rectify the disordered solids or fluids of the body, would not be so necessary to preserve life, as an orator to persuade the spirit to continue in the body, and preserve it's life. And, accordingly, we read of foreign ignorant nations, where the kindred persuade the dying person to live, and tarry with them, and not to forsake them; and, when the person is dead, they mourn and reprove him, "Why were you so unkind to leave and forsake us?" And indeed this conduct of those poor savages is a very natural inference from their supposition of the intelligent spirit giving animal life to the body.

together with him in their souls, and shall live with him in their bodies also, when raised from the dead. This exposition arises near to a certainty of evidence.

1 Pet. iii. 18—20. “*Christ* was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also he went, and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of *Noah*.” I confess this is a text that has much puzzled interpreters, in what sense *Christ* may be said to go and preach to those ancient rebels, who were destroyed by the flood; whether he did it by his Spirit working in *Noah*, the preacher of righteousness, in those days; or whether in the three days in which the body of *Christ* lay dead, his soul visited the spirits of those rebels, in their separate state of imprisonment, on which some ground the notion of his descent into hell: But, let this be determined as it will, the most clear and easy sense of the apostle, when he speaks of the spirits in prison, is, that the souls of those rebels, after their bodies were destroyed by the flood, were reserved in prison for some special and future design: And this is very parallel to the present circumstances of fallen angels in *Jude*, verse 6. “The angels, that kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day:” And why may not the spirits of men be as well kept, in such a prison, as angelic spirits?

*Jude*, verse 7. “*Sodom* and *Gomorrha* are set forth for an example; suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” It is evident, that the material fire, which destroyed *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, was not eternal; for a great lake of water quickly overflowed, and now covers all that plain, where the fire was kindled, which burned down those cities. It is manifest also, that the day of resurrection, and future punishment, being not yet come, they do not, at this time, suffer the vengeance of eternal fire in their bodies: Nor can this verse, I think, be well explained, to make *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* an example to deter present sinners from uncleanness, but by allowing, that the spirits of those lewd persons are now suffering a degree of vengeance, or punishment, from the justice of God, which is compared to that fire, whereby their cities and their bodies were burned, and which vengeance, at the last great day, shall continue their punishment, and pronounce it eternal, or kindle material fire, which shall never be quenched.

The last text I shall mention is, *Rev.* vi. 9. “I saw, under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” I confess this is a book of visions, and this place, amongst others, might be explained as a mere vision of the apostle, if there were no other text, which confirmed the doctrine of a separate state: But, since, I think, there are some solid proofs of it in other parts of the new testament, I know not why this may not be explained, at least, something nearer to the literal sense of it, than those will allow, who suppose the soul to sleep from death to the resurrection. Why may not the spirits of the martyrs, which are now with God, pray him to hasten the accomplishment of his promises made to his church, and the day of vengeance upon his irreconcilable enemies?

## SECTION III.

*Some firmer or more evident proofs of a separate state.*

**I** Come now to consider those texts, which do more expressly and certainly discover the separate state, and which, I think, cannot, with any tolerable appearance of reason, be turned aside from their plain and obvious intention, to reveal and declare, that there is a separate state of souls. And such, in my opinion, are these that follow.

I. *Matth. x. 28.* "Fear not them, which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Every common reader, as well as every man of learning, who reads this text with a sincere mind, and without prejudice, I think, will acknowledge at least, that the most obvious and easy sense of the words implies, that there is a soul in man, which men cannot kill, even though they kill the body.

It is to very little purpose for writers to say, that the greek word ψυχή, which we translate soul here, doth, in other places in scripture, and even in the 39. verse of this very chapter, signify life, and consequently here it may, also, signify the animal life, or the person of the man; for it is manifest, that, in this place, it must signify some immortal principle in man that cannot die; whereas, when the body is killed, the animal life dies too, and does not exist till the body is raised again: But the soul is a principle in this place, which men cannot kill, even though they destroy the life of the body: And whatsoever other senses the word ψυχή may obtain in other texts, that cannot preclude such a sense of it, in this text, as is most usual in it self, and which the context makes necessary in this place.

Nor will it avail the supporters of the mortality of the soul to say, that this scripture means only, that men cannot kill the soul for ever, so that it shall for ever perish, and have no future life hereafter by a resurrection: for, in this sense, men cannot kill the body, so that it shall never revive, or rise again: But here is a plain distinction in the text, that the body may be killed, but the soul cannot.

And I think this scripture proves also, that, though the body may be laid to sleep in the grave, yet the soul cannot be laid to sleep; for the substance of the body still exists, and is not utterly destroyed by killing it, but only laid to sleep for a time, as the scripture often describes death: but the soul cannot be thus laid to sleep for a time, with it's substance still existing, for that would be to have no pre-eminence above the body, which is contrary to this assertion of our saviour.

II. *Luke xvi. 22—28.* "The beggar died, and was carried by angels into *Abraham's* bosom: The rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, — and said, father *Abraham*, have mercy on me, and send *Lazarus* to my father's house, — that he may testify to my brethren, lest they come also into this place of torment." I grant, that this account of the rich man and the beggar, is but a parable, and yet it may prove the existence of the rich man's soul, in a place of torment, before the resurrection of the body;

1. Because the existence of souls, in a separate state, whilst other men dwell here on earth, is the very foundation of the whole parable, and runs through the whole of it. The poor man died, and his soul was in paradise. The rich man's dead body was



was buried, and his soul was in hell, while his five brethren were here on earth, in a state of probation, and would not hearken to *Moses* and the prophets.

2. Because the very design of the parable is to shew, that a ghost sent from the other world, whether heaven or hell, to wicked men, who are here in a state of trial, will not be sufficient to convert them to holiness, if they reject the means of grace, and the ministers of the word. The very design of our saviour seems to be lost, if there be no souls existing in a separate state. A ghost, sent from the other world, could never be supposed to have any influence to convert sinners in this world, even in a parable, if there were no such things as ghosts there. The rich man's five brethren could have no motive to hearken to a ghost, pretending to come from heaven or hell, if there were no such things as ghosts, or separate souls, either happy or miserable. Now, surely, if parables can prove any thing at all, they must prove these propositions, which are both the foundation, and the design of the whole parable.

3. I might add yet further, that it is very strange, that our saviour should so particularly speak of angels carrying the soul of a man, whose body was just dead, into heaven, or paradise, which he calls *Abraham's bosom*; if there were no such state, or place, as a heaven for separate souls; if *Abraham's* soul had no residence there, no existence in that state; if angels had never any thing to do in such an office. What would the *Jews* have said, or thought of a prophet come from God, who had taught his doctrines to the people in such parables, as had scarce any sort of foundation in the reality, or nature of things.

But you will say, the *Jews* had such an opinion current among them, though it was a very false one, and that this was enough to support a parable: I answer, what could *Christ*, who is truth it self, have said more, or plainer, to confirm the *Jews* in this gross error of a separate state of souls, than to form a parable, which supposes this doctrine, in the very design and moral of it, as well as in the foundation and matter of it?

III. *Luke xx. 37, 38.* "Now that the dead are raised, even *Moses* shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*; for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." Some learned men suppose, that the controversy between *Christ* and the sadducees; in this place, was about the "anastasis," which implies the whole state of existence after death, including both the separate state and the resurrection, because the sadducees denied both these at once, and believed, that death finished the whole existence of the man. They denied angels and spirits, *Acts xxiii. 8.* that is, separate souls of men, and thought the rewards and punishments, mentioned in scripture, related only to this life. Upon this account they suppose our saviour's design is to prove the existence of persons or spirits in the separate state, as much as the resurrection of the body.

And when he says, that the Lord, or *Jehovah*, is described as the God of *Abraham*, &c. it supposes *Abraham*, at the same time, to have actually some life and existence, in some state or other, for "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all that are dead, and gone out of this world, still live unto God; that is, they have a present life, in the invisible world of spirits, as God is an invisible spirit, as well as they expect a resurrection of their body in due time.

How could God, in the days of *Moses*, be called actually the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, who were long since dead, if there was no sense in which they were

now

now alive to God, since our saviour declares, God is properly the God only of the living, and not of the dead? This part of the argument holds good, in whatsoever sense you construe the whole debate, and by whatsoever medium or connexion you prove the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; and this is obvious to the honest and unlearned reader, as well as to the men of learning.

IV. *Luke* xxiii. 42, 43. "And he, that is, the penitent thief upon the cross, said unto *Jesus*, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom: And *Jesus* said unto him, verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The thief upon the cross believed that *Christ* would enter into paradise, which he supposed to be *Christ's* kingdom, when he departed from this world, which was not his kingdom: And this he believed, partly according to the common sentiment of the *Jews*, concerning good men at their death, as well as it is agreeable to our saviour's own expressions to God, *John* xvii. 11. "Holy Father, I am no more in the world, and I come unto thee:" or, as he said to his disciples, *John* xvi. 28. "I leave the world, and go to the Father."

And, according to these expressions, *Luke* xxiii. 46. *Christ* dies with these words on his lips, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Our saviour taking notice of the repentance of the thief, acknowledging his own guilt, thus, "We are justly under this condemnation, and receive the due reward of our deeds," and taking notice also of his faith in the *Messiah*, as a king whose kingdom was not of this world, when he prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom:" *Christ*, I say, taking notice of both these, answers him with a promise of much grace, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The use of the word paradise in scripture and amongst ancient writers, *jewish* and *christian*, is to signify the happiness of holy souls in a separate state: And our saviour entering into that state, at his death, declared to the dying penitent, that he should be with him there immediately. It is certain that by the word, paradise, *St. Paul* means the place of happy spirits, into which he was transported, *2 Cor.* xii. 4. And this sense is very accommodate, and proper to this expression of our saviour, and to the prayer of the penitent thief, and it is as suitable to the design of *Christ*, in his epistle to the church of *Ephesus*, *Rev.* ii. 7. "The tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God," which are the only three places where the new testament uses this word.

I know there have been great pains taken to shew that the stops should be altered, and the comma should be placed after the word "to-day," thus, "I say unto thee to day, thou shalt be with me in paradise," that is, some time or other hereafter. As though *Christ* meant no more than this, *viz.* "thou askest me to remember thee when I come into my kingdom: And I declare unto thee truly this very day, that some long time hereafter thou shalt be with me in happiness at thy resurrection, when my kingdom shall be just at an end, and I shall give it all up to the Father," as in *1 Cor.* xv. 24. Can any one imagine this to be the meaning of our blessed saviour, in answer to this prayer of the dying penitent? I know also there are other laborious criticisms to represent these words, "to-day," in other places of scripture as referring to some distant time, and not to mean that very day of twenty-four hours: But rather than enter into a long and critical debate upon all those texts, I will venture to trust the sense of it in this place, with any sincere and unlearned reader.

But

But, if we consult the learned, doctor *Whitby* will tell us, that it was a familiar phrase of the *Jews*, to say on a just man's dying, "to-day shall he sit in the bosom of *Abraham*." And, it was their common opinion, that the "souls of the righteous who were very eminent in piety, were carried immediately into paradise." The *Chaldee* paraphrase on *Solomon's Song*, chapter iv. 12. takes some notice of the "souls of the just, who are carried into paradise by the hands of angels." *Grotius* in his notes on *Luke* xxiii. 43. mentions the hearty and serious wish of the *Jews*, concerning their friends who are dead, in the language of the talmudical writers, "Let his soul be gathered to the garden of *Eden*." And in their solemn prayers when one dies, "Let him have his portion in paradise, and also in the world to come," by which they mean the state of the resurrection, and plainly distinguished it from this immediate entrance into *Eden* or paradise at the hour of death. The *Jews* suppose *Enoch* to be carried to paradise even in his body; and that the souls of good men have no interruption of life: but that there was a "reward for blameless souls," as the book of *Wisdom* speaks, chapter ii. 22. "For God created man to be immortal, and to be an image of his own eternity," which seems to suppose blameless souls, entering into this reward without interruption of their life. And if this be the meaning of paradise among the *Jews*, doubtless our saviour spake the words in such a known and common sense, in which the penitent thief would easily and presently understand him, it being a promise of grace in his dying hour, wherein he had no long time to study hard for the sense of it, or consult the criticks in order to find the meaning.

We come now to consider the writings of *St. Paul*: And it is certain, that the most natural and obvious sense of his words in many places of his epistles, refers to a separate state of the souls after death: For as he was a pharisee in the sentiments of religion, so he seems to be something of a *platonist* in philosophy, so far as christianity admitted the same principles. Why then should it not be reasonably supposed, wheresoever he speaks of this subject, and speaks in their language too, that he means the same thing which the pharisees and the *platonists* believed, that is, the immortality and life of the soul in a separate state. But I proceed to the particular texts.

V. 2 *Cor.* v. 6, 8. "Therefore we are always confident, or of good courage, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The apostle, verse 4. seems to wish that he might be clothed upon at once, with immortality in soul and body, without dying or being unclothed: But since things are otherwise determined, then in the next place, he would rather chuse absence from the body, that he might be present with the Lord. These words seem to me so plain, so express, and so unanswerable a proof of the spirits of good men existing, in a separate state, and being present with the Lord, when they are absent from the body at death, that I could never meet but with two ways of evading it.

The first is what a gentleman many years ago, who professed christianity, acknowledged to me, viz. that he believed *St. Paul* did mean in this place, the same sense in which I have explained him; but he thought *St. Paul* might be mistaken in his opinion, for he was not of the apostle's mind in this point. I think I need not tarry to refute this answer: But I may make this remark upon it, viz. that the sense of *St. Paul*, concerning the separate state, was so evident in this place, that this man had rather differ from the apostle, than deny this to be his meaning. All his prejudices

prejudices, against this doctrine, could not hinder him from acknowledging that the apostle believed and taught it.

The second way of evading it is, that this text with one or two others of like kind, do indeed speak of the happiness of souls in a separate state, but it doth refer only to the apostles themselves, who had this peculiar favour and privilege granted them by *Christ*, to follow him to paradise and enjoy his presence there, while the souls of other christians were asleep, unconscious and unactive till the resurrection.

Answer 1. It is granted indeed, that several verses of this chapter as well as in the former, have a peculiar reference to the ministers of *Christ*, and perhaps to the apostles who were his ambassadors; but there are many things in both these chapters, that are perfectly applicable to every christian, and the verses just before and just after this 8. verse, may belong to all good men as well as to the apostles or ministers. "He that hath wrought us for the self same thing, that is, for the happiness of the future state, is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit, at least as an enlightener and a sanctifier, if not as the author of special gifts," for *Rom.* viii. 9. "If any man hath not the Spirit of *Christ*, he is none of his." And verse 6. "Therefore we are always confident, or of good courage, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight." This is, or should be the character of every christian. And the 9. verse that follows it, belongs to all the saints: "Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him; verse 10. for we must all appear before the judgment seat of *Christ*, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Now why should we suppose, that *St. Paul* excludes all other christians besides himself, and his brethren the apostles, from the blessing of the 8. verse, *viz.* that when they "are absent from the body, they shall be present with the Lord," since the verses all round it are applicable to all christians.

Answer 2. These chapters were written with a design, not only, to vindicate and encourage the apostle himself, under the sufferings and reproaches, which he met with, but, doubtless, to give encouragement to the *corinthians*, and all christians under any sufferings or reproaches, they might meet with in the world; that, as he expresses it a little before, they might learn "to walk by faith, and to look at the things, which are unseen, which are eternal. And, indeed, if this peculiar blessing of the happiness of a separate state belongs only to the apostles, how much are the comforts of the new testament narrowed and diminished, and the faith and hope of common christians discouraged and enervated, and their motives to holiness weakened, when they are told, they have nothing to do to lay hold upon such promised favours, such revelations of grace, because they belong only to the apostles, and not to them?

And, indeed, how shall common christians ever know, what part of the epistles they may apply to themselves, for their direction and consolation, if they may not hope in such words of grace, where the holy writers use the word "we," and do not plainly intimate, that they belong to preachers or apostles only?

Answer 3. When our saviour prays for himself and his apostles, in the beginning of the xvii. of *St. John*, he comes, in the 20. verse, to extend the blessings he had prayed for to all believers. Verse 20. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word:" Verse 21. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us, that the world may believe, that thou hast sent me." Verse 24. "Father, I will that

that they, also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." Here it is evident, that our saviour prays that those, that shall believe on him through the word of the apostles, may be present with him in his kingdom to behold his glory; and is not that a very considerable part of his glory, which the Father hath conferred upon him, to be Lord and king, and head of his church? But this peculiar glory reaches no further than the resurrection and judgment, and cannot be seen afterwards: for in *1 Cor. xv. 24.* "Then cometh the end, and *Christ* shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father:" verse 28. "The Son himself also shall be subject unto the Father, that God may be all in all."

As for that final blaze of supreme glory, wherein *Christ* shall appear at the day of judgment, just before he resigns up his kingdom, and which, perhaps, is once called his kingdom, *2 Tim. iv. 1.* when "he shall come in the glory of his Father, and of his holy angels, as well as his own," *Mark viii. 28. Luke ix. 26.* the sight of it shall be public and common to all the world, and not any peculiar favour to the faints.

It seems, therefore, most probable, that it is only or chiefly in the separate state of souls departed, that the faints have a special promise of beholding this mediatorial glory of *Christ* in his kingdom; and this favour our saviour entreats of his Father for others that shall believe on him, as well as for his apostles.

I might here take occasion to enquire, whether every text, which promises to other christians, as well as to the apostles, a dwelling with *Christ* in his kingdom, must not have a more special reference to the glory of the separate state, upon this very account, because this kingdom of *Christ* ceases at the resurrection and judgment; and particularly that text in *2 Pet. i. 11.* "So an entrance shall be ministered unto you, abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and saviour *Jesus Christ*:" which is often, in scripture, called everlasting, because it continues to the end of the world: And the abundant entrance into it, very naturally refers to our departure from this life.

Answer 4. I cannot find any text of scripture, where this blessing of being present with the Lord, after death, in the separate state, is limited only to the apostles: I read not one word of such a peculiar favour promised them by *Christ*; and, therefore, according to the current course of several other places of scripture, which have been here produced, I am persuaded it belongs to all true christians, unless the apostle, in some plainer manner, had limited it to himself, and his twelve brethren, and excluded or forbid our hopes of it.

After all, if it be allowed, that the apostles may enjoy the blessedness of a separate state before the resurrection, then there is such a thing as a separate state of happiness for souls: this precludes, at once, all the arguments against it, that arise from the nature of things, and from any supposed impropriety in such a divine constitution: And since it is granted, that there are millions of angels, and several human spirits, in this unbodied state, enjoying happiness, I see no reason why the rest of the unbodied spirits of faints departed, should not be received to their society after death, unless there were some particular scriptures that excluded them from it.

VI. *Phil. i. 23, 24.* "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with *Christ*, which is far better: Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you." When the apostle speaks here of his abiding in the flesh, and his departing from the flesh, he declares the first was more needful for the *Philippians*, to promote religion in their hearts and lives; but the second would be

better for himself, for he should be with *Christ*, when he was departed from the flesh.

I would only ask any reasonable man to determine, whether, when *St. Paul* speaks of his being with *Christ* after his departure from the flesh, he can suppose, that the apostle did not expect to see *Christ* till the resurrection, which he knew would be a considerable distance of time, though perhaps it has proved many hundred years longer than the apostle himself expected it? No; it is evident, he hoped to be present with the Lord immediately, as soon as he was absent from the body: otherwise, as I have hinted before, death to him would have been but of little gain, if he must have lain sleeping till the dead shall rise, and have been cut off from his delightful service for *Christ* in the gospel, and all the blessed communications of his grace. The objection, which may arise here, also, from supposing this to be a peculiar favour granted to the apostles, is answered just before.

VII. *Heb. xii. 22—24.* "Ye are come—to the heavenly *Jerusalem*, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written, or registered, in heaven, to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to *Jesus*, the mediator of the new covenant," that is, the gospel, or the christian state, brings good men into a nearer union and communion with the heavenly world, and the inhabitants thereof, than the *jewish* state could do: Now the inhabitants of this upper world, this heavenly *Jerusalem*, are here reckoned up, God, as the prime Lord or head; *Jesus* the mediator, as the king of his church; the innumerable company of angels, as ministers of his kingdom; the general assembly of God's favourites, or children, who are called the first-born, perhaps, this may refer, in general, to all the saints of all ages past, and so some, whose names are written in the book of life in heaven; and, particularly, to the separate spirits of just men, who are departed from this world, and are made perfect in the heavenly state. The criticisms, that are used to put other senses upon these words, seem to carry them away so far from their more plain and obvious meaning, that I can hardly think they are the meaning of the apostle; for it would be of very little use for a common christian, to read these verses of divine consolation and grace, if he could take no comfort from them till he had learned those critical and distant expositions of such plain language.

It has been, indeed, objected, against the plain sense of this text, that the spirits of the just, or good men, are not yet made perfect in heaven, because the same apostle, *Heb. xi. 39, 40.* says, "These all, that is, the saints of the old testament, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises, God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect." Now these had been dead for many generations, yet they received not the promises, nor were made perfect. Thus saith the objection.

But the plain meaning of this text is, that they lived and died in the faith of many promises, some of which were to be fulfilled after their days here on earth, but were not fulfilled in their life-time: They did not enjoy the privileges and blessings of the gospel of the *Messiah*, in that perfect manner, in which we do, since the *Messiah* is actually come, and has fulfilled these promises, and by his death, or "offering himself, as the same apostle expresses it, for ever perfected them that are sanctified," *Heb. x. 14.* But all this does, by no means, preclude their existence and happiness, in a separate state, as spirits made perfect; that is, in a perfect freedom from

from all sin and sorrow; though it is probable this very state of comparative perfection might have several degrees of joy added to it at the ascension of *Christ*, and will have many more at the resurrection from the dead.

VIII. *2 Pet. i. 13, 14.* "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that, shortly, I must put off this my tabernacle." Here it is evident, that the person, who thinks it meet to stir up christians to their duty, has a tabernacle belonging to him, and which he must shortly put off. The soul, or thinking principle of the apostle *Peter*, which is here supposed to be himself, is so plainly distinguished from the tabernacle of the body, in which he dwelt for a season, and which he must put off shortly, that it most evidently implies, an existence of this thinking soul very distinct from the body, and which will exist when the body is laid aside. Surely the conscious being, and it's tabernacle or dwelling-place, are two very distinct things, and the conscious being exists when he puts off his present dwelling.

After all these arguments from scripture, may I be permitted to mention one, which is derived partly from reason, and partly from the sacred records, which seems to carry some weight with it?

The doctrine of rewards and punishments, in a separate state of souls, hath been one of the very chief principles or motives, whereby, virtue and religion have been maintained in this sinful world throughout all former ages and nations, and under the several dispensations of God among men, till the resurrection of the body was fully revealed: Now it is scarce to be supposed, that such a doctrine which God, in the course of his providence, hath made use of as a chief principle and motive of religion and virtue through all the world which had any true virtue, and, in all ages before christianity, should be a false doctrine. Let us prove the first proposition, by a view of the several ages of mankind and dispensations of religion.

The heathens, who have had nothing else but the light of nature to guide them, could have no notion at all of the resurrection of the body; and, therefore, not only the wisest and best of them, but, perhaps, the bulk of mankind among the gentiles, at least in *Europe* and *Asia*, if not in *Africa* and *America* also, who have been taught by priests and poets, and the public opinions of their nation, and traditions of their ancestors, have generally supposed such a separate state after this life, wherein their souls should be rewarded or punished, except where the fancy of transmigration prevailed; and even these very transmigrations into other bodies, *viz.* of dogs, or horses, or men, were assigned as speedy rewards or punishments of their behaviour in this life.

Now though this doctrine of immediate recompences could not be proved by them with certainty and clearness, and had many follies mingled with it, yet the probable expectation of it, so far as it hath obtained among men, hath had a good degree of influence, through the conduct of common providence, to keep the world in some tolerable order, and prevent universal irregularities and excesses of the highest degree; it hath had some force on the conscience to restrain the enormous wickedness of men.

The patriarchs of the first ages, whose history is related in scripture, had no notion of the resurrection of the body expressly revealed to them, that we can find; and it must be the hope of such a state of recompence of their souls after death, that influenced their practice of piety, if they were not informed, that their bodies should rise again.

*Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* had no plain and distinct promise of the resurrection of the body; yet it is said, *Heb. xi. 13—16*. "They received the promises, that is, of some future happiness, and embraced them, and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on earth, whereby they plainly declared, that they sought some other country; that is, a heavenly, and God hath prepared a city for them." What city, what heavenly country can this be, which they themselves sought after, but the city or country of separate souls or paradise, where good men are rewarded, and God is their God, if they had no plain promises or views of a resurrection of the body? And, indeed, they had need of a very plain and express promise of such a resurrection, to encourage their faith and obedience, if they had no notion or belief of a separate state, or a heavenly country, whither their souls should go at their death.

*Job* seems to have some bright glimpses of a resurrection, in chapter *xix. 25—27*. but this was far above the level of the dispensation wherein he lived, and a peculiar and distinguishing favour granted to him under his uncommon and peculiar sufferings.

In the institution of the *jewish* religion by *Moses*, there is no express mention of a resurrection, and we must suppose their hope of a future state, was chiefly such as they could gain from the light of nature, and learn by traditions from their fathers, or from unwritten instructions. For though our saviour improves the words of God to *Moses* in the bush, *Exod. iii. 6*. "I am the God of *Abraham*," &c. so far as to prove a resurrection from them, yet we can hardly suppose the *Israelites* could carry it any further, than merely to the happiness of *Abraham's* soul, &c. in some separate state; and thence came the notion of departed souls of good men going to the bosom of *Abraham*.

I grant that *David*, in his *Psalms*, *Isaiab* and *Daniel*, in their prophecies, have some hints of the resurrection of the body; but this doth not seem to have been the common principle or support of virtue and goodness, or a general article of belief among the *Jews*, in the early ages.

In the days of the later prophets, and after their return from *Babylon*, I confess, the *Jews* had some notion of a resurrection; but they also retained their opinion of the righteous souls being at rest with God, in a separate state before the resurrection. See the book of *Wisdom*, chapter *iii. 1—4*. "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise, they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace: for though they be perished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality," and *iv. 7*. "Though the righteous be prevented with death, yet they shall be in rest."

That this was the most common doctrine of the *Jews*, except the *sadducees* and their followers, in our saviour's time, and that it was the doctrine of the primitive christians, also, need not be proved here; though they, also, had the expectation of the resurrection of the body.

Now if this be the chief or only doctrine, which men could attain to, under the dispensation of natural reason, as the most powerful motive to virtue and piety, if this be the chiefest doctrine of that kind that we know of, which the patriarchs and primitive *Jews* enjoyed, if this also be a constant doctrine of later *Jews*, that is, the wisest and best of them, and also of the primitive christians, which had so much influence on the good behaviour of all of them toward God and men, and by which God carried on his work of piety in their hearts and lives, and by which also he impressed the consciences of evil men in some measure, and restrained them from their  
utmost



utmost excesses of vice and wickedness, it is not hard to be supposed, that this doctrine is all mere fancy and delusion, and hath nothing of truth in it? And, indeed, if this doctrine had been taken away, the heathens would be left without any possible true notion of a future state of recompence, and the patriarchs seem to have had no sufficient principle or motive to virtue and piety left them, and the principles and motives of goodness, in the following ages, among *jews* and christians, had been greatly diminished and infeeble.

At the conclusion of this chapter, I cannot help taking notice, though I shall but just mention it, that the multitude of narratives, which we have heard of in all ages of the apparition of the spirits or ghosts of persons departed from this life, can hardly be all delusion and falsehood. Some of them have been affirmed to appear upon such great and important occasions as may be equal to such an unusual event: And several of these accounts have been attested, by such witnesses of wisdom, and prudence, and sagacity, under no distempers of imagination, that they may justly demand a belief; and the effects of these apparitions, in the discovery of murders, and things unknown, have been so considerable and useful, that a fair disputant should hardly venture to run directly counter to such a cloud of witnesses, without some good assurance on the contrary side. He must be a shrewd philosopher, indeed, who, upon any other hypothesis, can give a tolerable account of all the narratives in *Glanvill's* "Sadducismus triumphatus," or *Baxter's* "world of spirits and apparitions," &c. Though I will grant some of these stories have but insufficient proof, yet if there be but one real apparition of a departed spirit, then the point is gained, that there is a separate state.

And, indeed, the scripture it self seems to mention such sort of ghosts, or appearances of souls departed, *Matth. xiv. 26.* When the disciples saw *Jesus* walking on the water, they "thought it had been a spirit:" And, *Luke xxiv. 37.* after his resurrection they saw him, at once, appearing in the midst of them, "and they supposed they had seen a spirit; and our saviour doth not contradict their notion, but argues with them upon the supposition of the truth of it, a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me to have." And, *Acts xxiii. 8, 9.* the word "spirit" seems to signify the "apparition of a departed soul," where it is said, "The sadducees say, there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit," and, verse 9. "If a spirit, or an angel hath spoken to this man," &c. A spirit here is plainly distinct from an angel, and what can it mean but an apparition of a human soul which has left the body?

## S E C T I O N IV.

### *Objections answered.*

**H**AVING pointed out so many springs of argument, to support this doctrine from the word of God, as well as from reason and tradition, I proceed now to answer some particular objections, which are raised against it.

**Objection I.** The scripture is so far from supposing, that the soul of man is immortal, or that there is any such thing as the life of the soul continuing after the death of the body, that it often speaks of the death of the soul, if the words were translated exactly according to the original. *Numb. xxxi. 19.* "Whosoever hath killed any person," "hebrew" any soul. *1 Sam. xxii. 22.* "I have occasioned the death of every soul of thy father's house." *Judges xvi. 30.* "And *Sampson* said, let my soul

soul die with the *Philistines*." *Ezek.* xviii. 20. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." *Psal.* lxxxix. 48. "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" *1 Kings* xix. 4. "*Elijab* requested for himself, that he might die," "hebrew" that his soul might die.

Answer. The word "soul" in english, "nephef" in hebrew, "psyche" in greek, and "anima" in latin, &c. signifies not, only, the conscious and active principle in man, which thinks and reasons, loves and hates, hopes and fears, and which is the proper agent in virtue or vice; but it is used, also, to signify the principle of animal life and motion in a living creature. And though these two in themselves are very distinct things, yet upon this account the word soul is attributed to brutes, at well as to men: for the *Jews*, as well as some heathens, in their mistaken philosophy, supposed the same soul of man, which gives natural life to the body, to be, also, that very intellectual principle, which thinks and reasons, fears and loves; and, upon this account, they gave both these principles, how distinct soever in themselves, one common name, and called them the soul.

Now the soul, or the principle of animal life and motion, being the chief or most valuable thing in an animal, it came to pass, that the whole animal was called a soul: therefore, even birds and fishes are called living souls, *Gen.* i. 20. and any animals whatsoever, in scripture, are called souls, or living souls. And then, for the same reason, that is, because the soul of man is his chief part, the whole person of man is called his soul, *Gen.* ii. 7. "Man became a living soul," that is, a living person. So *Exod.* i. 5. "All the souls, that came out of the loins of *Jacob*, were seventy souls," that is, all the persons were seventy.

And this is not, only, the language of the *Jews*, but even of other nations. In our country we use the word souls to signify persons: so we say a poor soul, when we see a person in misery: We use the word a meagre soul, for a thin man: We say, there were twenty souls lost in the ship, that is, twenty persons, &c.

Now the word soul, among the *Jews*, being so universally used to signify the person of man, they used the same word to signify the person when he was dead, as well as when he was alive. *Numb.* vi. 6. "He shall come at no dead body, in the hebrew, no dead soul," that is, no dead man or woman, or perhaps no dead animal.

Since the word soul is taken so often, and so commonly, to signify the person of a man or woman, no wonder that there is so frequent mention of souls dying in the scripture, when human persons die.

And if the soul signify a man or woman when they are dead, as well as when living, here is a fair account why the scriptures may speak of the souls going down to the grave, or being delivered from the grave, &c. *Psal.* lxxxix. 48. "Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" This may either denote his principle of animal life, or his person, that is, himself.

Now this account of things is very consistent with the scriptural doctrine of the distinction of the intelligent soul of man from his body, and the intelligent's soul's survival of the body, nor do any of these scriptural expressions, concerning the soul, forbid this supposition: For though, in some places, the word soul signifies the person of the man, or his body, or that animal principle which may die, yet, in other places, it signifies that intelligent or thinking principle, which cannot die, as we have before proved; where our saviour tells us, "we should not fear them that kill the body, but cannot kill the soul." Wheresoever the scripture speaks of a soul's being killed, it only means that the person, who was mortal, is slain; that is, the life of the body is destroyed, and the man, considered as a compound being, made up of  
soul

soul and body is, in some sense, dissolved, when one part of the composition dies. But where the soul signifies the intellectual principle in man, it is never said to die, unless where the word death means a loss of happiness, or living in misery; but this implies natural life still, for this soul cannot naturally be destroyed by any power but that which made it.

If any person object that the apostle in *Acts* ii. 31. says, "The soul of *Christ* was not left in hell, or the grave;" for so the word in the hebrew may signify, *Psalms* xvi. 10. whence this is cited; there is a sufficient answer to be given to this two or three ways. It may be construed, that the principle of the animal life of *Christ*, was not left to continue in death; or that the person of the man *Jesus* was not left in death or the grave, the soul being sometimes put for the person; or it may be as well construed, that the spirit of *Christ*, or his intellectual soul, was not left in the state of the dead, or of separation from the body, which the word "sheol" in the hebrew, and *hades* in the greek signify.

Here it may be observed also, that the words which signify spirit, "ruach, pneuma, spiritus," in hebrew, greek and latin, and other languages, is used sometimes for air or breath, which is supposed to be the principle of life to the animal body; and sometimes it signifies the intellectual soul, the conscious and active principle in man; and therefore whatsoever may be said of the spirit's dying or being lost, is no proof that the conscious principle in man dies, which is a very different thing from breath or air.

Perhaps it will be said here, does not *Moses* suppose breath to be the soul or spirit in man, when he says, *Gen.* ii. 7. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

I answer, it is evident that *Moses* makes a plain difference between God's formation of man and brutes, for he makes no distinction between their soul and body in their creation; but he distinguishes the soul from the body of man, in his creation, speaking according to the common language and philosophy of that age, as though the soul were in the breath: Nor was it proper to speak in strict philosophical language to those ignorant people; nor were the modes of expression in the bible, so peculiarly formed to teach us philosophy as religion.

But of this distinction between the soul of a brute and the soul of a man, there seems to be a plain intimation given by *Salomon* in the book of *Ecclesiastes*, chapter iii. verse 21. "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast that goeth downward to the earth?" That the spirit of man, that is, his conscious and intellectual principle, goeth upward, or survives at the death of the body, but the spirit of the beast, that is, the spring of it's animal life goeth down to the earth, is mingled with the common elements of this material world, and intirely lost.

But the wise man in this place perhaps, expresses some of his former atheistical doubts, saying, who knows whether there is any difference between them? Yet it intimates thus much, that men who pretended to wisdom in that age, supposed such a difference between the spirit of man and the spirit of a brute.

Objection II. is taken from *Psalms* vi. 5. "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" And *Psalms* cxlvi. 4. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." And *Eccles.* ix. 5. "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not any thing."

From

From all which words, some would infer there is no such thing as a separate state of souls.

Answer. Both *David* and his son *Solomon*, exclude all such sort of thoughts and actions, both religious and civil, from the state of death, as are practised in this life; all the pursuits of their present purposes, their present way and manner of divine worship, and their management or consciousness of human affairs: But they do not exclude all manner of consciousness, knowledge, thought or action, such as may be suited to the invisible state of spirits. The design of the writers in those places of scripture require no more than this, and therefore the words cannot be construed to any farther sense, or to exclude the conscious and active powers of a separate spirit, from their proper exercise in that invisible world, though they have done with all their actions in the present visible state.

Objection III. is taken from *John* xiv. 3. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also;" which seems to determine the point, that the followers of *Christ* were not to be present with him, 'till he came again to this world to raise the dead, and to take his disciples to dwell with him.

Answer 1. It hath been already granted by some persons, who doubt of the separate state of all souls, that the apostles had this special favour allowed them to be received into the presence of *Christ*, when they departed from this body: Now these words were spoken to the apostles, and therefore they cannot preclude this privilege which they expected, viz. that when they were "absent from the body, they should be present with the Lord, 2 *Cor.* v. 8.

Answer 2. *Christ* came again to his disciples at his own resurrection from the dead, and taught them the things of the other world, and better prepared them for the happiness of heaven and his own presence: He came again also by the destruction of the *jewish* state, and called his own people thence before-hand, as an emblem of their salvation when the world should be destroyed. He also came again at their death, when he that hath the keys of death and the invisible world let them out of the prison of the body, into the separate state, that they might dwell with him: The coming of *Christ* has many and various senses in the new testament, and need not be referred only to his coming at the day of judgment.

Answer 3. But suppose in this place, the words of *Christ* be construed, concerning his great and public coming, to raise the dead and judge the world; it is certain, that in that day the disciples shall be received to dwell with him, in a much more complete and glorious manner, when both soul and body shall be made the inhabitants of heaven: But this does not preclude or forbid that the separate souls of his followers should be favoured with his presence in paradise, before his public coming to judge the world. Though the last and greatest blessing be only mentioned here, it does not exclude the former.

Objection IV. *St. Paul*, in *Phil.* iii. 10, 11. says "that he desired to know *Christ*, and the power of his resurrection, &c. if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead:" Now what need had the apostle to be so solicitous about the resurrection, if he expected to be with *Christ* immediately upon his death, since being with *Christ* is the state of ultimate happiness?

Answer 1. Some learned men suppose that the apostle here presses after some peculiar exaltations of piety in this world, and after an interest in some first resurrection

tion, or resurrection of the martyrs and most eminent saints, which would be long before the general resurrection of all the dead, according to the visions of *St. John*, *Rev. xx. 4—7*. But as I am not sufficiently acquainted with the sense of that prophecy, to determine my opinion on this side, I proceed to other answers.

Answer 2. What if the words of *St. Paul* in this place to the *Philippians*, should mean no more than this, as verses 13, 14. “I forget the things that are behind, as though I had gained so little already, as not to be worth my notice; and I reach forth unto those things which are before, that is, further degrees of holiness to be obtained, pressing towards the mark of perfection, if by any means I might be made so conformable to the death of *Christ*, as to be entirely dead to sin, and if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead, that is, to such a perfection of holiness, as is represented by the resurrection of *Christ*, *Rom. vi. 4, 11*. or as that in which the “dead saints shall be raised; for I know I have not already attained it, nor am already perfect.”

Answer 3. Suppose the soul of *St. Paul*, to be present with *Christ* after death in heaven in the separate state, yet this is not the ultimate or highest happiness of the saints, and therefore he aimed at something higher and further, namely, the more complete happiness which he should enjoy at the resurrection of the dead.

Objection V. is borrowed from several verses of *1 Cor. xv. viz. 13, 18, 19, 32*. where the apostle is imagined to argue thus, “If there be no resurrection of the dead,” verse 13. “Then they which are fallen asleep in *Christ* are perished,” verse 18. “Then we have hope only in this life, and nothing else to support us,” verse 19. Then, “what advantage do I get by all my sufferings for *Christ*, if the dead rise not?” We were better comply with the appetites of the flesh, and enjoy a merry life here, “Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die;” verse 32. whereby it is evident, that the apostle places the blessed expectation of those, that are fallen asleep in *Christ*, only, and entirely, upon their being raised from the dead, which he would not have done, if there had been such a separate state: He extends our hope in *Christ* beyond this life, and raises his own expectation of advantage, or reward for his sufferings on the account of the gospel, entirely and only upon the resurrection of the dead, having no notion of any happiness in a separate state of souls: For if he had any such opinion or hope, this expectation of the happiness of the soul in a separate state, might have been a sufficient proof, that those, who died or slept in the faith of *Christ*, are not perished, and he had abundant reward for his sufferings, in that world of separate souls, without the resurrection of the body.

Answer 1. It must be granted, that the scripture, in order to support christians under present trials, chiefly refers them to the day of the resurrection, and final judgment, as the great and chief season of retribution: The reason of this will appear under my answer to a following objection: Now the apostle may be supposed to argue here only on this foot, neglecting or overlooking the separate state, as though this final retribution at and after the resurrection of the body, were comparatively the whole, because it is far the chief and most considerable part, being much the most sensible and conspicuous, and of the longest duration. The chief part of any thing is often taken for the whole: And if there were no resurrection of the dead, that is, if there were no state of retribution at all, then the *epicurean* reasoning would be good, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” verse 32:

And, to confirm this exposition, we may take notice, that, in other places of scripture, where the resurrection of the dead is mentioned, this “*anastasis*,” includes the

whole state of existence after death, both the separate and the resurrection-state: This seems to be the sense of it in that famous place, *Luke xx. 35.* where *Christ* argues with the sadducees, who denied the separate state, as well as the resurrection of the body: Now if you take away this "anastasis," this whole state of existence and retribution, then they that suffer for *Christ* have no advantage or recompence, and the *epicurean* doctrine is plainly preferable, at least in the common sense and reasoning of men, and in such seasons of trial and persecution.

Nor is it unreasonable to suppose, that there might be some of these principles of sadducism begun to be instilled into some of the *corinthians*, viz. that there were no rewards and punishments at all in any future state; for he tells them, verse 34. that some of them "had not the knowledge of God; that is, as a righteous rewarder of them that diligently seek him, I speak this, says he, to your shame." And, verse 58. he encourages them to be "steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord;" that is, there is certainly a future state of recompence for piety, and the discovery of it at the resurrection of the dead is the most public and glorious part of it, and, therefore, he insists upon this alone.

Answer 2. But we may give yet a more particular answer to this objection; for if we take in the whole scheme of the apostle's argument in this chapter, we shall find there is no sufficient ground for this objection against a separate state. He begins, verses 13—23. and argues thus, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then *Christ* is not risen," for he rose as the first-fruits, and his followers shall be the harvest, verse 23. but if there were no harvest, there were no first-fruits: And "if *Christ* be not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain;" verse 14. "Then we are found false witnesses in matters that relate to God." verse 15. mere impostors, who preach a wicked falsehood, and lead you to hope for a happiness, which ye shall never obtain: For "if *Christ*, who died for our sins, verse 3. be not raised for our justification, as in *Rom. iv. 25.* then ye are yet in your sins, ye lie yet under the guilt of sin; and, if so, then also they, which are fallen asleep in *Christ*, or have died in the faith of *Christ*, are perished," verse 18. they must either be condemned, or be utterly lost, both soul and body, having no ground for hope of eternal life, or any life or happiness at all hereafter. Then the hope of christians would be in this life only, and we are miserable creatures, who suffer so much for *Christ*'s sake, verse 19. It would be better for us, who have senses and appetites as well as other men, to indulge these senses and appetites, and eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, and there is an end of us: There can be no future state of happiness, of any kind, for us to expect, either in soul or body, if we have deceived you in the doctrine of the resurrection of *Christ*, and all our gospel be false: We are then such sort of impostors and wicked cheats, as can have no belief of a future state of rewards or punishments, and we were better act like our selves, and, like mere *epicureans*, give our selves up to all present pleasures, than expose our selves to perpetual sufferings for the sake of a man, who, if there be no resurrection, died, and never rose again, and, therefore, cannot make us any recompence. Now, this sort of arguing, does not at all preclude the separate state of happiness, but rather establish it.

I might add here a further answer to this objection, viz. the apostle is representing the sufferings of the body for *Christ*'s sake, verse 30—32. and, therefore, he thinks it proper to encourage christians with the recompence of the resurrection of the body, without taking any particular notice of the happiness of the separate state of the soul: And, in this view of things, his argument stands good. If there be

no resurrection of the body, there is no recompence for sufferings in the body; let us then give the body it's pleasures of sense; let us eat and drink while we live, for there is an utter end of us in death. But, saith he, verse 33. such "evil traditions corrupt good manners," and, therefore, they are not, they cannot be true: There must be a resurrection of the body, to encourage sufferings in the body, for the sake of virtue and religion\*.

Objection VI. Doth not the new testament constantly refer the rewards and punishments, of good and bad men, to the time of the resurrection of the dead, or the second coming of *Christ*? Is it not with this prospect it terrifies the sinner? Is it not with this it comforts the good man, and supports him under his present sufferings? It would be endless to cite all the particular texts on this occasion. That one text, *1 Thess. iv. 14, 17, 18.* speaks the sense of many others, and is sufficient to be cited here. The apostle persuades christians not to "mourn for the dead, as those that sorrow without hope, and gives this reason; for those, who sleep in *Jesus*, God will bring with him, when he comes to raise the dead, and then they shall be for ever with the Lord; and he bids them comfort one another with these words:" Whereas their comforts had been much nearer at hand, if he could have told them of the separate state of happiness, which the departed souls of their friends at present enjoyed; and, if there had been any such state, he had the fairest opportunity here to introduce it.

Answer. This very text I have mentioned before as a proof of the separate state, and, it is plain, the apostle seems to hint it, though he doth not insist upon it, when he supposes the soul of the deceased to be with *Christ* already; for he saith, "God will bring them with him;" that is, from heaven, when he comes to raise their bodies.

But to give a more general answer to the objection, as drawn from the silence of scripture in many places about this doctrine of the separate state.

There are good reasons, why the new testament more sparingly mentions the separate state of souls, and doth most frequently, but not constantly, refer both rewards and punishments to the resurrection.

1. Because the heathens themselves, at least the wisest and the best of them, did believe some sort of future state of happiness or misery, into which the souls of men should be disposed when they departed from these bodies, according to the vices or virtues they had practised in this life; and they derived this doctrine from their reasonings upon the foot of the light of nature. The writings of *Plato*, and his followers, and the sentiments of *Socrates*, conveyed to us in *Plato's* writings, are full of this opinion, viz. of the existence of the souls of good men in a happy state, when they depart from the body. *Cicero* sometimes speaks of it as his opinion, his desire, and his hope, nor were other heathen writers ignorant of this doctrine; but the new testament speaks less of this point, because it is the evident design of *Christ*, and his apostles, to lead their disciples to the more peculiar doctrines of revelation,

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\* There are several pages of just and pertinent answer, to this objection, by my learned and ingenious friend *Mr. Henry Grove*, in his "thoughts concerning the proof of a future state from reason," which confirm the replies I have here made. "Then they, saith he, who are fallen asleep in *Christ*, by whom the martyrs seem to be more especially intended, are perished, for any thing that *Christ* can do for them, who will never reward them for their sufferings; never restore that life, which they lost for his sake." And particularly his exposition on those words, "we are most miserable of all men," is very agreeable to the place. "The greek *ελευθερος* signifies, that we are more to be pitied than any men, as wanting the common understanding of men, to suffer death for *Christ's* sake, who would never be able to recompense us for it, if he be not risen from the dead." "And it is, saith he, a little afterward, for want of observing the intermediate links of the apostle's argument, which he there represents, that some have been at a loss for his meaning, while others have quite mistaken it." See page 124, &c.

rather than to treat them with sentiments derived from the light of nature: And this doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal rewards and eternal punishments that attend it, are more abundantly mentioned in the new testament, because they stand so much more connected with the gospel of *Christ*, and with his own resurrection from the dead, which is the chief evidence of it's divine authority. It is *Christ*, who rose from the dead, who is appointed to rise and to judge all mankind; and, therefore, it is natural for the apostles, in their writings, who desire to keep the death and resurrection of *Christ* always in the view of their converts, to point to the awful events of that day, when their saviour, risen from the dead, shall appear in the execution of his glorious commission, and judge the world. Thus *St. Paul* preaches to the *Athenians*, Acts xvii. 30, 31. "God now commands all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world, in righteousness, by that man, whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." And, in many other places, he connects our resurrection, and future recompences, with the resurrection of *Christ*.

And, in this respect, as well as in some others, the doctrine of rewards and punishments after the resurrection, seems to carry such superior force in it, especially upon those who believe the gospel, that it is no wonder the new testament more frequently refers to this great day of resurrection, and the apostle derives the chief part of his consolations or terrors from it.

2. Then will be the public and universal retributions of vice and virtue, in a more solemn manner, exhibited before all the world; whereas the entrance of mankind, into the recompences of the separate state, is more private and personal.

3. Then will be the day of complete rewards and punishments of man, in both parts of his nature, soul and body: All the separate state belongs only to the soul, and even those recompences are but imperfect, before, in comparison of what they will be, when body and soul are united.

4. Then will be the most glorious, visible, and sensible distinction made between the good and bad; and since this belongs to the body as well as the soul, it is very properly set before the eyes of men, in the holy writings, as done at the resurrection, because corporeal and sensible things work more powerfully on their imagination, and more sensibly and effectually strike the consciences of men, than the notion of mere spiritual rewards and punishments in the separate state.

5. The state of rewards and punishments, after the resurrection, will be far the longest and most durable recompence of the good and the bad; and, therefore, it is called eternal so often in scripture; everlasting life, and everlasting fire, *Matth. xvi.*

46. Whereas the retributions of the separate state, are, comparatively, but of short duration; and this is another thing, that makes a sensible impression on the hearts of men, *viz.* the eternal continuance of the joys and sorrows that follow the last judgment.

Perhaps it will be replied here, that, in the beginning of this essay, I represented the separate state, as a more effectual motive to the hopes and fears of men, because the joys and sorrows of it were so much nearer at hand, than those of the resurrection: And why do I now represent the recompences of the resurrection under such characters as are fit to have the strongest influence, and become the most effectual motive?

Answer. It is granted, that the recompences, after the resurrection, have several circumstances that carry with them some peculiar and most powerful motives to religion



gion and virtue; but that awful day may still seem to want this one motive, *viz.* the nearness of it, which belongs, eminently, to the recompences of the separate state. Now, if the scripture does really reveal the doctrine of rewards and punishments of souls immediately after death, and of soul and body together at the resurrection, then all those circumstances, of effectual motive to piety, are collected in our doctrine, *viz.* the immediate nearness of them in the separate state, and the public appearance, the universality, the completeness, the sensibility, and the duration of them after the great rising-day.

I might yet take occasion from this objection to give a further reason, why the apostles more frequently draw their motives of hope and fear from the resurrection, and the great judgment; that is, that even that day of recompence was generally then supposed to be near at hand, and so there was less need to insist upon the joys and sorrows of the separate state.

As the patriarchs and the *Jews* of old, after the *Messiah* was promised, were constantly expecting his first coming, almost in every generation, till he did appear, and many modes of prophetic expression in scripture, which speak of things long to come, as though they were present, or just at hand, gave them some occasion for this expectation; so the christians, of the first age, did generally expect the second coming of *Christ* to judgment, and the resurrection of the dead, in that very age wherein it was foretold. *St. Paul* gives us a hint of it in *2 Theff. ii. 1, 2*. They supposed the "day of the Lord was just appearing." And many expressions of *Christ*, concerning his return or coming again, after his departure, seemed to represent his absence as a thing of no long continuance. It is true, these words of his may partly refer to his coming to destroy *Jerusalem*; and the coming in of his kingdom among the gentiles, or his coming by his messenger of death, yet they generally, in their supreme and final sense, point to his coming to raise the dead, and judge the world: And from the words of *Christ*, also, concerning *John*, chapter *xxi. 22*. "If I will that he tarry till I come;" it is probable, that the apostles themselves at first, as well as other christians, might derive this apprehension of his speedy coming.

It is certain, that when *Christ* speaks of his coming, in general, and promiscuous, and parabolical terms, whether with regard to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, or the judgment of the world, he saith, *Matth. xxiv. 34*. "Verily, I say to you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." And the apostles frequently told the world, the coming of the Lord was near, *Phil. iv. 5*. "The Lord is at hand. *Heb. x. 24*. "Exhorting one another — so much the more, as you see the day approaching." And that this is the day of the coming of *Christ*, verse 37. assures us, "For yet a little while, he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." *Rom. xiii. 12*. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." *1 Pet. iv. 5*. "To him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Verse 7. "The end of all things is at hand. *James v. 8, 9*. "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Behold the judge standeth at the door." *Rev. xxii. 10*. "Seal not up the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand." Verse 12. "And, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man as his work shall be:" And the sacred volume is closed with this assurance, verse 20. "Surely, I come quickly; and the echo, and expectation of the apostle, or the church, *Amen*, even so come, Lord *Jesus*."

It is granted, that, in prophetic expressions, such as all these are, some obscurity is allowed: And it may be doubtful, perhaps, whether some of them may refer to *Christ's*

*Christ's* coming, by the destruction of *Jerusalem*, or his coming to call particular persons away by his messenger of death, or his appearance to the last judgment. It is granted, also, it belongs to prophetic language to set things far distant, as it were, before our eyes, and make them seem present, or very near at hand. But still these expressions had plainly such an influence, on primitive christians, as that they imagined the day of resurrection and judgment was very near: and since the prophetic words of *Christ*, and his apostles, seemed to carry this appearance in them, and to keep the church under some uncertainty, it is no wonder, that the apostles chiefly referred the disciples, of that age, to the day of the resurrection, for comfort under their sufferings and sorrows: And though they never asserted, that *Christ* would come to raise the dead, and judge the world, in that age, yet when they knew themselves, that he would not come so soon, they might not think it necessary to give every christian, or every church, an immediate account of the more distant time of this great event, that the uncertainty of it might keep them ever watchful: And, even when St. *Paul* informs the *Thessalonians*, that the day of the Lord was not so very near, as they imagined it, *2 Thess.* ii. 2. yet he does not put it off beyond that century by any express language.

Thus we see there is very good reason, why the new testament should derive it's motives of terror and comfort chiefly from the resurrection, and the day of judgment; though it is not altogether silent of the separate state of souls, and their happiness or misery, commencing, in some measure, immediately after death, which has been before proved by many scriptures cited for that purpose.

Here, let it be observed, that I am not concerned in that question, whether human souls, separated from their bodies, have any other corporeal vehicle to which they are united, or by which they act, during the intermediate state between death and the resurrection? All that I propose to maintain here is, that that period or interval is not a state of sleep, that is, utter unconsciousness and inactivity: And whether they be united to a vehicle, or no, I call it still the separate state, because it is a state of the soul's separation from this body, which is united to it in the present life.

## S E C T I O N V.

### *More objections answered.*

**S**INCE this book was written, I have met with several other objections against the doctrine here maintained; and as, I think, they may all have a sufficient answer given to them, and the truth be defended against the force of them, I thought it very proper to lead the reader into a plain and easy solution of them.

**Objection VII.** Is not long life represented often in scripture, and especially in the new testament, as a blessing to man? And is not death set before us as a curse, or punishment? But can either of these representations be just or true, if souls exist in a separate state? Are they not then brought into a state of liberty by death, and freed from all the inconveniences of this flesh and blood? By this means death ceases to be a punishment, and long life to be a blessing.

**Answer.** It is according as the characters of men are either good or bad, and according as good men know more or less of a separate state of rewards or punishments, so a long life, or early death, are to be esteemed blessings or calamities in a greater or a less degree.

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Long life was represented as a blessing to good men, in as much as it gave them opportunity to enjoy more of the blessings of this life, and to do more service for God in the world : And, especially, since, in ancient times, there was much darkness upon this doctrine of the future state, and many good men had not so clear a knowledge of it. Long life was, also, a blessing to wicked men, because it kept them in a state, wherein there were some comforts, and withheld them, for a season from the punishments of the separate state.

Death was, doubtless, a punishment and a curse, when it was first brought into human nature by the sin of *Adam*, as it cut off mankind from the blessings of this life, and plunged him into a dark and unknown state : And if he were a wicked man, it plunged him into certain misery.

But since the blessings of the future state of happiness for good men are more clearly revealed, long life is not so very great a blessing, nor death so great a punishment to good men ; for death is sanctified by the covenant of grace, to be an introduction of their souls into the separate state of happiness, and the curse is turned, in some respect, into a blessing.

Objection VIII. Was it not supposed to be a great privilege to *Enoch* and *Elijab*, when they were translated without dying? But what advantage could it be to either of them to carry a body with them to heaven, if their souls could act without it?

I answer, when *Enoch* and *Elijab* carried their bodies to heaven with them, it was certainly a sublime honour, and a peculiar privilege, which they enjoyed, to have so early a happiness, both in flesh and spirit, conferred upon them, so many ages before the rest of mankind : For though the soul can act without the body, yet as a body is part of the compounded nature of man, our happiness is not designed to be complete, till the soul and body are united in a state of perfection and glory. And this happiness was conferred early on those two favourites of heaven.

Objection IX. Was it not designed as a favour, when persons were raised from the dead, under the old testament or the new, by the prophets, by *Christ*, and by his apostles? But what benefit could this be to them, if they had consciousness and enjoyment in the other world? Was it not rather an injury, to bring them back from a state of happiness into such a miserable world as this?

Answer 1. Since these souls were designed to be soon restored to their bodies, and the persons were to be raised to a mortal life again in a few days, it is probable they were kept just in the same state of immemorial consciousness, as the soul is in while the body is in the deepest sleep ; and so were not immediately sent to heaven or hell, or determined to a state of sensible happiness or misery. Then when the person was raised to life again, there was no remembrance of the intermediate state, but all the consciousness of that day or two vanished, and were forgotten for ever, as it is with us when we sleep soundly without dreaming.

Answer 2. If those, who were raised by *Christ*, or the prophets, or the apostles were pious persons, they submitted, by the will of God, to a longer continuance in this world, amidst some difficulties and sorrows, which submission would be abundantly recompensed hereafter. If they were not good persons, their renewed life on earth was a reprieve from punishment. So there was no injury done to any of them.

As for those, who were raised at the resurrection of *Christ*, and were seen by many persons in the holy city, there is no doubt but they were raised to immortality, and ascended to heaven when *Christ* did, as part of his triumphant attendants, and went to dwell with him in the heavenly state.

Objec-

Objection X. If the martyrs and confessors were to be partakers of the first resurrection, in *Rev.* xx. 4, 5. would not this be a punishment, instead of a blessing, to be called from the immediate presence of God, and *Christ*, and angels, to be re-united to bodies on earth, and dwell here again with men? Therefore, it seems more probable, that the souls, of these holy martyrs, had no such separate existence or enjoyment of happiness.

Answer. Perhaps neither that text, nor any others in the bible, foretel the resurrection of any number of persons to an animal earthly life again in this world: perhaps that prophecy means no more, than that the cause of *Christ* and religion, for which men were martyred and beheaded heretofore, shall rise again in the world, and the professors of it, in that day, shall be in flourishing circumstances, for a thousand years, or a very long season: So that, in prophetic language, these words do not signify the same individual martyrs or confessors, but their successors in the same faith and practice.

Or, if there should be any resurrection of good men to an animal life in this world, foretold by the prophets, and intended by the great and blessed God, I doubt not but they would be here so far separated from the wicked world, where sins and sorrows reign, that it would be a gradual advance of their happiness beyond what they enjoyed before in the separate state.

Objection XI. Though man is often said to be a compounded creature of soul and body, yet in scripture he is represented as one being: it is the man that is born, that lives, that dies, that sleeps or wakes, and that rises from the dead. This is evident, in many places of scripture, where these things are spoken of; and it seems to be the law of our nature or being, that we should always act and live in such a state, as souls united to bodies, and never in a state of separation.

Answer. Though there are several scriptures, which represent man as one being, *viz.* soul and body united, yet there are many other scriptures, which have been cited in the former parts of this essay, wherein the souls and the bodies of men are represented as two very distinct things: The one goes to the grave at death, and the other either into *Abraham's* bosom, or to a place of torment; either to dwell with God, to be present with *Christ* the Lord, and to become one of the spirits of the just made perfect, or to go to their own place, as *Judas* did. Now, those texts, where man is represented as one being, may be explained with very great ease, considering man as made up of two distinct substances, *viz.* body and spirit, united into one personal agent, as we have shewn before: But the several texts, where the soul and body are so strongly and plainly distinguished, as has been before represented, there is no possible way of representing these scriptures, but by supposing a separate state of existence for souls after the body is dead, which makes it necessary, that this exposition should take place.

Objection XII. How comes death to be called, so often in scripture, a sleep, if the soul wakes all the while?

Answer. Why is the repose of the man every night called sleep, since the soul wakes, as appears by a thousand dreams? But as a sleeping man ceases to act in the businesses or affairs of this world, though the soul be not dead, or unthinking; so death is called sleep, because, during that state, men are cut off from the businesses of this world, though the soul may think and act in another.

Objection XIII. The scripture speaks often of the general judgment of mankind at the last great day of the resurrection, but it does not teach us the doctrine of a particular judgment, which the soul is supposed to pass under, when every single man dies;

dies; why then should we invent such a supposition, or believe such a doctrine, of a particular judgment in a separate state?

Answer. It is evident in many scriptures, as we have shewn before, that the souls of men, after death, are represented as enjoying pleasure or punishment in the separate state. The soul of *Lazarus* in heaven, the soul of *Dives* in hell, the soul of *Paul*, as being "present with the Lord, which is far better," than dwelling in this flesh, or being present with this body, &c. Therefore there must be a sort of judgment, or sentence of determination, passed upon every such soul by the great God, whether it shall be happy or miserable: For it can never be supposed, that happiness or misery should be given to such souls without the determination of God, the judge of all: And, perhaps, that text, *Heb. ix. 27.* refers to it, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;" that is, immediately after it."

Or suppose that, in the separate state, the pleasures or sorrows, which attend souls departing from the body, should be only such as are the necessary consequents of a life spent in the practice of vice or of virtue, of religion or ungodliness, without any formalities of standing before a judgment-seat or a solemn sentence of absolution or condemnation; yet the very entrance upon this state, whether it be of peace or of torment, must be supposed to signify, that the state of that soul is adjudged or determined by the great governor of the world: And this is all that is necessarily meant by a particular judgment of each soul at death, whether it pass under the solemn formalities of a judgment and a tribunal, or no.

Objection XIV. If the saints can be happy without a body, what need of a resurrection? Let the body be as refined, as active, as powerful and glorious as it can be, still it must certainly be a clog to the soul: And this was the objection, that the heathen philosophers made to the doctrine of the resurrection, which the christians profess; for the philosophers told them, this resurrection, which they called their highest reward, was really a punishment.

Answer. The force of this objection has been quite taken away before, when it has been shewn, that man, being a creature compounded of body and spirit, was designed for it's highest happiness, and the perfection of it's nature, in this state of union, and not in a state of separation. And let it be observed, that, when the body shall be raised from the grave, it shall not be such flesh and blood as we now wear, nor made of such materials, as shall clog or obstruct the soul in any of it's most vigorous and divine exercises; but it shall be a spiritual body, *1 Cor. xv. 44.* a body fitted to serve a holy and a glorified spirit in it's actions and it's enjoyments, and to render the spirit capable of some further excellencies, both of action and enjoyment, than it is naturally capable of without a body. What sort of qualities this new-raised body shall be endued with, in order to increase the excellency, or the happiness of pious souls, will be, in a great measure, a mystery, or a secret, till that blessed morning appears.

Objection XV. Is not our immortality, in scripture, described as built upon the incorruptible state of our new-raised bodies, *1 Cor. xv. 53.* "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality:" But the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not particularly found, or taught in scripture.

Answer. It is granted, that the immortality of the new-raised body is built on that incorruptible sort of materials, of which it is to be formed, or which shall be mingled with it, or the incorruptible qualities, which shall be given to it by God himself: But the soul is immortal in it self, whether with or without a body: And he that can read all those texts of scripture, which have been before made use of in

in this essay, wherein the existence of the spirit, after the death of the body, is so plainly expressed, and cannot find the "immortality of the soul" in them, or the "spirit's capacity of existence in a separate state from the body," must be left to his own sentiments to explain, and verify the expressions of *Christ*, and his apostles, some other way: Or he must acknowledge, that their expressions are somewhat uncautious and dangerous, since, it is evident, they lead thousands and ten thousands, of wise and sober readers, into this sentiment of the soul's immortality.

Whether the soul, in it's own nature, be necessarily immortal, is a point of philosophy, and not to be sought for directly in scripture: But whether the great God, the governor of the world, has not appointed souls to exist, in a separate state of happiness or misery, after the bodies are dead, seems to me to be so plainly determined in many of the scriptures, which have been cited, as leaves no sufficient reason to doubt of the truth of it.

To conclude, though I think the doctrine, of the separate state of souls, to be of much importance in christianity, and that the denial of it carries great inconveniences, and weakens the motives to virtue and piety, by putting off all manner of rewards and punishments at such a distance as the general resurrection, yet I dare not contend for it, as a matter of such absolute necessity, that a man cannot be a christian without it. But this must be confessed, that they, who deny this doctrine, seem to have need of stronger inward zeal to guard them against temptation, and to keep their hearts always alive, and watchful to God and religion, since their motives to strict piety and virtue are sensibly weakened, by renouncing all belief of this nearer, and more immediate commencement of heaven and hell.

D I S C.

## DISCOURSES on the World to come.

## DISCOURSE I.

## The end of time.

REV. X. 5, 6.

*And the angel, which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever,—That there should be time no longer.*

**T**HIS is the oath, and the solemn sentence of a mighty angel, who came down from heaven, and, by the description of him in the first verse, he seems to be the “angel of God’s presence, in whom is the name of God,” even our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself, who pronounced, and swore, that “time should be no longer;” for all seasons and times are now put into his hand, together with the book of his Father’s decrees, *Rev. v. 7, 9*. What special age or period of time, in this world, the prophecy refers to, may not be so easy to determine; but this is certain, that it may be happily applied to the period of every man’s life; for whensoever the term of our continuance in this world is finished, our time, in the present circumstances and scenes that attend it, shall be no more: We shall be swept off the stage of this visible state into an unseen and eternal world: Eternity comes upon us at once, and all that we enjoy, all that we do, and all that we suffer in time, shall be no longer.

Let us stand still here, and consider, in the

First place, what awful and important thoughts are contained in this sentence, what solemn ideas should arise to the view of mortal creatures, when it shall be pronounced concerning each of them, that time shall be no more.

I. “The time of the recovery of our nature from it’s sinful and wretched state shall be no longer.” We come into this world fallen creatures, children of iniquity, and heirs of death; we have lost the image of God, who made us, and which our nature enjoyed in our first parents; and, instead of it, we are changed into the image of the devil, in the lusts of the mind, in pride and malice, in self-sufficiency and enmity to God; and we have put on also the image of the brute, in sinful appetites and sensualities, and in the lusts of the flesh; nor can we ever be made truly happy, till the image of the blessed God be restored upon us, till we are made holy, as he is holy, till we have a divine change passed upon us, whereby we are created anew, and reformed in heart and practice. And this life is the only time given us for this important change. If this life be finished, before the image of God be restored to us, this image will never be restored; but we shall bear the likeness of devils for ever; and perhaps the image of the brute too, at the resurrection of the

body, and be further off from God, and all that is holy, than ever we were here upon earth.

Of what infinite importance is it then, to be frequently awakening our selves, at special seasons and periods of life, to enquire, whether this image of God is begun to be renewed, whether we have this glorious change wrought in us, whether our desires and delights are fixed upon holy and heavenly things; instead of those sensual and earthly objects, which draw away all our souls from God and heaven. Let it appear to us as a matter of utmost moment to seek after this change; let us pursue it with unwearied labours, and strivings with our own hearts, and perpetual importunities at the throne of grace, lest the voice of him who swears that "there shall be time no longer," should seize us in some unexpected moment, and lest he swear in his wrath concerning us, "Let him that is unholy be unholy still, and let him that is filthy be filthy still." *Rev. xxii. 11.*

II. When this sentence is pronounced concerning us, "the season and the means of restoring us to the favour and love of God shall be no longer." We are born children of wrath, as well as the sons and daughters of iniquity," *Eph. ii. 3.* We have lost the original favour of our maker and are banished from his love, and the superior blessings of his goodness; and yet, blessed be the Lord, that we are not at present for ever banished beyond all hope: This time of life is given us to seek the recovery of the love of God, by returning to him according to the gospel of his Son: Now is pardon and peace, now is grace and salvation preached unto men, to sinful wretched men, who are at enmity with God, and the objects of his high displeasure; now the voice of mercy calls to us, "This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation," *2. Cor. vi. 2.* "To day if ye will hear his voice, let not your hearts be hardened to refuse it:" *Heb. iii. 15.* Now the fountain of the blood of *Christ* is set open to wash our souls from the guilt of sin; now all the springs of his mercy, are broken up in the ministrations of the gospel; now "God is in *Christ*, reconciling sinners to himself," *2 Cor. v. 19.* and "he has sent us his ministers to intreat you in *Christ's* stead, be ye reconciled to God; and we beseech you in his name, continue not one day or one hour longer in your enmity and rebellion, but be ye reconciled to God your creator, and accept of his offered forgiveness and grace, verse 20.

The moment is hastening upon us, when this mighty angel, who manages the affairs of the kingdom of providence, shall swear concerning every unbelieving and impenitent sinner, that the "time of offered mercy shall be no longer, the time of pardon and grace and reconciliation shall be no more:" The sound of this mercy reaches not to the regions of the dead; those who die before they are reconciled, they die under the load of all their sins and must perish for ever, without the least hope or glimpse of reconciling or forgiving grace.

III. At the term of this mortal life, "the time of prayer and repentance and service for God or man in this world shall be no longer." *Eccles. ix. 10.* "There is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest, whither we are all hastening." Let every sinful creature therefore ask himself, "Have I never yet begun to pray? Never begun to call upon the mercy of the God that made me? Never begun to repent of all my crimes and follies? Nor begun in good earnest to do service for God, or to honour him amongst men?" Dreadful thought indeed! When, it may be, the next hour we may be put out of all capacity and opportunity to do it for ever! As soon as ever an impenitent sinner has the vail of death drawn over him, all his opportunities of this kind are for ever cut off: He that has  
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never repented, never prayed, never honoured his God, shall never be able to pray or repent, or do any thing for God or his honour through all the ages of his future immortality: Nor is there any promise made to returning or repenting sinners in the other world, whither we are hastening. "As the tree falls, when it is cut down, so it lies, and it must forever lie, pointing to the north or the south," to hell or heaven. *Eccles.* xi. 3.

And, indeed, there is no true prayer, no sincere repentance can be exercised after this life; for the soul that has wasted away all its time given for repentance and prayer, is at the moment of death left under everlasting hardness of heart; and whatsoever enmity against God and godliness, was found in the heart in this world is increased in the world to come, when all manner of softening means and mercies are ever at an end. This leads me to the next thought.

IV. "How wretched soever our state is at death, the day of hope is ended, and it returns no more." Be our circumstances never so bad, yet we are not completely wretched while the time of hope remains. We are all by nature miserable by reason of sin, but it is only despair can perfect our misery. Therefore fallen angels are sealed up under misery because there is no door of hope opened for them. But in this life there is hope for the worst of sinful men: There is the word of grace and hope calling them in the gospel; there is the voice of divine mercy sounding in the sanctuary, and "blessed are they that hear the joyful sound:" *Psalms* lxxxix. 15. But if we turn the deaf ear to the voice of God and his Son, and to all the tender and compassionate intreaties of a dying saviour, hope is hastening to its period; for this very angel will shortly swear, that this joyful sound shall be heard no longer.

He comes now to the door of our hearts, he sues there for admittance, "open unto me and receive me as your saviour and your Lord, give me and my gospel free admittance, and I will come in and bestow upon you the riches of my grace and all my salvation: Open your hearts to me with the holy desires and humble submission of penitence, and receive the blessings of righteousness and pardon and eternal life." He now invites you to return to God, with an acknowledgment and renunciation of every sin, and he offers to take you by the hand, and introduce you into his Father's presence with comfort: This is a day of hope for the vilest and most hateful criminals; but if you continue to refuse, he will shortly swear in his wrath, you shall never enter into his kingdom, you shall never taste of the provisions of his grace, you shall never be partakers of the blessings purchased with his blood. *Heb.* iii. 11, 18. "I swear in my wrath, saith the Lord, they shall not enter into my rest." Oh the dreadful state of sinful creatures, who continue in such obstinacy, who waste away the means of grace and the seasons of hope, week after week and month after month, till the day of grace and hope is forever at an end with them! Hopeless creatures! Under the power and the plague of sin, under the wrath and curse of a God, under the eternal displeasure of *Jesus*, who was once the minister of his Father's love, and they must abide under all this wretchedness through a long eternity, and in the land of everlasting despair. But I forbear that theme at present, and proceed.

V. At the moment of our death "the time of our preparation for the hour of judgment, and for the insurance of heaven and happiness shall be no longer." Miserable creatures that are summoned to die thus unprepared! This life is the only time to prepare for dying, to get ready to stand before the judge of the whole earth, and to secure our title to the heavenly blessedness. Let my heart inquire, "Have I ever seriously begun to prepare for a dying hour, and to appear before the judge of all? Have

Have I ever concerned my self in good earnest, to secure an interest in the heavenly inheritance, when this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved? Have I ever made interest for the favour of God, and a share of the inheritance of the saints, by *Jesus* the great mediator, while he afforded life and time?"

Death is daily and hourly hastening upon us: Death is the king of terrors, and will fulfil all his name to every soul that is unprepared. It is a piece of wisdom then for every one of us, since we must die, to search and feel whether death has lost it's sting or no: Whether it be taken away by the blood of *Christ*? Is this blood sprinkled on my conscience, by the humble exercise of faith on a dying saviour? Are the terrors of death removed, and am I prepared to meet it by the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit? Have I such an interest in the covenant of grace as takes away the sting of death, as turns the curse into a blessing, and changes the dark scenes of death into the commencement of a new and everlasting life? This is that preparation for dying, for which our time of life was given us, and happy are those who are taught of God, to make this use of it.

Judgment is making haste towards us; months and days of divine patience are flying swift away, and the last great day is just at hand: Then we must give an account of "all that has been done in the body, whether it has been good or evil:" 2 *Cor.* v. 10. And what a dismal and distressing surprize will it be, to have the judge come upon us in a blaze of glory and terror, while we have no good account to give at his demand? And yet this is the very end and design of all our time, which is lengthened out to us on this side the grave, and of all the advantages that we have enjoyed in this life, that we may be ready to render up our account, with joy to the judge of all the earth.

Heaven is not our's by birth and inheritance, as lands and houses on earth descend to us from our earthly parents. We, as well as they, are by nature unfit for heaven and children of wrath; but we may be born again, we may be born of God, and become heirs of the heavenly inheritance through *Jesus Christ*: We may be renewed into the temper and spirit of heaven; and this life is the only season that is given us for this important change: Shall we let our days and years pass away, one after another in long succession, and continue the children of wrath still? Are we contented to go on this year as the last, without a title to heaven, without a divine temper, and without any preparation for the business, or the blessedness of that happy world?

VI. When this life comes to an end, "the time of all our earthly comforts and amusements shall be no more." We shall have none of these sensible things around us to employ or entertain our eyes or our ears, to gratify our appetites, to sooth our passions, or to support our spirits in distress. All the infinite variety of cares, labours and joys, which surround us here, shall be no more; life with all the busy scenes, and the pleasing satisfactions of it dissolve and perish together: Have a care then that you do not make any of them your chief hope, for they are but the things of time, they are all short and dying enjoyments.

Under the various calamities of this life we find a variety of sensible reliefs, and our thoughts and souls are called away from their sorrows, by present business, or diverted by present pleasure; but all these avocations and amusements will forsake us at once, when we drop this mortal tabernacle; we must enter alone into the world of spirits, and live without them there.

Whatsoever agonies or terrors, or huge distresses we may meet with in that unknown region, we shall have none of these sensible enjoyments, to soften and allay them, no drop of sweetness to mix with that bitter cup, no scenes of gaiety and merriment

merriment to relieve the gloom of that utter darkness, or to sooth the anguish of that eternal heart-ach. O take heed, my friends, that your souls do not live too much on any of the satisfactions of this life, that your affections be not fet upon them in too high a degree, that you make them not your idols and your chief good, lest you be left helpless and miserable under everlasting disappointment, for they cannot follow you into the world of souls: they are the things of time, and they have no place in eternity. Read what caution the apostle *Paul* gives us, in our converse with the dearest comforts of life; *1 Cor. vii. 29.* "The time is short; and let those who have the largest affluence of temporal blessings, who have the nearest and kindest relatives, and the most endeared friendships, be mortified to them, and be, in some sense, as though they had them not, for ye cannot possess them long." *St. Peter* joins in the same sort of advice, *1. Pet. iv. 7.* "The end of all things is at hand, therefore be ye sober, be ye moderate in every enjoyment on earth, and prepare to part with them all, when the angel pronounces, that time shall be no longer: His sentence puts an effectual period to every joy in this life, and to every hope that is not eternal.

Thus we have taken a brief survey, what are the solemn and awful thoughts, relating to such mortal creatures in general, which are contained in this voice or sentence of the angel, that time shall be no longer. In the

Second place, let us proceed further and enquire a little "what are those terrors which will attend sinners, impenitent sinners, at the end of time."

I. "A dreadful account must be given of all this lost and wasted time. When the judge shall ascend his throne in the air, and all the sons and daughters of *Adam* are brought before him, the grand inquiry will be, what have you done with all the time of life in yonder world? "You spent thirty or forty years there, or perhaps seventy or eighty, and I gave you this time with a thousand opportunities and means of grace and salvation; what have you done with them all? How many sabbaths did I afford you? How many sermons have ye heard? How many seasons did I give you for prayer and retirement and converse with God and your own souls? Did you improve time well? Did you pray? Did you converse with your souls and with God? Or did you suffer time to slide away in a thousand impertinences, and neglect the one thing necessary?"

II. "A fruitless and bitter mourning for the waste and abuse of time," will be another consequence of your folly. Whatsoever satisfaction you make take now, in passing time away merrily and without thinking, it must not pass away so for ever. If the approaches of death do not awaken you, yet judgment will do it. Your consciences will be worried with terrible reflexions on your foolish conduct.

O could we but hear the complaints of the souls in hell, what multitudes of them would be found groaning out this dismal note, "how hath my time been lost in vanity, and my soul is now lost for ever in distress:" How might I have shone among the saints in heaven, had I wisely improved the time which was given me on earth, given me on purpose to prepare for death and heaven? Then they will for ever curse themselves, and call themselves eternal fools, for hearkening to the temptations of *flesh and sense*, which wasted their time and deprived them of eternal treasures.

III. Another of the terrors, which will seize upon impenitent sinners at the end of time, will be endless despair of the recovery of lost time, and of those blessings, whose hope is for ever lost with it. There are blessings offered to sinful, miserable men in time, which will never be offered in eternity, nor put within their reach for ever. The gospel hath no calls, no invitations, no encouragements, no promises for  
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he dead, who have lost, and wasted their time, and are perished without hope. The region of sorrow, whither the judge shall drive impenitent sinners, is a dark and desolate place, where light and hope can never come: but fruitless repentance, with horrors and agonies of soul, and doleful despair reign through that world, without one gleam of light, or hope, or one moment of intermission. Then will despairing sinners gnaw their tongues, for anguish of heart, and curse themselves with long execrations, and curse their fellow-sinners, who assisted them to waste their time, and to ruin their souls.

IV. The last terror I shall mention, which will attend sinners, at the end of time, is, "an eternal suffering of all the painful and dismal consequences of lost and wasted time." Not one smile from the face of God for ever, not one glimpse of love or mercy in his countenance, not one word of grace from *Jesus Christ*, who was once the chief messenger of the grace of God, not one favourable regard from all the holy saints and angels; but the fire and brimstone burn without end, "and the smoke of this their torment will ascend, for ever and ever, before the throne of God, and the lamb." *Rev. xiv. 11.*

Who knows how keen and bitter will be the agonies of an awakened conscience, and the vengeance of a provoked God, in that world of misery? How will you cry out, "O what a wretch have I been, to renounce all the advices of a compassionate Father, when he would have persuaded me to improve the time of youth and health! Alas, I turned a deaf ear to his advice, and now time is lost, and my hopes of mercy for ever perished. How have I treated with ridicule, among my vain companions, the compassionate and pious councils of my aged parents, who laboured for my salvation? How have I scorned the tender admonitions of a mother, and wasted that time in sinning and sensuality, which should have been spent in prayer and devotion? And God turns a deaf ear to my cries now, and is regardless of all my groanings." This sort of anguish of spirit, with loud and cutting complaints, would destroy life it self, and these inward terrors would sting their souls to death, if there could be any such thing as dying there. Such sighs, and sobbs, and bitter agonies would break their hearts, and dissolve their being, if the heart could break, or the being could be dissolved: But immortality is their dreadful portion; immortality of sorrows, to punish their wicked and wilful abuse of time, and that waste of the means of grace they were guilty of in their mortal state.

[ "Here this discourse may be divided." ]

I proceed in the

Last place, to consider what reflexions may be made on this discourse, or what are some of the profitable lessons to be learned from it.

Reflexion I. We may learn, with great evidence, the inestimable worth and value of time, and particularly to those, who are not prepared for eternity. Every hour you live is an hour longer given you to prepare for dying, and to save a soul. If you were but apprized of the worth of your own souls, you would better know the worth of days and hours, and of every passing moment, for they are given to secure your immortal interest, and save a soul from everlasting misery. And you would be zealous and importunate in the prayer of *Moses*, the man of God, upon a meditation of the shortness of life, *Psal. xc. 12.* "So teach us to number our days, as to apply our hearts to wisdom;" that is, so teach us to consider, how few and uncertain our days are, that we may be truly wise in preparing for the end of them.

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It is a matter of vast importance, to be ever ready for the end of time, ready to hear this awful sentence, confirmed with the oath of the glorious angel, that "time shall be no longer." The terrors, or the comforts of a dying bed depend upon it: The solemn and decisive voice of judgment depends upon it: The joys and the sorrows of a long eternity depend upon it: Go now, careless sinner, and, in the view of such things as these, go and trifle away time, as you have done before; time, that invaluable treasure! Go, and venture the loss of your souls, and the hopes of heaven, and your eternal happiness, in wasting away the remnant hours or moments of life: But remember the awful voice of the angel is hastening towards you, and the sound is just breaking in upon you, that "time shall be no longer."

Reflexion II. "A due sense of time, hastening to it's period, will furnish us with perpetual new occasions of holy meditation."

Do I observe the declining day, and the setting sun, sinking into darkness? So declines the day of life, the hours of labour, and the season of grace: O may I finish my appointed work with honour ere the light is fled! May I improve the shining hours of grace ere the shadows of the evening overtake me, and my time of working is no more!

Do I see the moon gliding along through midnight, and fulfilling her stages in the dusky sky? This planet also is measuring out my life, and bringing the number of my months to their end. May I be prepared to take leave of the sun and moon, and bid adieu to these visible heavens, and all the twinkling glories of them! These are all but the measurers of my time, and hasten me on towards eternity.

Am I walking in a garden, and stand still to observe the slow motion of the shadow upon a dial there? It passes over the hour-lines with an imperceptible progress, yet it will touch the last line of day-light shortly: So my hours and my moments move onward with a silent pace; but they will arrive with certainty at the last limit, how heedless soever I am of their motion, and how thoughtless so ever I may be of the improvement of time, or of the end of it.

Does a new year commence, and the first morning of it dawn upon me? Let me remember, that the last year was finished, and gone over my head, in order to make way for the entrance of the present: I have one year the less to travel through this world, and to fulfil the various services of a travelling state: May my diligence in duty be doubled, since the number of my appointed years is diminished!

Do I find a new birth-day, in my survey of the calendar, the day wherein I entered upon the stage of mortality, and was born into this world of sins, frailties, and sorrows, in order to my probation for a better state? Blessed Lord, how much have I spent already of this mortal life, this season of my probation, and how little am I prepared for that happier world? How unready for my dying moment? I am hastening hourly to the end of the life of man, which began at my nativity: Am I yet born of God? Have I begun the life of a saint? Am I prepared for that awful day, which shall determine the number of my months on earth? Am I fit to be born into the world of spirits through the straight gate of death? Am I renewed in all the powers of my nature, and made meet to enter into that unseen world, where *there shall be no more of these revolutions of days and years, but one eternal day fills up all the space with divine pleasure, or one eternal night with long and deplorable distress and darkness?*

When I see a friend expiring, or the corps of my neighbour conveyed to the grave: *Alas!* their months and minutes are all determined, and the seasons of their trial are *finished* for ever; they are gone to their eternal home, and the estate of their souls is

fixed unchangeably: The angel that has sworn, their "time shall be no longer," has concluded their hopes, or has finished their fears, and, according to the rules of righteous judgment, has decided their misery or happiness for a long immortality. Take this warning, O my soul, and think of thy own removal!

Are we standing in the church-yard, paying the last honours to the relics of our friends? What a number of hillocks of death appear all round us! What are the tomb-stones, but memorials of the inhabitants of that town, to inform us of the period of all their lives, and to point out the day, when it was said to each of them, your "time shall be no longer." O may I readily learn this important lesson, that my turn is hastening too! Such a little hillock shall shortly arise for me, on some unknown spot of ground, it shall cover this flesh, and these bones of mine, in darkness, and shall hide them from the light of the sun, and from the sight of man, till the heavens be no more.

Perhaps some kind surviving friend may engrave my name, with the number of my days, upon a plain funeral stone, without ornament, and below envy: There shall my tomb stand, among the rest, as a fresh monument of the frailty of nature, and the end of time. It is possible some friendly foot may, now and then, visit the place of my repose, and some tender eye may bedew the cold memorial with a tear: One or another of my old acquaintance may, possibly, attend there, to learn the silent lecture of mortality from my grave-stone, which my lips are now preaching aloud to the world: And if love and sorrow should reach so far, perhaps, while his soul is melting in his eye-lids, and his voice scarce finds an utterance, he will point with his finger, and shew his companion the month, and the day of my decease. O that solemn, that awful day, which shall finish my appointed time on earth, and put a full period to all the designs of my heart, and all the labours of my tongue and pen!

Think, O my soul! that while friends or strangers are engaged on that spot, and reading the date of thy departure hence, thou wilt be fixed under a decisive and unchangeable sentence, rejoicing in the rewards of time well-improved, or suffering the long sorrows, which shall attend the abuse of it, in an unknown world of happiness or misery.

Reflexion III. We may learn, from this discourse, "the stupid folly and madness of those, who are terribly afraid of the end of time, whensoever they think of it, and yet they know not what to do with their time, as it runs off daily and hourly." They find their souls unready for death, and yet they live, from year to year, without any further preparation for dying: They waste away their hours of leisure in mere trifling, they lose their seasons of grace, their means and opportunities of salvation in a thoughtless and shameful manner, as though they had no business to employ them in; they live as though they had nothing to do, with all their time, but to eat and drink, and be easy and merry. From the rising to the setting sun, you find them still in pursuit of impertinencies; they waste God's sacred time, as well as their own, either in a lazy, indolent, and careless humour, or in following after vanity, sin, and madness, while the end of time is hastening upon them.

What multitudes are there of the race of *Adam*, both in higher and in lower ranks, who are ever complaining they want leisure; and when they have a release from business, for one day or one hour, they hardly know what to do with that idle day, nor how to lay out one of the hours of it for any valuable purpose? Those in higher station, and richer circumstances, have most of their time at their own command and dispo-

disposal; but, by their actual disposal of it, you plainly see they know not what it is good for, nor what use to make of it; they are quite at a loss how to get rid of this tedious thing, called time, which lies daily as a burden on their hands. Indeed, if their head ake, or their face grow pale, and a physician feel their pulse, or look wishfully on their countenance, and, especially, if he should shake his head, or tell them his fears, that they will not hold out long, what surprize of soul, what agonies and terrors seize them on a sudden, for fear of the end of time? For they are conscious how unfit they are for eternity: Yet when the pain vanishes, and they feel health again, they are as much at a loss as ever, what to do with the remnant of life.

O the painful and unhappy ignorance of the sons and daughters of men, that are sent hither on a trial for eternity, and yet know not how to pass away time! They know not how to wear out life, and get soon enough to the end of the day: They doze their hours away, or saunter from place to place, without any design or meaning: They enquire of every one they meet, what they shall do to kill time, as the french phrase is, because they cannot spend it fast enough: They are perpetually calling in the assistance of others, to laugh, or sport, or trifle with them, and to help them off with this dead weight of time, while, at the same moment, if you do but mention the end of time, they are dreadfully afraid of coming near it. What folly and distraction is this? What sottish inconsistency is found in the heart and practice of sinful men, *Eccles. ix. 3.* "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil; madness is in their heart while they live, and, after that, they go down to the dead."

O that these loiterers would once consider, that time loiters not! days and hours, months and years loiter not; each of them flies away with swiftest wing, as fast as succession admits of, and bears them onward to the goal of eternity. If they delay and linger, among toys and shadows, time knows no delay; and they will, one day, learn, by bitter experience, what substantial, important, and eternal blessings they have lost by their criminal and shameful waste of time. The apostle *Peter* assures them, *2 Pet. ii. 3.* Though they slumber and sleep in a lethargy of sin, so that you cannot awaken them, yet "their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." The awful moment is hastening upon them, which shall teach them terribly the true value of time: Then they would give all the golden pleasures, and the riches, and the grandeur of this world, to purchase one short day more, or one hour of time, wherein they might repent, and return to God, and get within the reach of hope and salvation: But time, and salvation, and hope are all vanished, and fled, and gone out of their reach, for ever.

Reflexion IV. Learn, from such meditations as these, "the rich mercy of God, and the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ* in giving us so long a warning, before he swears that time shall be no more." Every stroke of sickness is a warning-piece, that life is coming to it's period: Every death amongst our friends and acquaintance is another tender and painful admonition, that our death also is at hand: The end of every week and every dawning sabbath is another warning; every sermon we hear of the shortness of time and the uncertainty of life is a fresh intimation, that the great angel will shortly pronounce a period upon all our time. How inexcusable shall we be, if we turn the deaf ear to all these warnings? *St. Peter* advises us to "count the long-suffering of the Lord for salvation." *2. Pet. iii. 15.* and to secure our eternal safety, and our escape from hell during the season of his lengthened grace.

Alas! How long has *Jesus*, and his mercy, and his gospel waited on you, before you began to think of the things of your everlasting peace? And if you are now

solemnly awakened, yet how long has he waited on you, with fresh admonitions and with special providences, with mercies and judgments, with promises and invitations of grace, with threatenings and words of terror, and with the whispers and advices of his own Spirit, since you began to see your danger? And, after all, have you yet sincerely repented of sin? Have you yet received the offered grace? Have you given up your selves to the Lord, and laid hold of his salvation? "This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation;" 2 Cor vi. 2. "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Heb. iii. 7—11. It is never said, through all the bible, that to-morrow is the day of grace, or to-morrow is the time of acceptance: It is the present hour only that is offered. Every day and every hour is a mercy of unknown importance to sinful men: It is a mercy, O sinners, that you awaked not this morning in hell, and that you were not fixed without remedy beyond the reach of hope and mercy.

Reflection V. Learn from this discourse what "a very useful practice it would be, to set our selves, often before hand, as at the end of time," to imagine ourselves just under the sound of the voice of this mighty angel, or at the tribunal of *Cbrist*, and to call our souls to a solemn account, in what manner we have past away all our leisure time hitherto: I mean, all that time which hath not been laid out in the necessities of the natural life, for it's support and it's needful refreshment, or in the due and proper employments of the civil life; both these are allowed and required by the God of nature, and the God of providence who governs the world; but what hast thou done, O man; O woman, what hast thou done with all the hours of leisure, which might have been laid out on far better employments, and to far nobler purposes? Give me leave to enter into particulars a little, for generals do, but seldom, convince the mind, or awaken the conscience, or affect the heart.

1. Have you not slumbered or squandered away too much time without any useful purpose or design at all? How many are there that when they have morning hours on their hands, can pass them off on their beds, and lose and forget time in a little more sleep and a little more slumber; a few impertinences with breakfast and dressing, wear out the morning without God. And how many afternoon and evening hours are worn away in such sauntering idleness, as I have described, that when the night comes, they cannot review one half hour's useful work, from the dawn of the morning to the hour of rest. Time is gone and vanished, and as they knew not what to do with it while it was present, so now, it is past, they know not what they have done with it: They keep no account of it, and are never prepared to come to a reckoning: But will the great judge of all take this for an answer to such a solemn enquiry?

2. Have you never laid out much more time, than was needful, in recreations, and pleasures of sense? Recreations are not unlawful, so far as they are necessary, and proper to relieve the fatigue of the spirits, when they are tired with business or labour, and to prepare for new labours and new businesses: But have we not followed sports without measure, and without due limitation? Hath not some of that very time been spent in them, which should have been laid out in preparing for death and eternity, and in seeking things of far higher importance?

3. Have you not wasted too much time in your frequent clubs, and what you call good company, and in places of public resort. Hath not the tavern, or the coffee-house, or the ale-house seen and known you, from hour to hour, for a whole evening, and that sometimes before the trade or labours of the day should have been ended?

And



And when your bible, and your closet, or the devotion of your family, have sometimes called upon your conscience, have you not turned a deaf ear to them all?

4. Have not useless and impertinent visits been made to no good purpose, or been prolonged beyond all necessity or improvement? When your conversation runs low, even to the dregs, and both you and your friends have been at a loss what to say next, and knew not how to fill up the time, yet the visit must go on, and time must be wasted. Sometimes the wind and the weather, and twenty insignificancies, or, what is much worse, scandal of persons or families, have come into your relief; that there might not be too long a silence: But not one word of God or goodness could find room to enter in, and relieve the dull hour. Is none of this time ever to be accounted for? And will it sound well in the ears of the great judge, "We ran to these sorry topics, these slanderous and backbiting stories, because we could not tell what to talk of, and we knew not how to spend our time."

5. Have you not been guilty of frequent, and even perpetual delays or neglects of your proper necessary business in the civil life, or in the solemn duties of religion, by busying your selves in some other needless thing, under this pretence, "It is time enough yet?"

Have you learned that important and eternal rule of prudence, "never delay till to-morrow, what may be done to-day; never put off, till the next hour, what may be done in this?" Have you not often experienced your own disappointment and folly by these delays? And yet have you ever so repented, as to learn to mend them? *Solomon* tells us, *Eccles.* iii. 1. "There is a time for every purpose, and every work, under the sun:" a proper and agreeable time for every lawful work of nature and life; and it is the business and care of a wise man to do proper work in proper time; but when we have let slip the proper season, how often have we been utterly disappointed? Have we not sustained great inconveniencies? And, sometimes, it hath so happened, that we could never do that work or business at all, because another proper season for it hath never offered: Time hath been no more. *Felix* put off his discourse with *Paul*, about the "faith of Christ, and righteousness, and judgment to come, to a more convenient time, which, probably, never came," *Acts* xxiv. 25. And the word of God teaches us, that, if we neglect our salvation in the present day of grace, the angel, in my text, is ready to swear, that "time shall be no longer."

Here permit me to put in a short word to those, who have lost much time already.

O my friends! begin now to do, what in you lies to regain it; by double diligence, in the matters of your salvation, lest the voice of the arch-angel should finish your time of trial, and call you to judgment before you are prepared.

What time lies before you, for this double improvement, God only knows: The remnant of the measure of your days is with him, and every evening the number is diminished; Let not the rising sun upbraid you with continued negligence. Remember your former abuses of hours, and months, and years, in folly and sin, or, at best, in vanity and trifling: Let these thoughts, of your past conduct, lie with such an effectual weight on your hearts, as to keep you ever vigorous in present duty. Since you have been so lazy and loitering, in your christian race, in time past, take larger steps daily, and stretch all the powers of your souls to hasten towards the crown and the prize. Harken to the voice of God, in his word, with stronger attention and zeal to profit: Pray to a long-suffering God with double fervency; cry aloud, and give him no rest, till your sinful soul is changed into penitence, and renewed

renewed to holiness, till you have some good evidences of your sincere love to God, and unfeigned faith in his Son *Jesus*. Never be satisfied till you are come to a well-grounded hope through grace, that God is your friend, your reconciled Father, that, when days and months are no more, you may enter into the region of everlasting light and peace.

But I proceed to the

Last general remark. "Learn the unspeakable happiness of those, who have improved time well, and who wait for the end of time with christian hope." They are not afraid, or, at least, they need not be afraid, of the sentence, nor the oath of this mighty angel, when he lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears, with a loud voice, "there shall be time no more."

O blessed creatures! Who have so happily improved the time of life and day of grace, as to obtain the restoration of the image of God, in some degree, on their souls, and to recover the favour of God through the gospel of *Christ*, for which end time was bestowed upon them: They have reviewed their follies with shame in the land of hope; they have mourned, and repented of sin, ere the season of repentance was past, and are become new creatures, and their lips and their lives declare the divine change. They have made preparation for death, for which purpose life and time were given. Happy souls, indeed, who have so valued time, as not to let it run off in trifles, but have obtained treasures more valuable than that time, which is gone, even the riches of the covenant of grace, and the hopes of an eternal inheritance in glory!

Happy such souls, indeed, when time is no more with them! Their happiness begins, when the duration of their mortal life is finished. Let us survey this their happiness in a few particulars.

Their time of their darkneses and difficulties is no longer: The time of painful ignorance and error is come to an end: You shall wander no more in mistake and folly; you shall behold all things in the light of God, and see him face to face, who is the original beauty, and the eternal truth. You shall see him without veils and shadows, without the reflecting glass of his word and ordinances, which, at best, gives us but a faint glimpse of him, either in his nature or wisdom, his power or goodness. You shall see him in himself, and in his son *Jesus*, the brightest and fairest image of the Father, and "shall know him, as you are known, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 10, 12.

There is no more time for temptation and danger: When once you are got beyond the limits of this visible world, and all the enticing objects of flesh and sense, there shall be no more hazard of your salvation, no more doubting and distressing fears, about your interest in your Father's love, or in the salvation of his beloved Son.

There is no more time nor place for sin to inhabit in you: The lease of it's habitation, in your mortal body, must end, when the body it self falls into the dust: You shall feel no more of it's powerful and defiling operations, either in heart or life, for ever.

The time of conflict, with your spiritual adversaries, is no longer. There is no more warfare betwixt the flesh and spirit, no more combat with the world, and the devil, who, by a thousand ways, have attempted to deceive you, and to bear you off from your heavenly hope. Your warfare is accomplished, your victory is complete, you are made overcomers through him that has loved you. Death is the last enemy

enemy to be overcome; the sting of it is already taken away, and you have now finished the conquest, and are assured of the crown, *1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.*

The time of your distance and absence from God is no more: The time of coldness and indifference, and the fearful danger of backslidings is no more: You shall be made as "pillars in the temple of your God, and shall go no more out:" *Rev. iii. 16.* He shall love you like a God, and kindle the flames of your love to so intense a degree, as is only known to angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect.

There is no more time for you to be vexed with the society of sinful creatures: Your spirit, within you, shall be no more ruffled, and disquieted, with the teizing conversation of the wicked, nor shall you be interrupted, in your holy and heavenly exercises, by any of the enemies of God, and his grace.

The time of your painful labours and sufferings is no more. *Rev. xiv. 13.* "Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord, for they rest from all their labours," that carry toil or fatigue with them: "There shall be no more complaints nor groans, no sorrow or crying; the springs of grief are for ever dried up, neither shall there be any more pain in the flesh or the spirit. God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and death shall be no more," *Rev. xxi. 4.*

"It is finished," said our blessed Lord on the cross, *Luke xxiii. 46.* It is finished, may every one of his followers say, at the hour of death, and at the end of time: My sins and follies, my distresses and my sufferings, are finished for ever, and the mighty angel swears to it, that the time of these evils is no longer: They are vanished, and shall never return. O happy souls, who have been so wise to count the short and uncertain number of your days on earth, as to make an early provision for a removal to heaven! Blessed are you above all the powers of present thought and language! Days, and months, and years, and all these short and painful periods of time, shall be swallowed up in a long and blissful eternity: The stream of time, which has run between the banks of this mortal life, and bore you along amidst many dangerous rocks of temptation, fear, and sorrow, shall launch you out into the ocean of pleasures, which have no period; those felicities must be everlasting, for duration has no limit there: Time, with all its measures, shall be no more. Amen.

# DISCOURSE II.

## The watchful christian dying in peace.

Occasioned by the decease of Mrs. SARAH ABNEY, daughter of the late Sir THOMAS ABNEY, knight, &c. Preached April 2, 1732.

Dedicated to the lady ABNEY, mother of the deceased, and to Mrs. MARY and Mrs. ELIZABETH ABNEY, her two surviving sisters.

MADAM,

**I**F sorrows could be diminished, in proportion to the multitude of those who share in them, the spring of your tears would have been drawn almost dry, and the tide of grief have sunk low, by being divided into a thousand streams. But though this cannot afford perfect relief to your LADYSHIP, yet it must be some consolation, to have been blessed with a daughter, whose removal, from our world, could give occasion for so general a mourning.

I confess, MADAM, the wound, which was made by such a smarting stroke, is not to be healed in a day or two, reason permits some risings of the softer and kinder passions in such a season; it shews, at least, that our hearts are not marble, and reveals the tender ingredients that are moulded up in our frame; nor does religion permit us to be insensible, when a God afflicts, though he doth it with the hand of a Father and a friend. Nature and love are full of these sensibilities, and incline you to miss her presence in every place, where she was wont to attend you, and where you rejoiced in her, as one of your dearest blessings. She is taken away, indeed, from mortal sight, and to follow her remains to the grave, and to dwell there, gives but a dark and melancholy view, till the great rising-day. Faith may ken the distant prospect, and exult in the sight of that glorious futurity; yet I think there is, also, a nearer relief, MADAM, to your sorrows. By the virtues, which shone in her life, you may trace the ascent of her spirit to the world of immortality and joy. Could your LADYSHIP keep the eye of your soul directed thither, you would find it an effectual balm for a heart, that bleeds at the painful remembrance of her death. What could your LADYSHIP have asked, as a higher favour of heaven, than to have born, and trained up a child for that glorious inheritance, and to have her secured of the possession beyond all possible fear or danger of losing it.

This,

This, MADAM, is your own divinest hope for your self, and you are hastening on toward that blessed society, as fast as days and hours give leave. When your thoughts descend to this lower world again, there are two living comforts near you, of the same kind with what you have lost: May your LADYSHIP rejoice in them yet many years, and they in you! And when *Jesus*, who hath the keys of death, and the invisible state, shall appoint the hour for your ascent to heaven, may you leave them behind to bless the world with fair examples of virtue and piety among men, and a long train of services for the interest of their redeemer.

If I were to say any thing, YOUNG LADIES, to you in particular, it should be in the language of our Saviour, and his beloved apostle, "Hold fast what you have till the Lord comes, that none may deprive you of your crown. Take heed to your selves, that you lose not the things which you have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." Go on, and persevere, as you have begun, in the path of true religion and happiness: And, in this age of infidelity and degenerate life, be ye daily more established in the christian faith and practice, in opposition to the smiles, and frowns, and every snare of a vain delusive world. Let this one thought set a double guard upon you, that while your elder sister was with you, it was something easier to resist every temptation, when she had pronounced the first refusal: Her steadiness was a guard, which you have now lost, but you have an almighty God in covenant on your side, and "the grace of our Lord *Jesus* is sufficient for you."

To his care, my LADY, I commend your self, and your whole family, with affectionate petitions, and am,

MADAM,

Your LADYSHIP's most obliged,

and faithful servant,

London, April 28.  
1732.

L W A T T S.

## The watchful christian dying in peace.

A

# FUNERAL SERMON, &c.

**I**T is an awful providence, which hath lately removed from among us a young person, well known to most of you, whose agreeable temper and conduct had gained the esteem of all her acquaintance, whose constitution of body, together with the furniture of her mind, and circumstances in the world, concurred to promise many future years of life and usefulness. But all that is born of the race of man is frail and mortal, and all that is done, by the hand of God, is wise and holy. We mourn, and we submit in silence. Yet the providence hath a voice in it, and the friends of the deceased are very solicitous, that such an unexpected and instructive appearance of death might be religiously improved to the benefit of the living. For this end I am desired to entertain you, at present, with some meditations on those words of our Saviour, which you read in

LUKE xii. 37.

*Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.*

**V**ARIOUS, and well-chosen, are those parables, whereby our Saviour gave warning to his disciples, that, when he was departed from this world, they should ever be upon their guard, and always in a readiness to receive him at his return; because he would come on a sudden, and “in such a hour as they thought not,” to demand an account of their behaviour, and to distribute his recompences according to their works. There are two of these parables in this chapter: But to enter into a detail of all the particular metaphors, which relate to this one, whence I have borrowed my text, would be too tedious here, and would spend too much of the present hour. Without any longer preface, therefore, I shall apply my self to improve the words, to our spiritual profit, in the following method.

- I. I shall enquire, what is meant by the coming of *Christ*, in the text, and how it may be properly applied to our present purpose, or the hour of death.
- II. I shall consider, what is implied in the watchfulness, which our Saviour recommends.
- III. I propose some considerations, which will discover the blessedness of the watchful soul in a dying hour.
- IV. I shall add some practical remarks.

First, Let us enquire, what is meant by the coming of *Christ* in my text. The coming of *Christ*, in some of these parables, may have reference to his speedy appearance, in the course of his providence, in that very age, to judge and punish the

the *jewish* nation, to destroy their city, and put an end to their church and state, for their many hainous iniquities, and the most provoking crime of rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. But these words, in their supreme and most important sense, always point to the glorious appearance of *Christ* at the last day, when he shall come to shut up all the scenes of this frail life, to put an end to the present world, to finish all the works of this mortal state, and to decide and determine the eternal states of all mankind by the general judgment.

Yet *Christ* comes to each of us, in the hour of death, also, for "he hath the keys of death and of hell," or of the invisible world, *Rev. i. 18.* It is he, who appoints the very moment, when the soul shall be dismissed from this flesh, he opens the doors of the grave for the dying body, and he is Lord of the world of spirits, and lets in new inhabitants, every minute, into those unseen regions of immortal sorrow, or immortal peace.

And, as *Christ* may be said to come to us by the message or summons of death, so the many solemn writings and commands of watchfulness, which attend these parables of *Christ*, have been usually, and with good reason, applied to the hour of death also, for then the Lord comes to shut up the scene of each of our lives, our works are then finished, our last day is come, and the world is then at an end with us.

Let it be observed, also, that there is a further parallel between the day of the general judgment, and that of our own death: The one will as certainly come as the other, but the time when *Christ* will come, in either of these senses, is unknown to us, and uncertain: And it is this, which renders the duty of perpetual watchfulness so necessary to all men. The parable assures us, that our Lord will certainly come, but whether at the second, or third watch, whether at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or near the morning, this is all uncertainty; yet whensoever he comes, he expects we should have our loins girded, like servants fit for business, and our lamps burning, to attend him at the door, and that we be ready to receive him as soon as he knocks.

Were the appointed hour of judgment, or of death, made known to us for months or years before-hand, we should be ready to think, constant watchfulness a very needless thing. Mankind would persuade themselves, to indulge their foolish and sinful slumbers, and only take care to rub their eyes a little, and bestir themselves a hour or two before this awful event: But it is the suddenness and uncertainty of the coming of *Christ* to all mankind, for either of these purposes, that extends the charge of watchfulness to all men, as well as to the apostles, *Mark xiii. 37.* and that calls upon us aloud, to keep our souls ever awake, lest, as our Lord there expresses it, lest, coming suddenly, he should find us sleeping. And remember this, that, if we are unprepared to meet the Lord at death, we can never be ready when he comes to judgment: Peace and blessedness attend the watchful christian, whensoever his Lord cometh. "Blessed is that servant, whom, when his Lord cometh, he shall find watching." This leads me to the second general head.

Secondly, What is implied in watchfulness.

Answer. In general it is opposed to sleeping, as I have already hinted, in *Mark xiii. 35, 36.* And, in the language of scripture, as well as in common speech, sleep and slumber denote an unpreparedness to receive whatever comes, for this is the case with those who are asleep: On the other hand, watchfulness is a preparation and readiness for every event, and so it is expressed in some of these parables, verse 40. "Be ye therefore ready." But to enter into a few particulars.

1. There is a sleep of death, *Psal.* xiii. 3. Spiritual death, as well as natural, is sometimes called a sleep. Such is the case of a soul "dead in trespasses and sins," *Eph.* v. 14. compared with ii. 1. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and *Christ* shall give thee light."

Watchfulness, therefore, implies life, a principle of spiritual life in the soul: Surely those, who are dead in sins, are not prepared to receive their Lord: He is a perfect stranger to them, they know him not, they love him not, they obey him not; and a terrible stranger he will be, if he comes upon them before they are awake. But those, who are awakened by divine grace into a spiritual life, have seen something of the glory of God in the face of *Jesus Christ*; they are acquainted with their Lord, they love him, and have some degree of preparation to meet their Saviour, when he summons them to leave this world. This is, therefore, a matter of highest consequence, that we awake from a state of sin and death, that we be made alive to God, begin the christian life, and set upon religion, in good earnest, according to the rules of the gospel, before *Christ* calls us away. It is only this divine life begun in us, that can secure us from eternal death; though even christians may be found slumbering in other respects, and expose themselves to painful evils, if that hour surprize them at unawares.

2. There is a sleep of indolence and thoughtlessness: When a man is insensible of his own circumstances, and too careless of the things which most concern him, we say, "the man is asleep." Such a sleep seems to be upon the church of *Israel*, *Isai.* xxix. 10, 11. "a spirit [of deep sleep, when the law, which contained the great things of God, and their salvation, was to them as a sealed book, they read it not, their eyes were closed, their spiritual senses were bound up." Many a christian, who hath been raised from a death in sin, has been seized with this criminal slumber, and has had the image of death come again upon him: He has grown too careless and unconcerned about his most important and eternal affairs; and, in this temper, he hardly knows what his state is toward God, nor keeps up a lively sense or notice of divine and eternal things upon his spirit.

Watchfulness, in opposition to this sleep, implies a holy solicitude and diligence to know our own spiritual state; a consciousness of what we are; a keeping all the spiritual senses in proper exercise, and maintaining a lively perception of divine things. It implies an acute, painful sense of indwelling sin, and the irregular propensities of the heart, a delightful relish of heavenly objects, frequent thoughts of death and eternity, constant waiting for those awful events, with a quick apprehension and resentment of all things, that help or hinder the spiritual life. This is the character of a wakeful christian, and such an one as is ready to receive his returning Lord.

3. There is a sleep of security and foolish peace, when a person is not apprehensive of imminent danger, and is much unguarded against it. Such was the sleep of *Jonah* in the storm, of *Sampson* on the lap of *Delilah*, when the *philistines* were upon him, and of the disciples, when *Judas*, and the band of soldiers, were just ready to seize their master. This is the case of many a slumbering christian: He is not upon his guard against his inward lusts and passions, nor against those outward temptations and perils to which he is continually exposed, while he dwells in flesh and blood.

Watchfulness, in this respect, is when a christian hath his eyes open, and turns them round on every side, to foresee approaching evil, and prevent it; when he is prepared for every assault of every adversary, whether sin or the world, whether death or the devil; he hath his spiritual armour girt upon him, and is ready for the combat.



bat. He is every hour guarding against the powers of the flesh; and watching against it's allurements and attractions, lest he be defiled thereby, and unfit to meet his returning Lord: He is daily loosening his heart from all sensual attachments, and weaning himself from the world and creatures, because he knows he must quickly take his long farewell, and part with them all, at the call and appointment of his great master. He is like a centinel upon his watch-tower, ever awake, because dangers stand thick around him.

4. There is a sleep of sloth and inactivity, *Prov. xix. 15.* "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep. A little more sleep, a little more slumber, saith the lazy christian, who turns upon his bed, as the door upon it's hinges," and makes no progress or advance in his way to heaven. We are sleepy christians, when we do little for God, or our own souls, in comparison of the vast work, and important varieties of duty that lie upon us: When our zeal is cold, and our efforts of service slight and feeble: When the light of grace shines so dim, and the spark of holiness is so covered with ashes, that it is hard to say, whether it burn or no. As in natural things, so in spiritual, it is a difficult matter, sometimes, to distinguish between a dead man and a lethargic sleeper.

Watchfulness, in opposition to this slumber, is a lively and vigorous exercise of every grace, and a diligent attendance on every duty, both toward God and man, a constant converse with heaven by daily devotion, an active zeal for God in the world, a steady faith in the promises, a joyful hope of heavenly blessedness, a longing expectation of the returning Saviour, which makes the soul stretch out the wings of desire and joy, as though it were going forth to meet him. This is the meaning of the apostle *Peter's* expression, *2 Pet. iii. 12.* "Looking for, and hastening to the coming of the day of God."

Put all these things together now, and they make up the character of a watchful christian: He is awake from the sleep of death, and made spiritually alive; he hath the work of vital religion begun in his heart.

He is awake from the sleep of thoughtlessness and indolence, he is solicitous to know his own state, and hath good hope through grace, he lives in the view of heavenly things, and keeps his eye open to future and eternal glories.

He is awake from the sleep of security, he is upon his guard against every danger, and ready to receive every alarm.

He is awake from the sleep of slothfulness, and is active in the pursuit of the glory of his God, and his own eternal interest, and still pressing toward the mark to obtain the prize. This is the soul that is ready to meet a returning Saviour, and to meet his Lord when he comes, either at the hour of death, or to the general judgment.

Thirdly, let me propose some special considerations, which discover the blessedness of the watchful christian at the hour of death.

Consideration I. That moment dispossesses us of every enjoyment of flesh and blood, and divides us from the commerce of this visible world, but the wakeful christian is happy, for he is ready to be thus divided and dispossessed. Death breaks the band, at once, between us and all the sensible things round about us, by dissolving the frame of this body, which had united us to them; and the watchful saint is content to have that bond broken, these unions dissolved. His heart and soul are not torn away from the dear delights of this mortal state with that pain, anguish, and horror that attend the sinner, when death summons him off the stage, and divides him from his fleshly idols. The christian hath been untying his heart, by degrees,  
from

from the dearest delights of sense, and disengaging it from all that is not immortal: With holy pleasure he can bid farewell to sun, moon, and stars, and to all things, which their light can shew him, for he is going to a world, where the sun of righteousness ever shines in unclouded glory, and discovers such sights as are infinitely superior to all that the eyes of flesh can behold: He can part with friends and kindred with a composed spirit, for he is going to meet better friends, and diviner kindred, as we shall shew immediately: He can leave his dying flesh behind him, and commit it to the dust, in joyful hope of the great rising-day, and he hath a better mansion at present provided for him on high in his Father's house, while he lives far separate from all earthly dwellings, *2 Cor. v. 1.* "We know, that if this earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God,—not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Consideration II. The moment of death finishes our state of trial, and fixes us unchangeably in the state of sin or holiness, in which we are then found; and blessed is the watchful christian, for he is prepared to have his trial thus ended, and his state thus fixed, and made unchangeable. "As the tree falls, so it lies, whether to the north or the south:" *Eccles. xi. 3.* As the soul parts from the body, so it remains, whether fitted for heaven or hell. It is therefore a matter of the last importance to be prepared, and ready for such an eternal sentence and unchangeable determination. Were any of us to be surprized some moment this day, and forced to continue all our lives in that very posture of body in which we are then found, should we not be awake, and keep our selves in the most natural and easy gestures all that day, lest we be seized at once, and fixed in some distorted, painful, and uneasy situation all our months and years to come? Or, if we were to be bound down to one single thought or passion all the remnant of our life, in which we were found in any uncertain minute in this hour, should we not watch with utmost care, and guard against every displeasing thought, and every fretful and vexing passion, lest it should be fixed upon us till we die?

Now this is the case at death: The almighty voice of God then pronounces, "He that is unclean and unholy, must for ever be unholy and unclean; but he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, shall be for ever holy." *Rev. xxii. 11.* I will not precisely determine, that this is the sense of that text, yet since the apostle speaks there concerning the coming of *Christ*, it may be very applicable to the present case. Now how dreadful soever this thought is to a guilty sinful creature, it is no terror to a wakeful christian: He is ready to have these words pronounced from heaven, for they will establish him in eternal holiness and eternal peace: He hath endeavoured to secure to himself an interest in the love of God through the faith and love of *Jesus* the blessed mediator, and at death he is fixed for ever in their love. He hath loved God in time, and in this visible world, and there is nothing in all the unseen worlds, nothing through all the ages of eternity, shall ever separate him from the love of God in *Christ Jesus*. The moment of death hath fixed him for ever a holy and beloved soul, beyond the power of creatures to change his temper, or his state. This is the blessedness of the watchful christian.

Consideration III. Death sets us, in a more immediate and sensible manner, in the presence of God, a glorious and holy God, God the judge of all; and blessed is the watchful christian, for he is willing to stand before this God, to be brought into his presence: This is what he hath longed and prayed for, to be for ever with God. It is the blessedness that he hath sought with incessant labours and tears, with holy diligence

gence and daily devotion, and blessed is the "pure in heart, who hath watched against the pollutions of the world, for he shall see God, *Matth. v. 8.*

It is certain, that when the soul departs from the body, "it returns to God, who gave it," *Ecclef. xii. 7.* And probably to God, as a judge too, *Heb. ix. 27.* "after death, judgment." There is some sort of determination of the state of each single person at death before the great and general judgment-day, because that day is appointed rather for the public vindication of the equity of God, in his distribution of rewards and punishments, and is particularly put into the hands of our Lord *Jesus*: Now, since the separate soul returns to God, who gave it, it is of vast importance, that we be then prepared to come before him.

Some of us here would be mightily afraid of appearing before a prince, or a great and honourable person in an undress; but for our souls, in a naked state, or in a garment of sinful pollution, to be surprized by the great and holy God, to be set on a sudden in his presence, what terror is contained in this thought! Now the watchful christian hath this blessedness, that he is washed, from his defilements, in the blood of the lamb, "he is clothed with the robe of righteousness, and the garments of salvation," *Isai. lxi. 10.* He is prepared to appear before a God of infinite holiness without terror, for he is made like him, he bears his image, he appears as one of his children, and he is not afraid to see his Father.

However some commentators may confine, and impoverish the sense of *David*, in the end of the xvii. *Psalms*, yet, I am persuaded, the Spirit of God in him designed to express his faith and joy, either at the hour of death, or in the morning of the resurrection, "I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness:" When the *Psalms* had described, what were the satisfactions of the men of this world in death, verse 14. *viz.* that they had filled their houses with children, and leave their substance, or riches to them, he then declares what was his support and hope in his dying hour, "As for me, saith he, I have other views: I am not afraid, O my God, to appear before thee in the other world, for I shall see thy face, not as a criminal, but as a person approved, and accepted, and righteous in thy sight: I shall awake, from this world of dreams and shadows, into thy complete image, and perfect holiness; or I shall awake from the dust of death, and shall be fully satisfied; and rejoice to find my self made so like my God, and to dwell for ever in his presence."

Consideration IV. It is the Lord *Jesus Christ* that lets the soul out of the body, for he hath the keys of death, and of the unseen world, and blessed is the watchful christian, who waits for the coming of his Lord, for he can meet him gladly when fulfilling this part of his glorious office. He shall be introduced by him into the presence of God his Father, and shall receive most condescending instances of mercy from *Christ* himself. See the text, *Luke xii. 36, 37.* "Be ye your selves like men, that wait for the Lord, that, when he cometh, and knocketh, ye may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: Verily, I say to you, he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth, and serve them." He shall condescend, as it were, even below the office of a steward, he shall bring out the heavenly provisions of his Father's house, and make them sit down in his kingdom, and give them divine refreshments after their labours; he shall feed them as a shepherd, shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and afford them his presence for ever.

The watchful christian is blessed, indeed, when he shall be "absent from the body, and be at once present with the Lord, *2 Cor. v. 8.* The Lord *Jesus*, whom he

he hath seen by faith in his gospel, whose voice he hath heard in his word, and obeyed it; *Jesus*, whom he hath touched, and tasted in the appointed emblems of his supper on earth, in whom he hath believed through the word of grace, and whom he hath loved before he saw him, shall now receive him into his presence, and the disciple shall rejoice for ever to meet his Lord with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

Consideration V. At the hour of death we are sent at once into an invisible world, we shall find our selves in the midst of holy or of unclean spirits; born away at once into an unknown region, and into the midst of unknown inhabitants, the nations of the saved, or the crouds of damned souls; and blessed is the watchful christian, for he is ready to enter into the unseen regions: He knows he shall not be placed among those, whose company and whose character he never loved here on earth; "his soul shall not be gathered with sinners, nor his dwelling be with the workers of iniquity," *Psal. xvi. 3.* but with "the saints, the excellent in the earth, in whom was all his delight." *xxvi. 9.* Every one when dismissed from the prison of this body, must go as the apostles did, when released from the prison at *Jerusalem*, to their own company, *Acts iv. 23.* *Judas* the traitor went to his own place, *Acts i. 25.* And the watchful christian will be disposed among spirits of the just made perfect; he will find himself in that blessed society at his dismissal from flesh and blood. Read, and see, what a glorious society it is, *Heb. xii. 22. 23.* "To the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and *Jesus*, the mediator of the new covenant." The apostle says, we are come to them already, that is, by the covenant of grace, as administered under the gospel; we are brought into a blessed union with them, in spirit and in temper, even in this life, we are members of the same body, we are united to the same head, and made parts of the same household, though we are not yet brought home: But at death we are actually present with them, and dwell and converse among them with holy familiarity, as citizens of the same heavenly *Jerusalem*, as parts of the same sacred family, and at home, as children of the same God, and in their Father's house. The watchful christian is at once carried into the midst of the blessed world by ministering angels, the world where *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob* dwell, and made a speedy partaker of their blessedness, *Luke xvi. 22.*

Consideration VI. Death brings with it a most amazing and inconceivable change of all our present circumstances and thoughts, our actions and pursuits, our sensations and enjoyments, I mean, all those that relate to this life only, such as eating, drinking, buying, selling, &c. It dislodges us from these bodies, and thereby finishes all those affections, concerns and labours which belong to the body, and sends us into another sort of world, whose affairs and concerns are such only as belong to spirits, whether sinful or holy: A most delightful, or a most dreadful change! A world of unknown sorrows, or unknown happiness! *Luke xxiii. 43.* "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." *Luke xvi. 22.* "The rich man died,—and in hell he lift up his eyes." And, indeed, the change is so vast, that, comparatively speaking, we know not what sorrow or happiness is till this day comes. Now it is a very foolish and dangerous thing, at best, to pass into such an extreme change of states infinitely worse, or infinitely better, while we are asleep, and at all uncertainties: What if it should be the miserable state, and we should awake in hell? But the watchful christian is blessed, for he is ready for this amazing change. He hath long lived upon it by faith and hope, though he knows not so well what the particular

cular enjoyments of heaven are; and he is well satisfied, that he is prepared for that happy world by God himself. 2 Cor. v. 5. "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God:" He is well-pleased to have his faith changed into sight, and his hope into fruition: He hath been long pained and burdened, in this sinful world, with the vain trifles, the poor low cares and amusements of it; the sins, and sorrows, and temptations that surround him in it, give him continual inquietudes, and he hath been training up in the school of *Christ*, by devotion and good works, for those higher services of heaven. Since he can trust the promises of the gospel, and has had some small foretaste of these pleasures, he knows that the actions and employments, the businesses and the joys of the upper world, are incomparably superior to any thing here on earth, and free from all the uneasy and defiling circumstances of this life. He is awake to receive this change: He rejoices in his removal from world to world: His vital and active powers are ready for the business of paradise, and he opens his heart to take in the joy.

Consideration VII. Death makes it's approaches, oftentimes, and seizes us in such a manner as to give no room for prayers or repentance, then the blessedness of the watchful soul appears, that if he is carried out of the world and time, in such a surprizing way, he is safe for eternity.

Sometimes the messenger of death stops all our thoughts and actions, at once, by a lethargic stroke, or confounds them all by the delirious ravings of a fever; the light of reason is eclipsed and darkened, the powers of the mind are all obstructed, or the languishings of nature have so enfeebled them, that either we cannot exercise them, to any spiritual purposes, or we are forbid to do it, for fear of counterworking the physician, increasing the malady, and hastening our death. Thus we are not capable of making any new preparation for the important work of dying; we can make use of none of the means of grace, no do any thing more to secure an interest in the love of God, the salvation of *Christ*, and the blessings of heaven.

This is a very dismal thought indeed. But the watchful christian hath this blessedness, that he is fit to receive the sentence of death in any form; nor lethargies, nor deliriums, nor languors of nature can destroy the seed of grace and religion in the heart, which were sown there in the days of health; nor can any of the formidable attendants of death cancel his former transactions with God and *Christ* about his immortal concerns. That great and momentous work was done before death appeared, or any of it's attendants. He was not so unwise as to leave matters, of infinite importance, at that dreadful hazard: He is not now to begin to seek after a lost God, nor to begin his repentance for past sins: He is not now a stranger at the throne of grace, nor beginning to learn to pray: He is not now commencing his acquaintance with *Jesus Christ*, his Saviour, in the midst of a tumult and hurry of thoughts and fears; nor are the works of faith, and love, and holiness to be now begun. Dreadful work indeed, and infinitely hazardous! To begin to be convinced of sin on the borders of death, and to make our first enquiries after God and heaven upon the very brink of hell! To begin to ask for pardon when we can live in sin no longer; to cry out, *Jesus, save me*, when the waves of the wrath of God are breaking in upon the drowning soul! Hopeless condition, and extreme wretchedness! To have all the hard work of conversion to go through under the sinkings of feeble nature, and to begin the exercises of virtue and godliness under the wild disorders of reason! What a madness is it to leave our infinite concerns at such a horrible uncertainty!

[“ Here this discourse may be divided.”]

But these are not thy circumstances, oh wakeful christian ! Nor was this the case of our young departed friend, though her distemper soon discomposed her reasoning powers, and gave her very little opportunity to make a present preparation for dying. But she had heard the voice of *Christ*, in his gospel, betimes, and awoke to righteousness at his call, that she might be always ready for his summons in death. Religion was her early care, a fear to offend God possessed, and governed her thoughts and actions from her childhood, and heavenly things were her youthful choice. She had appeared, for some years, in the public profession of christianity, and maintained the practice of godliness in the church and the world ; but it began much more early in secret. Her beloved closet, and her retiring hours, were silent witnesses of her daily converse with God and her Saviour : There she devoted her soul to her Creator betimes, according to the encouragements and rules of the gospel of *Christ*, and there she found peace and salvation. It was there she made a conscientious recollection of the sermons she heard in public from her tender years, and left behind her these fruits of her memory, and her pen, to attest what improvements she gained, in knowledge, by the ministrations of the word ; and her cabinet has now discovered to us another set of memoirs, wherein she continually observed what advances she might make in real piety, by those weekly seasons of grace.

It was under these influences she maintained a most dutiful and affectionate behaviour to her honoured parents, and with filial fondness, mingled with esteem, submission, and reverence, paid her constant regards to the lady, her mother, in her widowed estate. It was by the united principles of grace and nature, she lived with her younger sisters in uncommon harmony and friendship, as though one heart and soul animated them all. It was under these influences, she ever stood upon her guard, amongst all the innocent freedoms of life, and though she did not immure her self in the walls of a mother's house, but indulged a just curiosity to learn some of the forms of the world, the magnificence of courts, and the grandeurs of life, yet she knew how far to appear among them, and when to retire. Nor did she forbid her self all the polite diversions of youth agreeable to her rank ; nor did reason, or religion, or her superior relatives forbid her ; yet she was still awake to secure all that belongs to honour and virtue, nor did she use to venture to the utmost bounds of what sobriety and religion might allow. Danger of guilt stands near the extreme limits of innocence.

Shall I let this paper inform the world, with what friendly decency she treated her young companions and acquaintance ; how far from indulging the modish liberties of scandal on the absent ; how much she hated those scornful and derisive airs, which persons, on higher ground, too often assume toward those, who are seated in the inferior ranks of life ? Is it proper, I should say, how much her behaviour won upon the esteem of all that knew her, though I could appeal to the general sorrow at her death, to confirm the truth of it ? But who can forbear, on this occasion, to take notice, how far she acquired that lovely character, in her narrow and private sphere, which seems almost to have been derived to her, by inheritance, from her honoured father deceased, who had the tears of his country long dropping upon his tomb, and whose memory yet lives in a thousand hearts ?

Such a conversation, and such a character, made up of piety and virtue, were prepared for the attacks of a fever, with malignant and mortal symptoms. Slow and

and unsuspected were the advances of the disease, till the powers of reason began to falter and retire, till the heralds of death had made their appearance, and spread on her bosom their purple ensigns. When these disorders began, her lucid intervals were longer, and, while she thought no person was near, she could address herself to God, and say, how often she had given her self to him; she hoped she had done it sincerely, and found acceptance with him, and trusted that she was not deceived. The gleams of reason, that broke in between the clouds, gave her light enough to discern her own evidences of piety, and refresh her hope. Then she repeated some of the last verses of the cxxxix. *Psalms* in metre, viz.

“ Lord, search my soul, try every thought :  
 Though my own heart accuse me not  
 Of walking in a false disguise,  
 I beg the trial of thy eyes.”  
 “ Doth secret mischief lurk within ?  
 Do I indulge some unknown sin ?  
 O turn my feet whene'er I stray,  
 And lead me in thy perfect way.”

She was frequent and importunate in her requests for the psalm-book, that she might read that psalm, or, at least, have it read to her throughout; and it was with some difficulty we persuaded her to be composed in silence; thus sincerely willing was she, that God might search and try her heart, still hoping well concerning her spiritual state, yet still solicitous about the assurance of her own sincerity, in her former transactions with heaven.

The next day, among the roving of her thoughts, she rehearsed all those verses of the xvii. *Psalms*, which are paraphrased in the same book, with very little faulting in a line or two :

“ Lord, I am thine; but thou wilt prove  
 My faith, my patience, and my love,” &c.

The traces of her thoughts, under this confusion of animal nature, retained something in them divine and heavenly.

O blessed situation of soul, when we stand prepared for death, though it come with the formidable retinue of a disordered brain, and clouded reason! It would be too long, at present, to represent to you the sad consequences of being found asleep, when *Christ* comes to call us away from this world, I shall therefore only make these three reflexions.

Reflexion I. “ None can begin too early to awake to righteousness, and prepare for the call of *Christ*, since no one is too young to be sent for by his messenger of death.” I do not here speak of the state of infancy, when persons can hardly be said to be in a personal state of trial: But when I say, none can awake too early to mind the things of religion, I mean, after reason begins its proper exercise, and this appears sometimes in early childhood. All our life in this world, compared with heaven, is a sort of night, and season of darkness; and if our Lord summon us away in the first watch of the night, in the midst of youth and vigour, and the pleasing allurements of flesh and sense, we are in a deplorable state, if we are found sleeping, and hurried away from earth into the invisible world, in the midst of our

foolish dreams of golden vanity. Dreadful indeed, to have a young thoughtless creature carried off the stage sleeping, and dead in trespasses and sins! Let those that are drunk with wine fall asleep upon the top of a mast in the middle of the sea, where the winds and the waves are tossing and roaring all around them; let a mad man, who has lost his reason, lie down to sleep upon the edge of a precipice, where a pit of fire and brimstone is burning beneath him, and ready to receive his fall; but let not young sinners, whose rational powers are in exercise, and whose life is, every moment, a mere uncertainty, venture to go on in their dangerous slumbers, while the wrath of God, and eternal misery attend them, if they die before they are awake.

It is granted, that no power beneath that which is divine, can effectually quicken a dead soul, and awaken it into a divine life. It is the work of God, to "quicken the dead," *Rom. iv. 17. Eph. ii. 5.* It is the Son of God, who is the "light and life of the world," *John i. 4.* to whom "the Father hath given this quickening power," *John v. 26.* He calls sinners, to awaken them from their deadly sleep, *Eph. v. 14.* And "they live by him, as he lives by the Father," *John vi. 57.* He awakens dead souls to life by the same "living Spirit, which shall quicken their mortal bodies, and raise them from the grave," *Rom. viii. 9, 11, 13. 2 Cor. iii. 3.* which Spirit he "hath received from the Father," *John iii. 34.* And, on this account, we are to seek the vital influences of this grace from heaven by constant and importunate prayer. Yet, in my text, as well as in other scriptures, awaking out of sleep, and watching unto righteousness, is represented as our duty, and we are to exert all our natural powers, with holy fervency for this end, while our daily petitions draw down from heaven the promised aids of grace. Our diligence in duty, and our dependence on the divine power and mercy, are happily and effectually joined in the command of our Saviour, on this very occasion, in one of his parables, *Mark xiii. 33.* "Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is, that the Lord will come." And again, chapter *xiv. 38.* "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Trust not in your own strength and sufficiency, for the glorious change to be wrought in your sinful hearts, and yet neglect not your own labours and restless endeavours, under a pretence, that it is God's work, and not your's. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and *Christ* shall give thee light," *Eph. v. 14.*

Nor should frail dying creatures, in their youngest years, delay this work one day, nor one hour, since the consequences of being found asleep, when *Christ* calls, are terrible indeed. We are beset with mortality all around us; the seeds of disease and dissolution are working within us from our very birth and cradle, ever since sin entered into our natures; and we should ever be in a readiness to remove hence, since we are never secure from the summons of heaven, the stroke of death, and the demands of the grave.

There was a lovely boy, the son of the *shunamite*, who was given to his mother in a miraculous way, and when he was in the field among the reapers, he cried out, "My head, my head;" he was carried home immediately, and, in a few hours, died in his mother's bosom, *2 Kings iv. 18.* Who would have imagined, that head-ach should have been death, and that in so short a time too? This is almost the case which we lament at present; the head-ach was sent but a few days before, nor was the pain very intense, nor the appearance dangerous, yet it became the fatal, though unexpected fore-runner of death.

This providence is an awful warning-piece to all her young acquaintance, to be ready for a sudden removal; for she was of a healthy make, and seemed to stand at



as great distance, from the gates of death, as any of you : But the firmest constitution of human nature is born with death in it. From every age, and every spot of ground, and every moment of time, there are short and sudden ways of descent to the grave. Trap-doors, if I may use so low a metaphor, are always under us, and a thousand unseen avenues to the regions of the dead. A malignant fever strikes the strongest nature, with a mortal blast, at the command of the great author and disposer of life. My youngest hearers may be called away from the earth by the next pain that seizes them. Nothing but religion, early religion and sincere godliness, can give you hope in youthful death, or leave a fragrant favour on your name, or memory, among those that survive.

Reflexion II. If such blessedness, as I have described, belong to every watchful christian at the hour of death, then it may not be improper here to take notice of “some peculiar advantages, which attend those who shake off the deadly sleep of sin in their younger years, and are awake early to God and religion.”

1. They have much fewer sins to mourn over on a death-bed, and they prevent much bitter repentance for youthful iniquities, Holy *Job* was a man of distinguished piety, and God himself pronounces of him, that “there was none like him in all the earth,” *Job* i. 18. but it is a question, whether his most early days were devoted to God, and whether he was so watchful over his behaviour in that dangerous season of life, for he makes a heavy complaint in his addresses to God, *Job* xiii. 26. “Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.” The sooner we begin to be awake to holiness, the more of these follies and sorrows are prevented : Happy those, who have the fewest of them, to embitter their following lives, or make a death-bed painful !

2. Young persons have fewer attachments to the world, and the persons and things of it, which are round about them, and are more ready to part with it, when their souls are united to God by an early faith and love. They have not yet entered into so numerous engagements of life, nor dwelt long enough here to have their hearts grown so fast on to creatures, which usually make the parting-stroke so full of anguish and smarting sorrow. A child can much more easily ascend to heaven, and leave a parent behind, without that tender and painful solicitude, which a dying parent has for the welfare of a surviving child. The surrender of all mortal interests, at the call of God, is much more easy when our souls are not tied to them by so many strings, nor united by so many of the softer endearments of nature, and where grace has taught us to practise an early weaning from all temporal comforts, and a little loosened our hearts from them by the faith of things eternal.

3. Those that have been awake betimes to godliness, give peculiar honours to the gospel at death, and leave this testimony to the divine religion of *Jesus*, that it was able to subdue passion and appetite, in that season of life, when they are usually strongest and most unruly. They give peculiar credit and glory to the christian name, and the gospel, which has gained them so many victories over the enemies of their salvation, at that age wherein multitudes are the captives of sin, and slaves to folly and vanity.

4. Those christians, who are awake to God, in their early years, leave more happy and powerful examples of living and dying to their young companions and acquaintance. It is the temper of every age of life, to be more influenced and affected by the practice of persons of the same years. Sin has fewer excuses to make, in order to shield it self from the reproof of such examples, who have renounced it betimes ; and virtue carries with it a more effectual motive to persuade young sinners

ners to piety and goodness, when it can point to it's votaries of the same age, and in the same circumstances of life. "Why may not this be practised by you, as well as by your companions round about you, of the same age?" But I must hasten to the last reflexion.

Reflexion III. "When we mourn the death of friends, who were prepared for an early summons, let their preparation be our support." Blessed be God, they were not found sleeping! While we drop our tears upon the grave of any young christian, who was awake, and alive to God, that blessedness which *Christ* himself pronounces upon them, is a sweet cordial to mingle with our bitter sorrows, and will greatly assist to dry up the spring of them. The idea of their piety, and their approbation in the sight of God, is a balm to heal the wound, and give present ease to the heart-ach.

We are ready to run over their virtues, and spread abroad their amiable qualities in our thoughts, and then, with seeming reason, we give a loose to the mournful passion; whereas all these, when set in a true light, are real ingredients towards our relief.

We lament the loss of our departed friend, when we review that capacious and uncommon power of memory, which the God of nature had given her, and which was so well furnished with a variety of human and divine knowledge, and was stored with a rich treasure of the word of God, so that if providence had called her into a more public appearance, she might have stood up in the world as a burning and shining light, so far as her sex and station required. This furniture of the mind seems, indeed, to be lost in death, and buried in the grave; but we give in too much to the judgment of sense; did not this extensive knowledge lay a foundation for her early piety? And did it not, by this means, prepare her for a more speedy removal to a higher school of improvement, and a world of sublimer devotion? And does she not shine there among brighter and better company?

We mourn again for our loss of a person so valuable, when we think of that general calmness and sedateness of soul, which she possessed in a peculiar degree, so that she was not greatly elevated or depressed by common accidents or occurrences; but this secured her from the rise of unruly passions, those stormy powers of nature, which sometimes sink us into guilt and distress, and make us unwilling and afraid of the sudden summons of *Christ*, lest he should find us under these disorders.

We think of her firmness of spirit, and that steady resolution, which, joined with a natural reserve, was a happy guard against many of the forward follies and dangers of youth, and proved a successful defence against some of the allurements and temptations of the gayer years of life: And then we mourn a-fresh, that a person, so well formed for growing prudence and virtue, should be so suddenly snatched away from amongst us. But this steady and dispassionate frame of soul, well improved by religion and divine grace, became an effectual means to preserve her youth more unblemished, and made her spirit fitter for the heavenly world, where nothing can enter that is defiled, and whose delights are not tumultuous as our's are on earth; but all is a calm and rational state of joy.

We lament yet further, when we think of her native goodness, and unwillingness to displease: But goodness is the very temper of that region to which she is gone, and she is the fitter companion for the inhabitants of a world of love.

We lament, that such a pattern of early piety should be taken from the earth, when there are so few practisers of it, especially among the youth of our degene-  
rate

rate age, and in plentiful circumstances of life. But it is a matter of high thankfulness to God, who endowed her with those valuable qualities, and trained her up so soon for a world so much better than our's is. Let our sorrow for the deceased be changed into devout praises to divine grace. Let us imitate the holy language of St. Paul to the *Thessalonians*, and say, "We are comforted, even at her grave, in all our afflictions and distress, by the remembrance of her faith and piety. What sufficient thanks can we render unto God, upon her account, for all the joy, wherewith we rejoice, for her sake, before our God, night and day praying exceedingly, that we may see her face in the state of perfection? And may God himself, even our Father, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*, direct our way to the happy world, where she dwells," 1 *Thess.*, iii. 7—12. The imitation of what was excellent in her life, and watchful readiness to follow her in death, are the best honours we can pay her memory, and the wisest improvement of the present providence. May the Spirit of grace teach us these lessons, and make us all learn them with power, that when our Lord *Jesus* shall come to call us hence by death, or shall appear, with all his saints, in the great rising-day, we may be found among his wakeful servants, and partake of the promised blessedness! Amen.

D I S-

## DISCOURSE III.

## Surprize in death.

MARK xiii. 35, 36.

*Watch ye, therefore; — lest, coming suddenly, be find you sleeping.*

**A**MONG the parables of our Saviour, there are several recorded by the evangelists, which represent him as a prince, or lord and master of a family, departing, for a season, from his servants, and, in his absence, appointing them their proper work, with a solemn charge, to wait for his return; at which time, he foretold them, that he should require an account of their behaviour in his absence; and he either intimates, or expresses a severe treatment of those, who should neglect their duty while he was gone, or make no preparation for his appearance. He informs them, also, that he should come upon them on a sudden, and, for this reason, charges them to be always awake, and upon their guard, verse 35. *Watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning.*

Though the ultimate design of these parables, and the coming of *Christ* mentioned therein, refer to the great day of judgment, when he shall return from heaven, shall raise the dead, and call mankind to appear before his judgment-seat, to receive a recompence according to their works; yet both the duties, and the warnings, which are represented in these parables, seem to be very accommodable to the hour of our death; for then our Lord *Jesus*, who has the keys of death and the grave, and the unseen world, comes to finish our state of trial, and to put a period to all our works on earth: He comes then to call us into the invisible state; he disposes our bodies to the dust, and our souls are sent into other mansions, and taste some degrees of appointed happiness or misery, according to their behaviour here. The solemn and awful warning, which my text gives us concerning the return of *Christ* to judgment, may be pertinently applied to the season when he shall send his messenger of death to fetch us hence: *Watch ye, therefore, — lest, coming suddenly, be find you sleeping.*

When I had occasion to treat on a subject near a-kin to this\*, I shewed, that there was a distinction to be made between the dead sleep of a sinner, and slumber of an unwatchful christian. Those who never had the work of religion begun in their hearts or lives, are sleeping the sleep of death; whereas some, who are made alive by the grace of *Christ*, yet may indulge sinful drowsiness, and grow careless and secure, slothful and unactive. "The wise virgins, as well as the foolish, were slumbering and sleeping," *Matth. xxv. 5.* The mischiefs and sorrows, which attend each of these when *Christ* shall summon them to judgment, or shall call them away from earth,

\* In a funeral sermon for Mrs. SARAH ABNEY, on *Luke xii. 37.* "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." See page 560.

earth, by natural death, are great and formidable, though they are not equally dangerous: Let us consider each of them in succession, in order to rouse dead sinners from their lethargy, and to keep drowsy christians awake.

First, Let us survey the sad consequences, which attend those that are asleep in sin, and spiritually dead, when the hour of natural death approaches: They are such as these,

I. "If they happen to be awakened on the borders of the grave, into what a horrible confusion and distress of soul are they plunged?" What keen anguish of conscience, for their past iniquities, seizes upon them? What bitter remorse and self-reproaches, for the seasons of grace which they have wasted, for the proposals of mercy which they have abused and rejected, and for the divine salvation, which seems now to be lost for ever, and put almost beyond the reach of possibility and hope. They feel the messenger of death laying his cold hands upon them, and they shudder and tremble with the expectation of approaching misery. They look up to heaven, and they see a God of holiness there, as a consuming fire, ready to devour them as stubble fit for the flame: They look to the Son of God, who has the keys of death in his hand, and who calls them away from the land of the living, even to *Jesus*, the compassionate mediator, but they can scarce persuade themselves to expect any thing from him, because they have turned a deaf ear so long to the invitations of his gospel, and so long affronted his divine compassion. They look behind them, and, with painful agonies, are frightened at the mountains of their former guilt ready to overwhelm them: They look forward, and see the pit of hell opening upon them with all it's torments; long darkness without a glimpse of light, and eternal despair with no glimmerings of hope.

Or if, now and then amidst their horrors, they would try to form some faint hope of mercy, how are their spirits perplexed with prevailing and distracting fears, with keen and cutting reflexions? "Oh that I had improved my former seasons for reading, for praying, for meditating on divine things! But I cannot read, I can hardly meditate, and scarce know how to pray. Will the ear of God ever hearken to the cries and groans of a rebel, that has so long resisted his grace? Are there any pardons to be had for a criminal, who never left his sins till vengeance was in view? Will the blood of *Christ* be ever applied to wash a soul, that has wallowed in his defilements, till death roused him out of them? Will the meanest favour of heaven be indulged to a wretch, who has grown bold in sin, in opposition to so loud and repeated warnings? I am awake, indeed, but I can see nothing round me but distresses and discouragements, and my soul sinks within me, and my heart dies at the thoughts of appearing before God."

It is a wise and just observation among christians, though it is a very common one, that the scriptures give us one instance of a penitent saved in his dying hour, and that is, "the thief upon the cross," *Luke* xxiii. 43. that so none might utterly despair; but there is but one such instance given, that none might presume. The work of repentance is too difficult, and too important a thing, to be left to the languors of a dying bed, and the tumults and flutterings of thought, which attend such a late conviction. There can be hardly any effectual proofs given of the sincerity of such repentings: And I am verily persuaded, there are few of them sincere; for we have often found these violent emotions of conscience vanish again, if the sinner has happened to recover his health: They seem to be merely the wild perplexities and struggles of nature averse to misery, rather than averse to sin: Their renouncing their former lusts on the very borders of hell and destruction, is more like the vehem-

ment and irregular efforts of a drowning creature, constrained to let go a most beloved object, and taking eager hold of any plank for safety, rather than the calm, and reasonable, and voluntary designs of a mariner, who forsakes his earthly joys, ventures himself in a ship that is offered him, and sets sail for the heavenly country. I never will pronounce such efforts and endeavours desperate, lest I limit the grace of God, which is unbounded; but I can give very little encouragement for hope to a hour or two of this vehement and tumultuous penitence, on the very brink of damnation. *Judas* repented, but his agonies of soul hurried him to hasten his own death, that he might go to his own place: And there is abundance of such kind of repenting, in every corner of hell; that is a deep and dreadful pit, whence there is no redemption, though there are millions of such sort of penitents; it is a strong and dark prison, where no beam of comfort ever shines, where bitter anguish and mourning for sins past, is no evangelical repentance, but everlasting and hopeless sorrow.

II. "Those that are found sleeping at the hour of death, are carried away at once from all their sensual pursuits and enjoyments, which were their chosen portion, and their highest happiness." At once they lose all their golden dreams, and their chief good is, as it were, snatched away from them at once, and for ever. "They stand on slippery places, they are brought to destruction in a moment, and all their former joys are like a dream, when one awaketh, and finds himself beset round with terrors." *Psal.* lxxiii. 18—20.

Are there any of you, that are pleasing your selves here in the days of youth and vanity, and indulge your dreams of pleasure in the sleep of spiritual death, think of the approaching moment, when the death of nature shall dissolve your sleep, and scatter all the delusive images of sinful joy. This separation from the body of flesh is a fearful shock given to the soul, that makes it awake indeed. Sermons would not do it: The voice of the preacher was not loud enough; strokes of affliction, and smarting providences, would not do it; perhaps the soul might be roused a little, but dropped into profound sleep again: Sudden or surprizing deaths near them, and even the pains of nature in their own flesh, their own sicknesses and diseases, did not awaken them, nor the voice of the Lord in them all: But the parting-stroke, that divides the soul and body, will terribly awaken the soul from the vain delusion, and all it's fancied delights for ever vanish.

When they are "visited by the Lord of hosts with this thunder and earthquake, as the prophet *Isaiab* speaks, *Isai.* xxix. 8. when this storm and tempest of death shall shake the sinner out of his airy visions, he shall be as a hungry man that dreameth he was eating, but awakes, and his soul is empty; or as a thirsty creature dreaming that he drinks, but he awaketh, and behold he is faint," and his soul is pained with raging appetite: The sinner finds, to his own torment, how wretchedly he has deceived himself, and fed upon vanity: There are no more earthly objects to please his senses, and to gratify his inclinations; but the soul for ever lies upon a rack of carnal desire, and no proper object to satisfy it. His taste is not suited to the pleasures of a world of spirits, he can find no God there to comfort him: God, with his offers of grace, are gone for ever, and the world with it's joys are for ever vanished, while the wretched and malicious creatures, into whose company he is hurried, and who were the tempters or associates of his crimes, shall stand round him to become his tormenters.

III. "Though death will awaken sinful souls into a sharper and more lively sense of divine and heavenly things, than ever they had in this world, yet they shall never be

be awakened to spiritual life and holiness:" And I think I may add, that though they should be awakened to a sight of God, and his justice, and his grace, to a sight of heaven and hell, more immediate and perspicuous than what even the saints themselves usually enjoy in this life, yet they would remain still under the bondage of their lusts, still dead in trespasses and sins. They shall for ever continue unbeloved of God, and incapable of all the happiness of the heavenly state, because they are for ever averse to the holiness of God, and themselves for ever unholy. It is only in the present state of trial, and under the present proposals of grace, that sleeping sinners can be awakened into the spiritual and divine life. The voice of the Son of God, that breaks the monuments of brass, and makes tombs of hardest marble yield to his call, shall never break one heart of stone, which is gone down to death in it's native and sinful hardness: That almighty voice, that must awaken the nations of the dead, and command their bodies up from the grave, shall never awaken one dead soul, when they are past the limits of this life. The compassionate calls of a Saviour, and the offers of mercy, are then come to their utmost period: And if we refuse to hear the call of mercy to the moment of death, we shall then be terribly constrained to feel the loss of it, but never able to obtain the blessing.

Obstinate sleepers shall be awakened to see God, but only as *Balaam* was: "I shall see him, but not nigh," *Numb. xxiv. 17*. The saints, in this life, have God near them in all their trials, as a Father and a friend to uphold, to comfort, to sanctify, though they see him but darkly through a glass, and behold but little of his power or glory: The sinner, awaking in hell, shall perhaps have a clearer and more acute perception of what God is, than any saint on earth: But he shall behold him as an enemy, and not a friend: If he beholds him in the glory of his grace, it is at a dreadful and insupportable distance; there is no grace for him: He sees him in his holiness, but he cannot love him, he has no meltings of true penitence for his former rebellions against God, his heart is hardened into everlasting enmity, and shall never taste of his love. Hence arise all the foul and gnawing passions of envy, malignity, and long despair, which are the very image of *Satan*, and change mankind into devils.

These impenitent sons and daughters of men shall grow into the more complete likeness of those wicked spirits, and under the impressions of their guilt and damnation, they shall rival those apostate and cursed creatures, in the obstinate hatred of God, and all that is holy.

IV. Hence it will follow, in the last place, that the sinner, who is "fast asleep, in his sins, at the hour of death, shall awake into such a life as is worse than dying." He shall be surprized, all at once, into darkness and fire, which have no gleam of light, and sorrows without mitigation, and which can find no end. The punishment of hell is not called *eternal death*, to denote a state of senseless and stupid existence; but death being the most opposite to life, and all the enjoyments of it, the misery of hell is described by death, as the most formidable thing to nature, as a word that puts a period to all the enjoyments of this mortal life, and stands directly opposite to a life of joy and glory in the immortal world. Happy would it be for such souls, if they could sink into an everlasting sleep, and grow stupid and senseless for ever and ever; but this is a favour not to be granted to those, who have been constant and unrepenting rebels against the law, and the grace of God.

The moment when the body falls asleep in death, the soul is more awake than ever to behold it's own guilt and wretchedness. It has then such a lively and piercing sense of it's own iniquities, and the divine wrath that is due to them, as it never saw or felt before. The inward senses of the soul, if I may so express it, which have

been darkened, and stupified, and benumbed in this body, are all awake, at once; when the vail of flesh is thrown off, and the curtains are drawn back, which divided them from the world of spirits. Every thought of sin, and the anger of God, wounds the spirit deep in this awakened state, though it scarce felt any thing of it before; and *a wounded spirit who can bear?* *Prov. xviii. 14.* But sinners must bear it days without end, and ages without hope.

Then the crimes they have committed, and the sinful pleasures they have indulged, shall glare upon their remembrance, and stare them in the face with dreadful surprize; and each of them is enough to drive a soul to despair: Nor can they turn their eyes away from the horrid sight, for their criminal practices beset them around, and the naked soul is all sight and all sense; it is eye and ear all over; it hears the dreadful curses of the law, and the sentence of the judge, and never, never forgets it. This is the character, these the circumstances of an obstinate sinner, that awakes not till the moment of death, and lifts up his eyes in hell, as our Saviour expresses it, *Luke xvi. 23.* These will be the consequences of our guilt and folly, if we are found in a dead sleep of sin, when our Lord comes to call us from this mortal state.

Secondly. Let us spend a few thoughts, also, upon the dangerous and unhappy circumstances of those, of whom we may "have some reason to hope they have once begun religion in good earnest, and are made spiritually alive, but have indulged themselves in drowsiness, and worn out the latter end of their days in a careless, secure, and slothful frame of spirit."

1. If they have had the principle of vital religion wrought in their hearts, yet "by these criminal slumbers they darken, or lose their evidences of grace, and, by this means, they cut themselves off from the sweet reflexions and comforts of it on a dying bed, when they have most need of them." They know not whether they are the children of God or no, and are in anxious confusion and distressing fear: They have scarce any plain proofs of their conversion to God, and the evidences of true christianity ready at hand, when all are little enough to support their spirits: They have not used themselves to search for them by self-enquiry, and to keep them in their sight, and therefore they are missing in this important hour: They have not been wont to live upon their heavenly hopes, and they cannot be found, when they want them, to rest upon in death. They die, therefore, almost like sinners, though they may perhaps have been once converted to holiness, and there may be a root of grace remaining in them; and the reason is, because they have lived too much as sinners do: They have given too great and criminal an indulgence to the vain and worldly cares, or the trifling amusements of this life; these have engrossed almost all their thoughts and their time, and therefore, in the day of death, they fall under terrors and painful apprehensions of a doubtful eternity just at hand.

If we have not walked closely with God in this world, we may well be afraid to appear before him in the next. If we have not maintained a constant converse with *Jesus* our Saviour by holy exercises of faith and hope, it is no wonder if we are not so ready with cheerfulness and joy to resign our departing spirits into his hand. It is possible we may have a right to the inheritance of heaven, having had some sight of it by faith, as revealed in the gospel, having, in the main, chosen it for our portion, and set our feet in the path of holiness that leads to it; but we have so often wandered out of the way, that in this awful and solemn hour, we shall be in doubt, whether we shall be received at the gates, and enter into the city.

Such unwatchful christians have not kept the eternal glories of heaven in their constant and active pursuit, they have not lived upon them as their portion and inheritance,



heritance, they have been too much strangers to the invisible world of happiness; and they know not how to venture through death into it. They have built indeed upon the solid foundation, *Christ Jesus* and the gospel, but they have mingled so much hay and stubble with the superstructure, that when they depart hence, or when they appear before *Christ* in judgment, "they shall suffer great loss, by the burning of their works, yet themselves may be saved, so as by fire," *1 Cor.* iii. 10—15. They may pass, as it were, by the flame of hell, and have something like the scorching terrors of it in death, though the abounding and forgiving grace of the gospel may convey them safe to heaven: They escape as a man that is awakened with the sudden alarms of fire, who suffers the loss of his substance, and a great part of the fruit of his labours, and just saves his own life. They plunge into eternity, and make a sort of terrible escape from hell.

2. "They can never expect any peculiar favours from heaven at the hour of death, no special visitations of the comforting Spirit, nor that the love of God, and the joy of his presence, should attend them through the dark valley." It is not to such unwatchful or sleepy christians, that God is wont to vouchsafe his choicest consolations. They fall under terrible fears, about the pardon of their sins, when they stand in most need of the sight of their pardon; and *Christ*, as the ruler of his church, sees it fit they should be thus punished for their negligence. They lay hold of the promises of mercy with a trembling hand, and cannot claim them by a vigorous faith, because they have not been wont to live upon them, nor do they see those holy characters in their own hearts and lives, which confirm their title to them. They have no bright views of the celestial world, and earnestness of their salvation, for it is only for watchful souls, that these cordials are prepared in the fainting hour: It is only to the watchful christian, that these foretastes of glory are given. "The fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever," *Isai.* xxxii. 17. "Blessed is he which watcheth, and keepeth his garments" clean, that he may enter with triumph into that city, where nothing shall enter that defileth, *Rev.* xvi. 15.

3. "Slumbering and slothful christians, are oftentimes left to wrestle with sore temptations of *Satan*, and have dreadful conflicts in the day of death:" And the reason is evident, because they have not watched against their adversary, and obtained but few victories over him in their life. These temptations are keen and piercing thorns, that enter deep into the heart of a dying creature. The devil may be let loose upon them "with great wrath, knowing that his time is but short," *Rev.* xii. 12. and yet there is great justice in the conduct of the God of heaven, in giving them up to be buffeted by the powers of hell. What frightful agonies are raised in the conscience by the tempter and the accuser of souls, on a sick or dying bed, can hardly be described by the living, and are known only to those who have felt them in death.

4. "Such drowsy christians make dismal work for new and terrible repentance on a death-bed:" for though they have sincerely repented in times past of their former sins, yet having too much omitted the self-mortifying duties, having given too much indulgence to temptation and folly, and having not maintained this habitual penitence for their daily offences in constant exercise, their spirits are now filled with fresh convictions, and bitter remorse of heart. The guilt of their careless and slothful conduct finds them out now, and besets them around, and they feel most acute sorrows, and wounding reflexions of conscience, while they have need of most comfort. What a glorious entrance had *St. Paul* into the world of spirits, and the presence of *Christ*? He had made repentance, and mortification, and faith in *Jesus*, his  
daily

daily work : O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom. vii. 24. "I run, I fight, I subdue my body, and keep it under; 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27. "I am crucified to the world, and the world to me; the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God:" Gal. ii. 20. vi. 14. When he was "ready to be offered up, and the time of his departure was at hand, from the edge of the sword, and the borders of the grave, he could look back upon his former life, and say, I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me," 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

5. "The unwatchful christian, at the hour of death, has the pain and anguish of reflecting, that he has omitted many duties to God and man, and these can never be performed now;" that he has done scarce any services for *Christ* in the world, and those must be left for ever undone: There is no further work or device, no labours of zeal, no activity for God in the grave, whither we are hastening, *Eccles.* ix. 10. "Alas! I have brought forth but little fruit to God; and it is well if I be not cast away as an unprofitable servant. My talents have lain bound up in rust, or been but poorly employed whilst I have lain slumbering and unactive: The records of my life, in the court of heaven, will shew but very little service for God amongst men: I have raised few monuments of praise to my redeemer, and I can never raise them now. I shall have but few testimonies for my love and zeal to appear in the great day of account, when the martyrs, and the confessors, and the lively christians shall be surrounded with the living ensigns of their victories over sin and the world, and their glorious services for their redeemer. Wretch that I am! that I have loved my Lord at so cold a rate, and lain slumbering on a bed of ease, whilst I should have been fighting the battles of the Lord, and gaining daily honours for my Saviour!"

6. "As such sort of christians give but little glory to God in life, so they do him no honour in death; they are no ornaments to religion while they continue here, and leave perhaps but little comfort with their friends when they go hence:" Doubtings and jealousies, about their eternal welfare, mingle with our tears and sorrows for a dying friend; these anxious fears, about the departed spirit, swell the tide of our grief high, and double the inward anguish. They are gone, alas! from our world, but we know not whither they are gone, to heaven or to hell. A sad farewell to those whom we love! A dismal parting-stroke, and a long heart-ach!

And what honour can be expected to be done to God or his Son, what reputation or glory can be given to religion, and the gospel, by a drowsy christian, departing, as it were, under a spiritual lethargy? He dies under a cloud, and casts a gloom upon the christian faith. St. Paul was a man of another spirit, a lively and active saint, full of vigour and zeal in his soul: It was the holy resolution and assurance of this blessed apostle, "that *Christ* should be magnified in his body, whether by life or death," *Phil.* i. 20. He spent his life in the service of *Christ*, and he could rejoice in death as his gain. It is a glory to the gospel, when we can lie down and die with courage, in the hope of it's promised blessings. It is an honour to our common faith, when it overcomes the terrors of death, and raises the christian to a song of triumph, in view of the last enemy. It is as a new crown put upon the head of our redeemer, and a living cordial put into the hands of mourning friends, in our dying hour, when we can take our leave of them with holy fortitude, rejoicing in the salvation of *Christ*. No sooner does he call, but we are ready, and can answer with holy transport, "Lord, I come." This is a blessing that belongs only to the watch-

watchful christian. May every one of us be awake to salvation in our expiring moments, and partake of this glorious blessedness!

[“Here this discourse may be divided.”]

I proceed now to a few remarks, and particularly such as relate to the necessity and duty of constant watchfulness, and the hazardous case of sleeping souls.

Remark I. “To presume on long life is a most dangerous temptation, for it is the common spring and cause of spiritual sleep and drowsiness.” Could we take an inward view of the hearts of men, and trace out the springs of their coldness and indifference about eternal things, and the shameful neglect of their most important interests, we should find this secret thought in the bottom of their hearts, “that we are not like to die to-day or to-morrow.” They put this evil day afar off, and indulge themselves in their carnal delights, without due solicitude to prepare for the call of God. There is scarce any thing produces so much evil fruit in the world, so much shameful wickedness amongst the sensual and the profane, or such neglect of lively religion among real christians, as this bitter root of presumption upon life and time before us. *Matth. xxiv. 48, 49.* “The evil servant did not begin to smite his fellows, and to eat and drink with the drunken, till he hath said in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming:” It was “while the bridegroom tarried, and they imagined he would tarry longer, that even the wise virgins fell into slumbers,” *Matth. xxv. 5.* Ask your own hearts, my friends; does not this thought secretly lurk within you, when you comply with a temptation, “Surely I shall not die yet, I have no sickness upon me, nor tokens of death, I shall live a little longer, and repent of my follies?” Vain expectation, and groundless fancy! when you see the young, and the strong, and the healthy seized away from the midst of you, and a final period put at once to all their works and designs in this life. Yet we are foolish enough to imagine our term of life shall be extended, and we presume upon months and years, which God hath not written down for us in his own book, and which he will never give us to enjoy.

We are all borderers upon the river of death, which conveys us into the eternal world, and we should be ever waiting the call of our Lord, that we may launch away, with joy, to the regions of immortality: But thoughtless creatures that we are, we are perpetually wandering far up into the fields of sense and time, we are gathering the gay and fading flowers that grow there, and filling our laps with them as a fair treasure, or making garlands for ambition to crown our brows, till one and another of us is called off on a sudden, and hurried away from this mortal coast: Those of us, who survive, are surprized a little, we stand gazing, we follow our departing friends, with a weeping eye, for a minute or two, and then we fall to our amusements again, and grow busy, as before, in gathering the flowers of time and sense. O how fond we are to enrich ourselves with these perishing trifles, and adorn our heads with honours and withering vanities, never thinking which of us may receive the next summons to leave all behind us, and stand before God! but each presumes, “it will not be sent to me.” We trifle with God, and things eternal, or utterly forget them, while our hands and our hearts are thus deeply engaged in the pursuit of our earthly delights: All our powers of thought and action are intensely busied amongst the dreams of this life, while we are asleep to God, because we vainly imagine he will not call us yet.

Remark II. “Whatsoever puts us in mind of dying, should be improved to awaken us from our spiritual sleep.” Sudden deaths near us should have this effect:

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our young companions and acquaintance, snatched away from among us, in an unexpected hour, should become our monitors in death, and teach us this divine and needful lesson: The surprizing loss of our friends, who lay near our hearts, should put us in mind of our own departure, and powerfully awaken us from our dangerous slumbers. Sinners when they feel no sorrows, they think of no death; but "when the judgments of God are in the earth, his Spirit can awaken the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness," *Isai.* xxvi. 9. At such seasons it is time for "the sinners in *Zion* to be afraid, and fearfulness to surprize the hypocrites," *Isai.* xxxiii. 14. Even the children of God have sometimes need of painful warning-pieces, to awaken them from their careless, their slothful and their secure frame: And as for those souls, who are indeed awake to righteousness, and lively in the practice of all religion and virtue, such sudden and awful strokes of providence have a happy tendency to wean them from creatures, and keep them awake to God, that, when their Lord comes, he may find them watching, and pronounce upon them everlasting blessedness.

Remark III. "No person can be exempted from this duty of watchfulness, till he is lord of his own life, and can appoint the time of his own dying." Then, indeed, you might have some colour for your carnal indulgences, some pretence for sleeping, if you were sovereign of death, and the grave, and had the keys in your own hand.

And truly such as venture to sleep in sin, do, in effect, say, "We are lords of our own life:" They act, and manage, as if their times were in their own hands, and not in the hand of their maker: But the watchful christian lives upon that principle which *David* professes, *Psal.* xxxi. 15. "My times are in thy hand, O Lord;" and they never give rest to themselves, till they can rejoice with him, and say to the Lord, "thou art my God, into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it, and I leave it to thy appointment, when thou wilt dislodge me from this body of flesh and blood, and call me into thy more immediate presence." verse 5. If we could but resist the messenger of death, when the Lord of hosts has sent it, if we could shut the mouth of the grave, when the Son of God has opened it, for us, with the key that is intrusted in his hand, we might say then to our souls, "sleep on your bed of ease, and take your rest:" But wo be to those, who will venture to sleep in an unholy and unpardoned state, or even allow themselves the indulgence of short and sinful slumbers, when they cannot resist death one moment, when they cannot delay the summons of heaven, when they cannot defer their appearance before that judge, whose sentence is eternal pleasure, or everlasting pain.

Our holy watch must not be intermitted one moment, for every following moment is a grand uncertainty. There is no minute of life, no point of time, wherein I can say, "I shall not die;" and therefore I should not dare to say, "This minute I will take a short slumber." What if my Lord should summon me whilst he finds me sleeping? His command cannot be disobeyed, the very call and sound of it divides me from flesh and blood, and all that is mortal, and sends me, at once, into the eternal world; for it is an almighty voice.

Remark IV. As it is a foolish and dangerous thing, for any of the sons and daughters of men, to presume upon long life, and neglect their watch; so "persons, under some peculiar circumstances, are eminently called to be ever wakeful." Give me leave here to reckon up some of them, and make a particular address to the persons concerned.

1. Is your constitution of body weak and feeble? You carry then a perpetual warning about you, never to indulge sinful drowsiness. Every languor of nature assures you, that it is sinking to the dust: Every pain you feel should put you in mind, that the pains of death are ready to seize you: You are tottering upon the very borders of the grave, and will you venture to drop in before your hopes of life and immortality are secured, and a joyful resurrection? You pass, perhaps, many nights, wherein the infirmities of your flesh will not suffer you to sleep, and to take that common refreshment of nature; and shall not these same infirmities keep you awake to things spiritual, and rouse all your thoughts and cares about your immortal interests?

2. You, whose circumstances or employments of life expose you to perpetual dangers, either by land or by sea; you, who carry your lives, as it were, in your hand, and are, often in a day, within a few inches of death; is it not necessary for you to enquire daily, Am I prepared for a departure hence? Am I ready to hear the summons of my Lord, and ready to give up my account before him? Shall I dare go on another day with my sins unpardoned, with my soul un sanctified, and in immediate danger of eternal misery? A fall from a horse, or a house-top, may send you down to the pit, whence there is no redemption; every wind that blows, and every rising wave may convey you into the eternal world, and are you ready to meet the great God in such a surprize, and without warning?

3. You who are young, and vigorous, and flourish amidst all the gaieties and allurements of life, you are in most danger of being lulled asleep in sin, and therefore I addressed you lately in a funeral discourse, when the present providence gave each of you a new and loud call to awake, and I pray God you may hear his voice in it.

4. Perhaps others of you are arrived at old age, and the course of nature forbids you to expect a long continuance in the land of the living: Are any of my hearers ancient sinners, and asleep still? Venturous and thoughtless creatures! that have grown old in slumber, and worn out their whole life in iniquity! Surely, it is time for you to hear the voice of the Son of God in the gospel, and accept of his salvation: Behold, the judge is at the door! he comes speedily, and he will not tarry; his herald of death is just at hand: Are you willing he should seize you in a deadly sleep, and send you into eternal forrows?

And let aged christians bestir themselves, and awake from their slothful and secure frames of spirit; let them look upward to the crown that is not far off, to the prize that is almost within reach: "Whatsoever your hand or heart find to do for God, do it with all your zeal and might:" *Eccles. ix. 10.* "Let your loins be girded about, and your natural powers active in his service, let your lamp of profession be bright and burning, that, when *Jesus* comes, ye may receive him with joy," *Luke xii. 35, 36.*

5. And are there any of you, that are under decays of grace and piety, that are labouring and wrestling with strong corruptions, or in actual conflict with repeated temptations, which too often prevail over you? it becomes you to hear the watchword, which *Christ* often gives to his churches under such circumstances: Make haste and awake unto holiness, "be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die; hold fast what thou hast received;" *Rev. iii. 2, 11.* "remember thy first affection and zeal, and repent and mourn for what thou hast lost, lest I come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know the hour: Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, for thou hast lost thy first love:"

*Rev.* ii. 3, 4. Have a care of dangerous lukewarmness and indifference in the things of religion. This is the very temper of a sleepy declining christian, while he dreams he is rich, and has great attainments: Take heed lest, presuming upon thy riches and thy self-sufficiency, thou shouldst be found "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," *Rev.* iii. 16. Keep your souls awake hourly, and be upon your guard against every adversary, and every defilement, lest ye be seized away in the commission of some sin, or in the compliance with some foul temptation. The drowsy soldier is liable to be led captive, and to die in fetters, and groan heavily in death. But blessed is the watchful christian, he shall be found amongst the overcomers, and shall overtake of the rich variety of divine favours, which are contained in the epistles to the seven churches, *Rev.* chapters ii. and iii.

Though the greatest part of a former discourse has been describing the blessedness of a watchful christian at the hour of death, and in this I have set before you the sad consequences that attend sleepers, both which are powerful preservatives against drowsiness, yet, at the conclusion of this sermon, give me leave to add a few more motives to the duty of watchfulness, for we cannot be too well guarded against the danger of spiritual sloth and security.

Motive I. "Our natures at best, in the present state, are too much inclined to slumber." We are too ready to fall asleep hourly: All the saints on earth, even the most lively and active of them, are not out of danger, while they carry this flesh and blood about them. Indeed the best of christians here below dwell but, as it were, in twilight, and, in some sense, they may be described as persons between sleeping and waking, in comparison of the world of spirits. We behold divine things here but darkly, and exert our spiritual faculties but in a feeble manner: It is only in the other world that we are broad awake, and in the perfect and unrestrained exercise of our vital powers; there only the complete life and vigour of a saint appears. In such a drowsy state then, and in this dusky hour, we cannot be too diligent in rousing our selves, lest we sink down into dangerous slumbers. Besides, if we profess to be "children of the light, and of the day, and growing up to a brighter immortality, let us not sleep, as do others, who are the sons and daughters of night and darkness," *1 Thess.* v. 4, 5.

Motive II. "Almost every thing around us, in this world of sense and sin, tends to lull us asleep again as soon as we begin to be awake." The busy or the pleasant scenes of this temporal life, are ever calling away our thoughts from eternal things, they conceal from us the spiritual world, and close our eyes to God, and things divine and heavenly. If the eye of the soul were but open to invisible things, what lively christians would we be? But either the winds of worldly cares rock us to sleep, or the charm of worldly pleasures soothes us into deceitful slumbers. We are too ready to indulge earthly delights, and, while we dream of pleasure in the creatures, we lose, or, at least, abate our delights in God. Even the lawful satisfactions of flesh and sense, and the enticing objects round about us, may attach our hearts so fast to them, as to draw us down into a bed of carnal ease, till we fall asleep in spiritual security, and forget that we are made for heaven, and that our hope and our home is on high.

Motive III. "Many thousands have been found sleeping at the call of *Christ*:" Some, perhaps, in a profound and deadly sleep, and others in a hour of dangerous slumber: Many an acquaintance of our's has gone down to the grave, when neither they, nor we thought of their dying, at such a season. But as thoughtless as they were,

were, they were never the further from the point of death ; and we shudder with horror when we think what is become of their souls.

While we are young, we are ready to please our selves with the enjoyments of life, and flatter our hopes with a long succession of them. We suppose death to be at the distance of fifty or threescore miles ; threescore years and ten is the appointed period : But, alas ! how few are there, whose hopes are fulfilled, or whose life is extended to those dimensions ? Perhaps the messenger of death is within a furlong of our dwelling ; a few more steps onward, and he smites us down to the dust.

There are some beautiful verses, which I have read perhaps thirty years ago, wherein the ingenious author describes the different stages of human life, under the image of a fair prospect, or landscape, and death is placed, by mistaken mortals, afar off beyond them all. Since the lines return now upon my remembrance, I will repeat them here with some small alteration. They are as follow :

“ Life, and the scenes that round it rise,  
Share in the same uncertainties.  
Yet still we hug our selves with vain presage,  
Of future days, serene and long,  
Of pleasures fresh, and ever strong,  
An active youth, and slow declining age.

“ Like a fair prospect still we make  
Things future pleasing forms to take :  
First, verdant meads arise, and flow’ry fields ;  
Cool groves, and shady copses here,  
There brooks, and winding streams appear,  
While change of objects still new pleasures yields.

“ Farther fine castles court the eye,  
There wealth and honours we espy ;  
Beyond, a huddled mixture fills the stage,  
Till the remoter distance shrouds  
The plains with hills, those hills with clouds,  
There we place death behind old shiv’ring age.

“ When death, alas ! perhaps too nigh,  
In the next hedge doth skulking lie,  
There plants his engines, thence lets fly his dart ;  
Which, while we ramble without fear,  
Will stop us in our full career,  
And force us from our airy dreams to part.”

How fond and vain are our imaginations, when we have seen others called away, on a sudden, from the early scenes of life, to promise our selves a long continuance here ! We have the same feeble bodies, the same tabernacles of clay, that others have, and we are liable to many of the same accidents or casualties : The same killing diseases are at work in our natures, and why should we imagine or presume, that others should go so much before us ?

And if we inquire of our selves, as to character, or merit, or moral circumstances of any kind, and compare our selves with those that are gone before, what foundation have we to promise our selves a longer continuance here? Have we not the same sins, or greater, to provoke God? Are we more useful in the world than they, and do more service for his name? May not God summon us off the stage of life on a sudden, as well as others? What are we better than they? Are we not as much under the sovereign disposal of the great God, as any of our acquaintance, who have been seized in the flower and prime of life, and called away in an unexpected hour? And what power have we to resist the seizure, or what promise to hope, that God will delay longer? Let us then no more deceive our selves with vain imaginations, but each of us awake, and bestir our selves, as though we were the next persons to be called away from this assembly, and to appear next before the Lord.

Motive IV. "When we are awake, we are not only fitter for the coming of our Lord, to call us away by death, and fitter for his appearance to the great judgment, but we are better prepared also to attend him in every call to present duty, and more ready to meet his appearance in every providence." It is the christian soldier, who is ever awake, and on his guard, that is only fit for every sudden appointment to new stations and services; he is more prepared for any post of danger and hazardous enterprize, and better furnished to sustain the roughest assaults. We shall be less shocked at sudden afflictions here on earth, if our souls keep heaven in view, and are ready winged for immortality. When we are fit to die, we are fit to live also, and to do better service for God, in whichsoever of his worlds he shall please to appoint our station. "My business, O Father, and my joy is to do thy will, among the sons of mortality, or among the spirits of the blessed on high."

Motive V. "Let us remember we have slept too long already in days past, and it is but a little while that we are called to watch." We have worn away too much of our life in sloth and drowsiness. The "night is far spent with many of us, the day is at hand; it is now high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed," *Rom. xiii. 11, 22*. Another hour or two, and the night will be at an end with us; *Jesus*, the morning-star, is just appearing; What? "can we not watch one hour?" *Matth. xxvi. 40*. O happy souls, that keep themselves awake to God in the midst of this dreaming world! Happy indeed, when our Lord shall call us out of these dusky regions, and we shall answer his call with holy joy, and spring upward to the inheritance of the saints in light! Then all the seasons of darkness and slumbering will be finished for ever; there is no need of laborious watchfulness, in that world, where there is no flesh and blood to hang heavy upon the spirit; but the sanctified powers of the soul are all life, and immortal vigour. There is no want of the sun-beams to make their day-light, or to irradiate that city; "the glory of God enlightens it with divine splendors, and the lamb is the light thereof," *Rev. xxi. 23*. No inhabitant can sleep under such an united blaze of grace and glory: No faintings of nature, no languors or weariness are found in all that vital climate; every citizen is for ever awake, and busy under the beams of that glorious day; zeal, and love, and joy are the springs of their eternal activity, and "there is no night there," *Rev. xxii. 5*.



## DISCOURSE IV.

## Christ admired and glorified in his saints.

2 THESS. i. 10.

*When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.*

**H**OW mean and contemptible soever our Lord *Jesus Christ* might appear heretofore on earth, yet there is a day coming, when he shall make a glorious figure in the sight of men and angels. How little soever the saints may be esteemed in our day, and look poor and despicable in an ungodly world, yet there is a hour approaching, when they shall be glorious beyond all imagination, and *Christ* himself shall be glorified in them. In that day shall the Lord our Saviour be the object of adoration and wonder, not only among those of the sons of men, that have believed on him, but before all the intellectual creation, and that, upon the account of his grace, manifested in believers.

The natural enquiry that arises here, is this, “What particular instances of the grace of *Christ*, in his saints, shall be the matter of our admiration, and his glory, in that day?”

To this I shall propose an answer under the following particulars.

First, It is a matter of pleasing wonder, “that persons, of all characters, should have been united in one faith, and persuaded to trust in the same Saviour, and embrace the same salvation;” for some, of all sorts, shall stand in that blessed assembly. Then it shall be a fruitful spring of wonder and glory, that men, of various nations and ages, of different tempers, capacities, and interests, of contrary educations and contrary prejudices, should believe one gospel, and trust in one deliverer from hell and death: That the sprightly, the studious and the stupid, the wise and the foolish, should relish and rejoice in the same sublime truths, not only concerning the true God, but also concerning *Jesus*, the redeemer; that the barbarian and the *roman*, the *greek* and the *jew* should approve, and receive the same doctrines of salvation, that they should come into the same sentiments, in the matters of religion, and live upon them as their only hope.

Astonishing spectacle! when the dark and savage inhabitants of *Africa*, and our forefathers, the rugged and warlike *britons*, from the ends of the earth, shall appear in that assembly, with some of the polite nations of *Greece* and *Rome*, and each of them shall glory in having been taught to renounce the gods of their ancestors, and the demons, which they once worshipped, and shall rejoice in *Jesus*, the king of *Israel*, and in *Jehovah*, the everlasting God.

The conversion of the gentile world to christianity is a matter of glorious wonder, and shall appear to be so in that great day: That those, who had been educated to believe many gods, or no God at all, should renounce atheism and idolatry, and adore

adore the true God only; and those, who were taught to sacrifice to idols, and to atone for their own sins with the blood of beasts, should trust in one sacrifice, and the atoning blood of the Son of God. Here shall stand a believing atheist, and there a converted idolater, as monuments of the almighty power of his grace.

There shall shine, also, in that assembly, here and there a prince and a philosopher, though "not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty are called," *1 Cor. i. 26.* and they shall be matter of wonder and glory: That princes, who love no controul, should bow their scepters, and their souls, to the royalty and godhead of the poor man of *Nazareth*: That the heathen philosophers, who had been used only to yield to reason, should submit their understandings to divine revelation, even when it has something above the powers and discoveries of reason in it.

It shall raise our holy wonder too, when we shall behold some of the *jewish* priests and pharisees, who became converts to the christian faith, adorning the triumph of that day. The *jewish* pharisees, who expected a glorious temporal prince for their *Messiah*, that they should at last own the son of a carpenter for their teacher, their saviour, and their king; that they should veil the pride of their souls, and acknowledge a parcel of poor fishermen for his chief ministers of state, and receive them as ambassadors to the world. That those, who thought they were righteous, and boasted in it, should renounce their boastings and their righteousnesses, and learn to expect salvation and life for themselves, from the death and righteousness of another: That they, who once called the cross of *Christ*, folly and weakness, should come to see the wisdom and power of God in a crucified man, and believe him who hung upon a tree, as an accursed creature, to be *Emanuel*, God with us, "God manifest in the flesh," and the Saviour of mankind, *Matth. i. 23. 1 Tim. iii. 16.*

Surely; shall men and angels say in that day, "These were the effects of an almighty power, it was the work of God the Saviour, and it is marvellous in our eyes." With united voices shall all the saints confess, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto us, but the Spirit of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; and of God the Father. We had perished in our folly, but *Christ* has been made wisdom to us; we were in darkness, and lay under the shadow of death, but *Christ* has given us light," *1 Cor. i. 30. Eph. v. 14.*

Come, all ye saints of these later ages, upon whom the end of the world is come, raise your heads with me, and look far backwards, even to the beginning of time, and the days of *Adam*; for the believers of all ages, as well as of all nations, shall appear together in that day, and acknowledge *Jesus*, the Saviour: According to the brighter or darker discoveries of the age in which they lived, he has been the common object of their faith. Ever since he was called the "seed of the woman," *Gen. iii. 15.* till the time of his appearance in the flesh, all the chosen of God have lived upon his grace, though multitudes of them never knew his name. It is true, the greater part of that illustrious company, on the right hand of *Christ*, lived since the time of his incarnation, "for the great multitude, which no man could number, is derived from the gentile nations," *Rev. vii. 9.* Yet the antient patriarchs, with the *jewish* prophets and saints, shall make a splendid appearance there: "One hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed among the tribes of *Israel*," verse 4: These of old embraced the gospel in types and shadows; but now their eyes behold *Christ Jesus*, the substance and the truth. In the days of their flesh, they read his name in dark lines, and looked through the long glass of prophecy to distant ages, and a Saviour to come, and now behold, they find complete and certain salvation and glory in him. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen*

seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, — Heb. xi. 13. They died in the hope of this salvation, and they shall arise in the blessed possession of it.

Behold *Abraham* appearing there, the father of the faithful, who “saw the day of *Christ*, and rejoiced to see it,” *John* viii. 56. who trusted in his son *Jesus*, two thousand years before he was born: His elder family, the pious *Jews*, surround him there, and we, his younger children among the gentiles, shall stand with him as the followers of his faith, who trust in the same *Jesus*, almost two thousand years after he is dead. How shall we both rejoice to see this brightest day of the Son of man, and congratulate each other’s faith, while our eyes meet and center in him, and our souls triumph in the sight, love, and enjoyment of him, in whom we have believed! How admirable and divinely glorious shall our Lord himself appear, on whom every eye is fixed with unutterable delight, in whom the faith of distant countries and ages is centered and reconciled, and in whom “all the nations of the earth appear to be blessed,” according to the ancient word of promise, *Gen.* xii. 3. and xviii. 18.

Secondly, It is a further occasion of pleasing wonder, “That so many wicked, obstinate wills of men, and so many perverse affections should be bowed down, and submit themselves to the holy rules of the gospel.” This is another instance of the grace of *Christ*, and shall be the subject of our joyful admiration. Every son and daughter of *Adam*, by nature, is averse to God, inclined to sin, a child of disobedience and death, *Eph.* ii. 2, 3. There is a new miracle wrought by *Christ* in every instance of converting grace, and he shall have the glory of them all in that day. It is a first resurrection from the dead, it is a new creation, and the almighty power shall then be publicly adored.

Then one shall say, “I was a sensual sinner, drenched in liquor and unclean lusts, and wicked in all the forms of lewdness and intemperance: “The grace of God my Saviour appeared to me, and taught me to deny worldly lusts,” *Tit.* ii. 11, 12. which I once thought I could never have parted with. I loved my sins as my life, but he has persuaded and constrained me to cut off a right hand, and to pluck out a right eye, and to part with my darling vices; and behold me here a monument of his saving mercy.”

“I was envious against my neighbour, shall another say, and my temper was malice and wrath; revenge was mingled with my constitution, and I thought it no iniquity: But I bless the name of *Christ*, my redeemer, who, in the day of his grace, turned my wrath into meekness; he inclined me to love even my enemies, and to pray for them that cursed me; he taught me all this by his own example, and he made me learn it by the sovereign influences of his Spirit. I am a wonder to my self, when I think what once I was: Amazing change, and almighty grace!”

Then a third shall confess, “I was a profane wretch, a swearer, a blasphemer; I hoped for no heaven, and I feared no hell; but the Lord seized me in the midst of my rebellions, and sent his arrows into my soul; he made me feel the stings of an awakened conscience, and constrained me to believe there was a God and a hell, till I cried out astonished, “What shall I do to be saved?” *Acts* xvi. 31. Then he led me to partake of his own salvation, and, from a proud rebellious infidel, he has made me a penitent and a humble believer, and here I stand to shew forth the wonders of his grace, and the boundless extent of his forgiveness.”

A fourth shall stand up, and acknowledge in that day, “And I was a poor, carnal, covetous creature, who made this world my God, and abundance of money was my heaven; but he cured me of this vile idolatry of gold, taught me how to obtain treasures

tures in the heavenly world, and to forsake all on earth, that I might have an inheritance there; and behold he has not disappointed my hope: I am now made rich indeed, and I must for ever speak his praises."

There shall be no doubt or dispute, in that day, whether it was the power of our own will, or the superior power of divine grace, that wrought the blessed change, that turned the lion into a lamb, a groveling earth-worm into a bird of paradise, and of a covetous or malicious sinner, made a meek and a heavenly saint. The grace of *Christ* shall be so conspicuous in every glorified believer in that assembly, that, with one voice, they shall all shout to the praise and glory of his grace; "not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name be all the honour!" *Psal. cxv. 1.*

Thirdly, It shall be the matter of our wonder, and the glory of *Christ* in that day, "that so many thousand guilty wretches should be made righteous by one righteousness, cleansed in one laver from all their iniquities, and sprinkled unto pardon and sanctification with the blood of one man *Jesus Christ*. See the great multitude that no man could number, *Rev. vii. 9, 10.* They all washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb," verse 14.

It is a matter of wonder to us now on earth, that the blessed Son of God, who is one with the Father, should stoop so low as to unite himself to a mortal nature, that he should become a poor despicable man, and pass through a life of sufferings and sorrows, and die an accursed death, to redeem us from guilt and deserved misery: But when we shall see him in his native glory and lustre, his acquired dignities, and all the honours of heaven heaped upon him, it will raise our wonder high, to think, that such a one should once humble himself to the death of the cross; the death of the vilest slave, that he might save our souls from dying; that he should pour out his own blood, to wash off the stains of millions of sins, that we might appear righteous before a God of holiness. Then shall the multitude of the saved join in that song, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, — be glory and dominion for ever," *Rev. i. 5, 6.* "Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and honour, — for thou hast redeemed us with thy blood from every kindred, tribe, and nation," *Rev. v. 9, 12.*

Then shall those blessed words of scripture appear, and shine in full glory, howsoever they are often passed over in silence, and too much forgotten in our age, *Rom. v. 17, 19, 21.* *If by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: So by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Then shall our blessed Lord shine in the complete lustre of that incommunicable name, **JEHOVAH TZIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness,** *Jer. xxiii. 6.*

And not only the atonement, and salvation it self, shall be the subject of our glorious admiration, but the way and manner how sinners partake of it, shall minister further to our wonder, and to the glory of *Christ*. That such a world of poor miserable creatures should be saved from hell, by believing or trusting in grace, when they could never be saved by all their own works; that they should obtain righteousness and acceptance unto eternal life, by a humble penitence and poverty of spirit, depending on the death and righteousness of another, when all their labour and toil, in works of the law, could not make up a righteousness of their own, sufficient to appear before the justice of God; *Christ* will not only be glorified in their holiness as saints, but admired and honoured in and by their faith as believers. His blood  
and

and his grace shall share all the glory. "Therefore it is of faith, and not of works, that it might be of grace," *Rom. iv. 15.* Yet this saving faith is the spring of shining holiness in every believer. Duties and virtues are not left out of our religion, when faith is brought into it. The graces of the saints join happily with the atonement of *Christ*, to render that day more illustrious.

Fourthly, "That a company of such feeble christians should maintain their course towards heaven, through so many thousand obstacles:" This shall be another subject of admiration, and yield a further revenue of glory to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, for he who is their righteousness, is their strength also. *Isai. xlv. 24, 25.* "In the Lord shall all the seed of *Israel* glory in that day, as their strength and their salvation. They have broke through all their difficulties, and were "able to do all things through *Christ* strengthening them," *Phil. iv. 13.*

Behold that noble army with palms in their hands; once they were weak warriors, yet they overcame mighty enemies, and have gained the victory and the prize; enemies rising from earth, and from hell, to tempt, and to accuse them, but "they overcame by the blood of the lamb," *Rev. xii. 7, 11.* What a divine honour shall it be to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the captain of our salvation, that weak christians should subdue their strong corruptions, and get safe to heaven through a thousand oppositions within and without: It is all owing to the grace of *Christ*, that grace which is all-sufficient for every saint, *2 Cor. xii. 9.* "They are made more than conquerors through him that has loved them." *Rom. viii. 37.*

Then shall the faith, and courage, and patience of the saints have a blessed review; and it shall be told, before the whole creation, what strife and wrestlings a poor believer has passed through in a dark cottage, a chamber of long sickness, or perhaps in a dungeon; how he has there combated with powers of darkness, how he has struggled with huge sorrows, and has born, and has not fainted, though he has been often in heaviness through manifold temptations. Then shall appear the bright scene which *St. Peter* represents as the event of sore trials, *1 Pet. i. 6, 7.* "When our faith has been tried in the fire of tribulation, and is found more precious than gold, it shall shine to the praise, honour and glory of the suffering saints, and of *Christ* himself at his appearance."

Behold that illustrious troop of martyrs, and some among them of the feeblest sex, and of tender age; now that women should grow bold in faith, even in the fight of torments, and children, with a manly courage, should profess the name of *Christ* in the face of angry and threatening rulers; that some of these should become undaunted confessors of the truth, and others triumph in fire and torture, these things shall be matter of glory to *Christ* in that day; it was his power that gave them courage and victory in martyrdom and death. Every christian there, every soldier in that triumphing army, shall ascribe his conquest to the grace of his Lord, his leader, and lay down all their trophies at the feet of his Saviour, with humble acknowledgements, and shouts of honour.

Almost all the saved number were, at some part of their lives, weak in faith, and yet, by the grace of *Christ*, they held out to the end, and are crowned. "I was a poor trembling creature, shall one say, but I was confirmed in my faith and holiness by the gospel of *Christ*, or, I rested on a naked promise, and found support, because *Christ* was there, and he shall have the glory of it." "In him are all the promises yea, and in him amen, to the glory of the Father," *2 Cor. i. 20—22.* and the Son shall share in this glory, for he died to ratify these promises, and he lives to fulfil them.

“Oh, what an almighty arm is this, shall the believer say, that has born up so many thousands of poor sinking creatures, and lifted their heads above the waves!” The spark of grace that lived many years in a flood of temptations, and was not quenched, shall then shine bright to the glory of *Christ*, who kindled and maintained it. When we have been brought through all the storms and the threatening seas, and yet the raging waves have been forbid to swallow us up, we shall cry out, in raptures of joy and wonder, “what manner of man is this, that the winds and the seas have obeyed him?” *Mark* iv. 41.

Then shall it be gloriously evident, that he has conquered *Satan*, and kept the hosts of hell in chains, when it shall appear, that he has made poor mean trembling believers victorious over all the powers of darkness, for the prince of peace has bruised him under their feet.

Fifthly, There is more work for our wonder and joy, and more glory for our blessed Lord, when we shall see, that so many dark and dreadful providences were working together, in mercy, for the good of his saints; it is because *Jesus Christ* had the management of them all put into his hands; and we shall acknowledge “he has done all things well,” *Mark* vii. 37. “All things have wrought together for good,” *Rom.* viii. 28. It is the voice of *Christ* to every saint in sorrow, *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*, *John* xiii. 7. I saw not then, faith the christian, that my Lord was curing my pride by such a threatening and abasing providence, that he was weaning my heart from sensual delights, by such a sharp and painful wound; but now I behold things in another light, and give thanks and praises to my divine physician.

We shall look back upon the hours of our impatience, and be ashamed, we shall chide the flesh for it's old repinings, when we shall stand upon the eternal hills of paradise, and cast our eyes backward upon yonder transactions of time, those past ages of complaint and infirmity. We shall then, with pleasure and thankfulness, confess, that the captain of our salvation was much in the right to lead us through so many sufferings and sorrows, and we were much in the wrong to complain of his conduct.

Bear up your spirits then, ye poor, afflicted, distressed souls, who are wrestling through difficult providences all in the dark, bear up but a little longer, “he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry,” *Heb.* x. 37. he will set all his conduct in a fair light, and you shall say, “Blessed be the Lord, and all his government.”

Sixthly, That heaven should be so well filled, out of such a hell of sin and misery, as this world is, shall be another delightful reflexion, full of wonder and glory. Take a short survey of mankind, how “all flesh has corrupted it's ways before God, and every imagination of the thought of man's heart is only evil, and that continually,” *Gen.* vi. 5, 12. *There is none righteous, no not one*, *Rom.* iii. 10. Look round about you, and see how iniquity abounds, violence, oppression, pride, lust, sensualities of all kinds, how they reign among the children of men: Religion is lost, and God forgotten in the world; and yet, out of this wretched world, *Christ* has provided inhabitants for heaven, where “nothing can enter that defileth,” *Rev.* xxi. 27. Look into your own hearts, ye sinners, see what a hell lies there, and ye converts of the grace of *Christ*, look into your hearts too, and see how many of the seeds of wickedness still lie hid there; how much corruption, and how little holiness; look inward, and wonder, that *Christ* should ever fit you for heaven by his converting and his sanctifying grace.

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Look round the world again, and survey the miseries of this earth; as many calamities as there are creatures, and perhaps ten times more: Who is there on earth without his sorrows? And, sometimes, a multitude of them meet in one single sufferer: See how toil, and weariness, and disappointment, poverty and sickness, pain, and anguish, and vexation are distributed through this world, that lies on the borders of hell; see all this, and wonder at the grace of *Christ*, that has taken a colony out of this miserable world, and made a heaven of it.

We shall, many of us, be a wonder to each other, as well as to our selves, and we shall all review, and admire the grace of *Christ* in and towards us all. Among the rest there are two sorts of christians, whose salvation shall be a special matter of wonder, and these are the melancholy and the uncharitable. The melancholy christian shall wonder, that ever such a sinner as himself was brought to heaven; and the uncharitable shall wonder, how such a sinner as his neighbour came there. The poor doubting melancholy soul, who was full of fears, lest he should be condemned, shall then have full assurance, that he is elected and redeemed, pardoned and saved, when he sees, hears, and feels the salvation and the glory upon him, within him, and all around him, and he shall admire and adore the grace of God, his Saviour. The narrow-souled christian, who said his neighbour would be damned for want of some party-notions, or for some lesser failings, shall confess his uncharitable mistake, and shall wonder at the abounding mercy of *Christ*, which has pardoned those errors in his neighbour, for which he had excommunicated and condemned him. Both these christians in that day, I mean, the timorous and the censorious, shall stand at his right hand, as monuments of his surprising grace, who forgave one the defects of his faith, and the other his want of love; and their souls and their tongues shall join together to rejoice in the Lord, and their spirits shall magnify their God and redeemer: *Christ* shall have his due revenue of glory from both in the hour of their public salvation.

O what honour shall it add to the overflowing mercy of *Christ*, what joy and wonder to all the saints, to see *Paul*, the persecutor and blasphemer, there, and *Peter*, who denied the Lord that bought him, and *Mary Magdalen*, that impure sinner! See what a foul and shameful catalogue, what children of iniquity, are at last made heirs and possessors of heaven, 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10. "The fornicators and idolaters, the thieves and the covetous, the drunkards, the revilers, and the extortioners." Such they were in the days of ignorance and heathenism, fit fuel for the fire of hell; and in those circumstances they are utterly excluded from the kingdom of God, but now they find a place in that blessed assembly; and the converting grace of *Christ* is admired and glorified, that could turn such sinners into saints. O surprising scene of rich salvation, when these *corinthian* converts, washed in the blood of *Christ*, and renewed by his Spirit, shall appear in their white garments of holiness and glory! There is not one sinful creature to be found in all the vast retinue of the holy *Jesus*, But there are thousands, who have been once great criminals, notorious sinners, and have been snatched, by the arms of divine love, as brands out of the burning. What an affecting sight will it be, when we shall behold all the members of *Christ* united to their head, and complete in glory, and see, at the same time, a world of vile sinners doomed to destruction! With what adoration and wonder shall we cry out, "And such were some of these happy ones, but they are sanctified, but they are justified in the name of the Lord *Jesus*; and by the Spirit of our God," 1 *Cor.* v. 11. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to God, our Saviour, be eternal honour," *Psal* cxv. 1.

In the seventh place, there is another glory and wonder added to this illustrious scene, and gives honour to our blessed Saviour, and that is, "That so many vigorous, beautiful, and immortal bodies should be raised at once out of the dust, with all their old infirmities left behind them:" Not one ach or pain, not one weakness or disease among all the glorified millions: As the *Israelites* came out of their bondage in *Egypt*, so shall the army of saints from the prison of the grave, and "not one feeble among them," *Psal.* cv. 37. This is the work of *Christ* the creator and the healer.

Here I might run many sorrowful divisions, and travel over the large and thorny fields of sickness and pains that attend human nature, those inborn mischiefs that vex poor christians in this state of trial and suffering. But these were all buried when the body went to the grave, and they are buried for ever; he that has the keys of death, shall let the bodies of his saints out of prison; but no gout nor stone, no infirmity nor distemper, no head-ach nor heart-ach shall ever attend them. The body was "sown in weakness, but it is raised in power; it was sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory, through the power of the second *Adam*, and his quickening Spirit," *1 Cor.* xv. 43, 45. *Rom.* viii. 11.

Then shall *Christ* appear to be sovereign and Lord of death, when such an endless multitude of old and new captives are released at his word, and the grave has restored it's prey; when those bodies which have been turned into dust some thousands of years, and their atoms scattered abroad by the winds of heaven, shall be raised again, in glory and dignity, to meet their descending Lord in the air. Surely *Jesus*, in that day, shall be acknowledged as a sovereign of nature, when, at the word of his command, a new creation shall arise, all perfect and immortal.

It will add yet further glory to *Christ*, when we remember what fruitful seeds of iniquity were lodged in that flesh and blood which we wore on earth, and which we laid down in the tomb, and when, at the same time, we survey our glorified bodies, how spiritual, how holy, how happily fitted for the service of glorified souls made perfect in holiness. How did all the saints once complain of "a law in their members, that warred against the law of their minds, and brought them into bondage to the law of sin." *Rom.* vii. 23. But this law of sin is now for ever abolished, this bondage dissolved and broken, and these members are all new-created for instruments of righteousness to serve God in his temple, for ever and ever. Holy *Paul* shall no more groan in a sinful tabernacle, he shall no more complain of that flesh, wherein no good thing dwelt, he shall cry out no more, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" *Rom.* vii. 24.

Many and bitter have been the sorrows of a holy soul in this world, because of the perverse dispositions of animal nature and the flesh: But none of the saints in that assembly shall ever feel again the stings of inward envy, the pricking thorns of peevishness, nor the wild ferments of wrath and passion: None of them shall ever find those unruly appetites, which wrought so strongly in their old flesh and blood, and too often over-powered their unwilling souls, those appetites which brought their consciences sometimes under fresh guilt, and filled them with inward reproaches and agonies of spirit. These evil principles are all destroyed by death, they are lost in the grave, and shall have no resurrection. The new-raised bodies of the righteous, in that day, shall be completely obedient to the dictates of their spirits, without any vicious juices to make reluctance, or perverse humours to raise an inward rebellion: And not only so, but perhaps even our bodies shall have some active holy tendencies wrought in them so far as corporeal nature can administer toward  
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the sacred exercises of a glorified saint. A sweet and blessed change indeed ! And *Jesus*, who raised these bodies, in this beauty of holiness, shall receive the glory of his divine work.

The last instance I shall mention, wherein *Christ* shall be admired in his saints, is this, " they shall all appear, in that day, as so many images of his person, and as so many monuments of the success of his office."

Is the blessed *Jesus* a great prophet, and the teacher of his church ? These are the persons that have learned his divine doctrine, they have heard the joyful sound of his gospel, and the holy truths of it are copied out in their hearts. These are the disciples of his school ; and by his word, and by his Spirit, they have been taught to know God, and their Saviour, and they have been trained up in the way to eternal life.

Is *Jesus* a great high-priest both of sacrifice and intercession ? Behold all these souls, an endless number, purified from their defilements by the blood of his cross, washed, and made white in that blessed laver, and reconciled to God by his atoning sacrifice : Behold the power of his intercession, in securing millions from the wrath of God, and in procuring for them every divine blessing. He has obtained for each of them grace and glory.

Is *Jesus* the Lord of all things, and the king of his church ? Behold his subjects waiting on him, a numerous and a loyal multitude, who have the laws of their king engraven on their souls. These are the sons and daughters of *Adam*, whom he has rescued, by his power, from the kingdom of darkness, and the hands of the devil : He has guarded them from the rage of their malicious adversaries in earth and hell, and brought them safe through all difficulties to behold the glories of this day, and to celebrate the honours of their king.

Is he the captain of salvation ? See what a blessed army he has lifted under his banner of love ; and they have followed him, through all the dangers of life and time, under his conduct. These are the chosen, the called, the faithful. They have sustained many a sharp conflict, many a dreadful battle, and they are at last made " more than conquerors, through him that has loved them," *Rom. viii. 37.* They attribute all their victories to the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of their divine leader, and even stand amazed at their own success against such mighty adversaries : But they fought under the banner, conduct and influence of the prince of life, the king of righteousness, who is always victorious, and has a crown in his hand for every conqueror.

Is *Jesus* the great example of his saints ? Behold the virtues and graces of the Son of God copied out in all his followers. " As he was, so were they in this world, holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners," *Heb. vii. 26.* As he now is, so are they, glorious in holiness, and divinely beautiful, while each of them reflects the image of their blessed Lord, and they appear as wonders to all the beholding world. They were unknown here on earth, even as *Christ* himself was unknown ; This is the day appointed to reveal their works, and their graces. *Jesus* is the " brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," *Heb. i. 3.* and all the sons and daughters of God shall then appear as so many pictures of the blessed *Jesus*, drawn by the finger of the eternal Spirit.

And not their souls only, but their glorified bodies also, are framed in his likeness. What grace and grandeur dwells in each countenance, " As thou art, O blessed *Jesus*, so shall they be, in that day, all of them resembling the children of a king !" *Judg. viii. 18.* Vigour and health, beauty and immortality shine and reign throughout

out all that blessed assembly. The adopted sons and daughters of God resemble the original and only begotten Son: *Christ* will have all his brethren and sisters conformed unto his glories, that they may be known to be his kindred, the children of his Father, and that he "may appear the first-born among many brethren," *Rom.* viii. 29. When the Son of God breaks open the graves, he forms the dust of his saints by the model of his own glorious aspect and figure, "and changes their vile bodies into the likeness of his own glorious body, by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself," *Phil.* iii. 21. He shall be admired as the bright original, and each of the saints as a fair and glorious copy: The various beauties that are dispersed among all that assembly, are summed up, and united in himself; "He is the chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely," *Cantic.* v. 10, 16. One sun in the firmament can paint his own bright image, at once, upon a thousand reflecting glasses, or mirrors of gold: What a dazzling lustre would arise from such a scene of reflexions! But what superior and inexpressible glory, above all the powers of similitude, and beyond the reach of comparison, shall irradiate the world in that day, when *Jesus*, the sun of righteousness, shall shine upon all his saints, and find each of them well prepared to receive this lustre, and to reflect it round the creation; each of them displaying the image of the original Son of God, and confessing all their virtues and graces, all their beauties and glories, both of soul and body, to be nothing else but mere copies and derivations from *Jesus*, the first and fairest image of the Father!

[ "Here this discourse may be divided." ]

U S E.

The doctrines and the works of divine grace are full of wonder and glory: Such is the person and offices of *Christ*, such are his holy and faithful followers, and such eminently will be the blessed scene at his appearance. In the foregoing part of the discourse, we have briefly surveyed some of those glorious wonders, we now come to consider what use may be made of such a theme.

Use I. It gives us eminently these two lessons of instruction.

Lesson 1. "How mistaken is the judgment of flesh and sense in the things that relate to *Christ*, and his saints." The Son of God himself was abused and scorned by the blind world, they esteemed him as "one smitten of God, and unbeloved, and they saw no beauty nor comeliness in him," *Isai.* liii. 2, 3. He was poor and despised all his life, and he was doomed to the death of a criminal and a slave. As for the saints, they find no more honour or esteem, among men, than their Lord, they are many times called and counted "the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things." *1 Cor.* iv. 13. This is the judgment of flesh and sense.

But when the great appointed hour is come, and *Jesus* shall return from heaven "with a shout of the arch-angel, and the trump of God;" *1 Thess.* iv. 16. when he shall call up his saints from their bed of dust and darkness, and make the graves resign those prisoners of hope; when they shall all gather together around their Lord, a bright and numerous army, shining and reflecting the splendors of his presence; how will the judgment of flesh and sense be confounded at once, and reversed with shame! "Is this the man that was loaded with scandal, that was buffeted with scorn, and scourged, and crucified in the land of *Judea*? Is this the person that hung on the cursed tree, and expired under agonies of pain and sorrow? Amazing sight!  
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How majestic, how divine his appearance! The Son of God, and the king of glory! And are these the men that were made the mockery of the world? That "wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, in dens and caves of the earth?" *Heb. xi. 37.* Surprising appearance! How illustrious! How full of glory! O that such a meditation might awaken us to judge more by faith."

Lesson 2. The next lesson that we may derive from the text is this, *viz.* "One great design of the day of judgment, is, to advance and publish the glory of *Christ.*" He shall come on purpose to be glorified in his saints; the whole creation was made by him, and for him; the transactions of providence, grace, and justice are managed for his honour; and the joyful and terrible affairs of the day of judgment are designed to display the majesty and the power of *Jesus* the king, the wisdom and equity of *Jesus* the judge, and the grace and truth of *Jesus* the saviour. I will grant indeed, that the appointment of this day is partly intended for the glory of *Christ*, in the just destruction of the impenitent, for he will be glorified in pouring out the vengeance of his Father upon rebellious sinners: *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;* verses 7—9. before my text. But his sweetest and most valuable revenue of glory arises from among his saints.

If the messengers of the churches are called the glory of *Christ*, with all the weaknesses, and sins, and follies that attend the best of them here, as in *2 Cor. viii. 23.* much more shall they be his glory hereafter, when they shall have no spot nor blemish found upon them, and the work of *Christ* upon their souls has formed and finished them in the perfect beauty of holiness. The saints shall reflect glory on each other, and all of them cast supreme lustre on *Christ* their head: The people shall be the crown and glory of the minister in that day, and the minister shall be the joy and glory of the people, and both shall be the crown, joy, and glory of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, *1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.* *2 Cor. i. 14.* *2 Thess. i. 12.* He shall appear high on a throne in the midst of that bright assembly, and say, "Father, these are the sheep that thou hast given me in the counsels of thy eternal love: All these have I ransomed from hell, at the price of my own blood; these have I rescued by my grace from the dominion of sin and the devil; I have formed them unto holiness, and fitted them for heaven; I have kept them, by my power, through all the dangers of their mortal state, and have brought them safe to thy celestial kingdom: "All thine are mine, and all mine are thine; I was glorified in them on earth," *John xvii. 10.* and they are now my everlasting crown and glory."

Then shall the unknown worlds that never fell, worlds of angels and innocent creatures, and the world of guilty devils and condemned rebels, stand and wonder together at the recovery and salvation *Christ* has provided for the fallen sons of *Adam*. They shall stand amazed to see the millions of apostate creatures, the inhabitants of this earthly globe, recovered to their duty and allegiance, by the Son of God going down to dwell amongst them: Millions of impure and deformed souls, restored to the divine image, and made beautiful, as angels, by the grace and Spirit of our Lord *Jesus*. Those spectators shall be filled with admiration and transport, to see such a multitude of criminals pardoned and justified, for the sake of a righteousness which they themselves never wrought, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God, by a covenant of grace unknown to other worlds, and by faith in the great mediator. They shall wonder to see such an innumerable company of polluted

luted wretches, washed from their sins in so precious a laver as the blood of God's own Son: And he that hung upon the cross, as a spectacle of wretchedness at *Jerusalem*, shall entertain the superior and inferior worlds with the sight of his adorable and divine glories, and the spoils he has brought from the regions of death and hell. Thus to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places, shall be made known by the church triumphant, the manifold wisdom, and the manifold grace of God the Father, and his Son *Jesus Christ*," *Eph. iii. 10.*

But tremble, Oh ye obstinate and impenitent wretches, ye sensual sinners, ye infidels of a christian name and nation, *Christ* will be glorified in you, one way or another: If your hearts are not bowed and melted to receive his gospel, you shall be "punished with everlasting destruction among those that know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son."

Tremble, ye sensual and ye profane sons of iniquity, when ye remember this day, when ye shall see the holy souls that ye scorned, with crowns on their heads, and palms in their hands, with the shout of victory, and joy on their tongues, and the god-man, whom ye despised, and whose grace ye neglected, shining at the head of that bright assembly.

Tremble, ye infidels, ye despisers of the name of a crucified *Christ*, behold his cross is become a throne, and his crown of thorns a crown of glory: See the man whom ye have scorned and reproached, at the head of millions of angels, and adored by ten thousand times ten thousand saints, while wicked princes and captains, armies and nations of sinners, wait their doom from his mouth, nor dare hope for a word of his mercy. O make haste, and come and be reconciled to him, and to God by him, that ye may belong to that blessed assembly, that ye may bear a part in the triumphs of that day, and that *Christ* may be glorified in your recovery from the very borders of damnation.

This thought leads me to the next use.

Use II. This discourse gives "rich encouragement to the greatest sinners to hope for mercy, and to the weakest saints to hope for victory and salvation." Such sort of subjects of the grace of *Christ*, shall yield him some of the brightest rays of glory at the last day. Yet, sinners, let me charge you here, never to hope for this happiness without solemn repentance, and an entire change of heart unto holiness, for an unholy soul would be a fearful blemish in that assembly, and a disgrace to our Lord *Jesus*. Christians, I would charge you, also, never to hope for the happiness of this day without battle and conquest, for all the members of that assembly must be overcomers: But where there is a hearty desire and longing after grace and salvation, let not the worst of sinners despair, nor the weakest believer let go his hope, for it is such as you and I are, in whom *Christ* will be magnified in that day.

Believe this, O thou humbled and convinced sinner, who complainest thy heart is hard, though thou wouldest fain repent and mourn; who fearest the bonds of thy corruptions are so strong, that they shall never be broken, believe that the sovereign grace of *Christ* has designed to exalt it self in the sanctification of such unholy souls as thou art, and in melting such hard hearts as thine. And thou, poor trembling soul, that wouldest fain trust in a Saviour, but art afraid, because of the greatness of thy guilt, and thy abounding iniquities, believe this, that "where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded," *Rom. v. 20.* It is from the bringing such sinners, as thou art, to heaven, that the choicest revenues of glory shall arise to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and thy acclamations of joy and honour to the Saviour shall per-

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haps be loudest in that day, *when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.*

Read the *1 Tim. i. 13, 14.* and see there what an account the great apostle gives of his own conversion; "I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, yet I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in *Jesus Christ.*" Now I am sent to publish and preach to blasphemers and persecutors, that *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation; that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting,* verses 15, 16.

Turn to another text, ye feeble believers, *2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.* there you shall find the same apostle, a convert and a christian, but too weak to conflict with the messenger of *Satan* that buffeted him, nor able to release himself from that sore temptation that lay heavy upon him; but having received a word from *Christ*, that his "grace was sufficient, and that his strength was to shine perfect in glory, in the midst of our weakness, the apostle encourages himself to a joyful hope: Now, says he, I can even glory in my infirmities, so far as they are without sin, that the power of *Christ* may rest upon me; when I am weak in my self, I am strong in the Lord."

Are not the most diseased patients the chief honours of the physician that hath healed them? And must not these appear eminently in that day, when he displays to the sight of the world the noblest monuments of his healing power? When cripples and invalids gain the victory over mighty enemies, is not the skill and conduct of their leader most admired? You are the persons then in whom *Christ* will be glorified, be of good cheer, receive his offered grace, and wait for his salvation.

Use III. The next use I shall make of this discourse is to draw a word of advice from it. "Learn to despise those honours and ornaments in this world, in which *Christ* shall have no share in the world to come." I do not say, cast them all away, for many things are needful, in this life, that can have no immediate regard to the other; but learn to despise them, and set light by them, because they reach no further than time, and shall be forgotten in eternity. Never put the higher esteem on your selves, or your neighbours, because of the gay glitterings of silk or silver; nor let these employ your eyes and your thoughts in the time of worship, when the things of the future world should fill up all your attention; nor let them entertain your tongues in your friendly visits, so as to exclude the discourse of divine ornaments, and the glorious appearance of our Lord *Jesus*.

When I am to put on my best attire, let me consider, if I am hung round with jewels and gold, these must perish before that solemn day, or melt in the last great burning, they can add no beauty to me in that assembly. If I put on love and faith, and humility, I shall shine in these hereafter, and *Christ* shall have some rays of glory from them. O may your souls and mine be dressed in those graces which are "ornaments of great price in the sight of God!" *1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.* Such as may command the respect of angels, and reflect honour upon *Christ* in that solemnity!

I confess, we dwell in flesh and blood, and human nature, in the best of us, is too much impressed by things sensible: When we see a train of human pomp and grandeur, and long ranks of shining garments and equipage, it is ready to dazzle our eyes, and attract our hearts: Vain pomp, and poor equipage, all this, when compared with the triumph of our blessed Lord, at his appearance, with an endless

army of his holy ones ; where every faint shall be vested, not in silks and gold, but, in robes of refined light, out-shining the sun, such as *Christ* himself wore in the mount of transfiguration. Millions of suns in one firmament of glory. Think on that day, and the illustrious retinue of our Lord : Think on that splendor that shall attract the eyes of heaven and earth, shall confound the proud sinner, and astonish the inhabitants of hell : Such a meditation as this will cast a dim shadow over the brightest appearances of a court, or a royal festival ; it will spread a dead colouring over all the painted vanities of this life ; it will damp every thought of rising ambition and earthly pride, and we shall have but little heart to admire or wish for any of the vain shews of mortality. Methinks every gaudy scene of the present life, and all the gilded honours of courts and armies should grow faint, and fade away and vanish at the meditation of this illustrious appearance.

Use IV. This text will give us also two hints of caution.

First, " You that are rich in this world, or wise, or mighty, dare not ridicule nor scoff at those poor weak christians, in whom *Christ* shall be admired and glorified in the last day." You that fancy you have any advantages of birth or beauty, of mind or body, here on earth, dare not make a jest of your poor pious neighbour that wants them, for he is one of those persons whom *Christ* calls his glory, and he himself has given you warning, lest you incur his resentment on this account, *Matth. xviii. 6. Who so shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were banged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* Perhaps the good man has some blemish in his outward form, or, it may be, his countenance is dejected, or his mien and figure awkward and uncomely ; perhaps his garments sit wrong and unfashionable upon him, or, it may be, they hang in tatters ; the motions of his body, perhaps, are ungraceful, his speech improper, and his deportment is simple and unpolished ; but he has shining graces in his soul, in which *Christ* shall be admired in the last day, and how darest thou make him thy laughing-stock ? Wilt thou be willing to hear thy scornful jest repeated again at that day, when the poor derided christian has his robes of glory on, and the judge of all shall acknowledge him for one of his favourites ?

The second hint of caution is this, " you that shall be the glory of *Christ* in that day, dare not do any thing that may dishonour him now." Walk answerable to your character and your hope, nor indulge the least sinful defilement. Say within your selves, " Am I to make one in that splendid retinue of my Lord, where every one must appear in robes of holiness, and shall I spot my garments with the flesh ? When I am provoked to anger and indignation, let me say, doth wrath and bluster become a follower and an attendant of the meek and peaceful *Jesus* ? When I am tempted to pride and vanity of mind, will this be a beauty or a blemish to that assembly, that shines in glorious humility ? Or, perhaps, I am wavering, and ready to yield, and become a captive to some foolish temptation ; but how then can I expect a place in that holy triumph, which is appointed for none but conquerors ? And how shall I be able to look my blessed general in the face on that day, if I prove a coward under his banner, and abandon my profession of strict holiness, at the demand of a sinful and threatening world ? "

Use V. The last use I shall make of the text, is matter of consolation and joy to two sorts of christians.

First, To the poor, mean and despised followers of *Christ*, and in whom *Christ* himself is despised by the ungodly world. Read my text, and believe, that in you *Christ* shall be glorified and admired, when, with a million of angels, he shall descend

send from heaven, and make his last appearance upon earth; mean as you are in your own esteem, because of your ignorance and your weakness in this world, you shall be one of the glories of *Christ* in the world to come: Little and despicable as you are in the esteem of proud sinners, they shall behold your Lord exalted on his throne, and you sitting among the honours at his right hand, while they shall rage afar off, and gnash their teeth at your glory: When the eye of faith is open, it can spy this bright hour at a distance, and bid the mourning christian rejoice in hope.

Secondly, There is comfort also in my text to those, who mourn for the dishonour of *Christ* in the world; those lively members of the mystical body, who sympathize with the blessed head under all the reproaches that are cast upon him, and his gospel, who groan under the load of scandal, that is thrown upon *Christ* in an infidel age, as though it were personally thrown upon themselves. It is matter of lamentation indeed, that there are but few of this sort of christians in our day, few that love our Lord *Jesus* with such tenderness; but if such there be among you, open your eyes, and look forward to this glorious day. This day to which *Enoch*, the first of all the prophets, and *John*, the last of all the apostles, directs our faith. Read their own words, *Jude* 14, 15. *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all, that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* *Rev.* i. 7. *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.* Bear up your hearts, ye mourners, and support your hopes with the promise of our Lord. "Again, a little while, and ye shall see me: *John* xvi. 17. shall see the son of man sitting on the throne of his glory." *Matth.* xxv. 31. "Then shall your heart rejoice in his honours, and in your own, and this joy no man taketh from you," *John* xvi. 19, 22. And while he repeats this promise with his last words in the bible, "Surely, I come quickly, let every soul of us echo to the voice of our beloved, Amen. Even so come, Lord *Jesus*."

## D I S C O U R S E V.

## The wrath of the Lamb.

R E V. vi. 15, 16, 17.

*And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man bid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and bide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

**W**HEN some terrible judgment, or execution of divine vengeance, is denounced against an age or a nation, it is sometimes described in the language of prophecy by a resemblance to the last and great judgment-day, when all mankind shall be called to account for their sins, and the just and final indignation of God shall be executed upon obstinate and unrepenting criminals. The discourse of our Saviour in the xxiv. chapter of *Matthew*, is an eminent example of this kind; where the destruction of the *jewish* nation is predicted, together with the final judgment of the world, in such uniform language, and similar phrases of speech, that it is difficult to say, whether both these scenes of vengeance run through the whole discourse, or which part of the discourse belongs to the one, and which to the other. The same manner of prophecy appears in this text.

Learned interpreters suppose these words to foretel the universal consternation, which was found amongst the heathen idolaters and persecutors of the church of *Christ*, when *Constantine*, the first christian emperor, was raised to the throne of *Rome*, and became governor of the world. But whether they hit upon the proper application of this prophecy, or not, yet still it is pretty evident, that this scene of terror is borrowed from the last judgment, which will eminently appear to be the day of wrath, as it is called, *Rom. ii. 5*. It is the great day of divine indignation in so eminent a manner, that all the tremendous desolations of kingdoms and people, from the creation of the world to the consummation of all things, shall be but as shadows of that day of terror and vengeance.

I shall therefore consider these words, at present, as they contain a solemn representation of that last glorious and dreadful day; and here I shall enquire particularly,

I. Who are the persons, whose aspect and appearance shall then be so dreadful to sinners.

II. How comes the wrath, which discovers it self, at that time, to be so formidable; and,

III. How



III. How vain will all the shifts and hopes of sinners be, in that dreadful day, to avoid the wrath and vengeance.

First, Who are the persons that appear clothed in so much terror?

Answer. It is he that sits upon the throne and the lamb: It is God, the Father of all, the great and almighty creator, the supreme Lord and governor of the world, and the lamb of God, that is, our Lord *Jesus Christ* his Son, dwelling in human nature, to whom the judgment of the world is committed, and by whom the Father will introduce the terrible and the illustrious scenes of that day, and manage the important and eternal affairs of it. It is by these names, that the apostle *John*, in this prophetic book, describes God the Father, and his Son *Jesus*, *Rev.* iv. 10. and v. 6—13.

If it be enquired, why God the Father is described as the person sitting on the throne, this is plainly agreeable to the other representations of him, throughout the scripture; where he is described as first and supreme in authority, as sitting on the throne of majesty on high, as denoting and commissioning the Lord *Jesus*, his well-beloved Son, to act for him, and as placing him on his throne to execute his works of mercy or vengeance. *Rev.* iii. 21. "He that overcometh shall sit down with me on my throne, saith our Saviour, even as I have overcome, and am set down with the Father on his throne." *John* v. 22—27. "The Father has committed all judgment into the hands of the Son." It is true, the godhead, or divine essence, is but one, and it is the same godhead, which belongs to the Father, that dwells in the Son, and, in this respect, "*Christ* and the Father are one, he is in the Father, and the Father in him, *John* x. 30, 38; yet the Father is constantly exhibited in scripture with peculiar characters of prime authority, and the Son is represented as receiving all from the Father, *John* v. 19, 20, 22, 26, 27.

If it be farther enquired, "Why *Christ* is called the lamb of God," I shall not pursue those many fine metaphors and similes, in which the wit and fancy of men have run a long course on this subject, but shall only mention these two things.

1. He is called the lamb, from the innocence of his behaviour, the quietness and meekness of his disposition and conduct in the world. The character of *Jesus* among men was peaceful and harmless, and patient of injuries; "when he was reviled, he reviled not again, but was led as a lamb to the slaughter, with submission, and without revenge: This resemblance appears, and is set forth to view, in several scriptures, wherein he is compared to this gentle creature, *Acts* viii. 32, *1 Pet.* ii. 23.

2. He is called the lamb, because he was appointed a sacrifice for the sins of men, *John* i. 29. *Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.* *1 Pet.* i. 18, 19. *You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.* It was a lamb, that was ordained for the constant daily sacrifice amongst the jews morning and evening, to typify the constant and everlasting influence of the atonement made by the death of *Christ*, *Heb.* x. 11, 12. It was a lamb which was sacrificed at the passover, and on which the families of *Israel* feasted, to commemorate their redemption from the slavery of *Egypt*, and to typify *Christ*, who "is our passover, who was sacrificed for us, and for whose sake the destroying angel spares all that trust in him," *1 Cor.* v. 7.

But will a lamb discover such dreadful wrath? Has the lamb of God such indignation in him? Can the meek, the compassionate, the merciful Son of God put on such terrible forms and appearances? Are his tender mercies vanished quite away, and will he renounce the kind aspect, and the gentle language of a lamb, for ever?

To

To this I answer, that the various glories and offices of our blessed Lord require a variety of human metaphors and emblems to represent them. He was a lamb, full of gentleness, meekness, and compassion, to invite and encourage sinful perishing creatures to accept of divine mercy: But he has now to deal with obstinate and rebellious criminals, who renounce his Father's mercy, and resist all the gentle methods of his own grace and salvation: And he is sent by the Father to punish those rebellions, but he is named the lamb of God still, to put the rebels in mind, what gentleness and compassions they have affronted and abused, and to make it appear, that their guilt is utterly inexcusable.

Let us remember, *Christ* is now a lamb raised to the throne in heaven, and furnished and armed "with seven eyes and seven horns," *Rev. v. 5, 6.* with perfect knowledge and perfect power, to govern the world, to vindicate his own honour, and to avenge himself upon his impenitent and obstinate enemies. Here the lamb will assume the name of "the lion of the tribe of *Judah*," also, and he must act in different characters, according to the persons he has to deal with.

The second general question, which we are to consider, is, "How comes the wrath of that great day to be so terrible?"

I answer, in general, because it is not only the wrath of God, but of the lamb: It is the wrath that is manifested for the affronts of divine authority, and the abuse of divine mercy: It is wrath that is awakened by the contempt of the laws of God, written in the books of nature and scripture, and for the contempt of his love, revealed in the gospel by *Jesus Christ*.

It is proper to observe here, that the wrath of God, and the wrath of the lamb, are not to be conceived as exactly the same, for it is the wrath of the Son of God, in his human nature exalted, as well as the displeasure of God the Father: It is the righteous and holy resentment of the man *Jesus*, awakened and let loose against rebellious creatures, that have broken all the rules of his Father's government, and have refused all the proposals of his Father's grace: It is the wrath of the highest, the greatest, and the best of creatures, joined to the wrath of an offended creator\*. But let us enter a little into particulars.

1. It is righteous wrath, and just and deserved vengeance, that arises from the clearest discoveries of the love of God neglected, and the sweetest messages of divine grace refused. All the former discoveries of the love of God to men, both in nature and providence, as well as by divine revelation, whether made by men or by angels, whether in the days of the patriarchs, or in the days of *Moses*, and the *Jews*, were far inferior to the grace which was revealed by *Jesus Christ*; and therefore the sin of rejecting it is greater in proportion, and the punishment will be more severe. "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; — How shall we escape, if we

\* Here let it be observed, that, when the holy scripture speaks of the "wrath and indignation of the blessed God," we are not to understand it, as though God was subject to such passions or affections of nature, as we feel fermenting or working within our selves, when our anger rises: But because the justice, or rectoral wisdom of God, inclines him to bring natural evil, pain, or sorrow upon those, who are obstinately guilty of moral evil or sin, and to treat them, as anger or wrath inclines men to treat those that have offended them, and therefore the scripture, speaking after the manner of men, calls it the "wrath and indignation of God."

And it is hard to say, whether or no the "wrath of the lamb;" that is, of the man *Christ Jesus*, in whom godhead dwells, be any thing more than the calm, dispassionate, rectoral wisdom of the human nature of *Christ*, inclining him to punish rebellious and impenitent sinners, in conformity to the will of God his Father, or in concurrence with the godhead, which dwells in him.

we neglect so great salvation, as this which began to be spoken by our Lord?" *Heb.* ii. 2—4.

*Moses* had many true discoveries of grace made to him, and intrusted with him for sinful men: But the scripture saith, *Jobn* i. 17. "The law came by *Moses*, and grace and truth came by *Jesus Christ*;" that is, in such super-abundance, as though grace and truth had never appeared in the world before. The forgiving mercy of God, under the vail of ceremonies and sacrifices, and the mediation of *Christ*, under the type of the high-priest, was but a dark and imperfect discovery, in comparison of the free, the large, the full forgiveness, which is brought to us by the gospel of *Christ*. Learn this doctrine at large from *Heb.* x. 1—14. This is amazing mercy, astonishing grace, and the despisers of it will deserve to perish with double destruction, for they wink their eyes against clearer light, and reject the offers of more abounding love.

2. It is wrath that is awakened by the most precious and most expensive methods of salvation slighted and undervalued. Well may God say to christian nations, especially to *Great Britain*, who sits under the daily sound of this gospel, "What could I have done more for you than I have done?" *Ijai.* v. 4. "I have sent my own Son, the Son of my bosom, the Son of my eternal love, to take flesh and blood upon him, that he might be able to die in your stead, who were guilty rebels, and deserved to die: I have given him up to the insults and injuries of men, to the temptations, the buffetings and rage of devils, to the stroke of the sword of my justice, to the cursed death of the cross for you; here is heaven and salvation purchased for man with the dearest and most valuable life in all the creation, with the richest blood that ever ran in the veins of a creature, with the life and blood of the Son of God, and yet you refused to receive and accept of this salvation procured at so immense a price. I called you to partake of this invaluable blessing freely, without money, and without price, and yet you slighted all these offers of mercy; what remains but that my wrath should kindle against you in the hottest degree, and fill your souls with exquisite anguish and misery? You have refused to accept of a covenant which was sealed with the blood of my own Son, which was confirmed by the miraculous operations of my own Spirit; you have valued your sinful pleasures, and the trifles of this vain world, above the blood of my Son, and the life of your souls: It is divinely proper, that divine vengeance should be your portion, who have rejected such rich treasures of divine love." *Heb.* x. 28—31. *He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

3. It is wrath that must avenge the affronts and injuries done to the prime minister of God's government, and the chief messenger of his mercy. All the patriarchs, and the prophets, and angels themselves, were but servants to bring messages of divine grace to men: And some of them, in awful forms and appearances, represented the authority of God too: But the Son of God is the prime minister of his government, and the noblest ambassador of his grace, and the chief deputy or vicergerent in his Father's kingdom. See *Heb.* i. 1, 2. *Psal.* ii. 6, 9, 12. His Father's glory and grandeur, compassion and love, are most sublimely exhibited in the face of *Christ* his Son, and God will not have his highest and fairest image disgraced and affronted, without peculiar and signal vengeance.

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The great God will vindicate the honours of his Son *Jesus*, in the infinite destruction of a rebellious and unbelieving world: And the Son himself hath wrath and just resentment; he will vindicate his own authority, and his commission of grace. He hath a rod of iron put into his hands, as well as a scepter of mercy, and with his rod will he break to pieces rebellious nations: *Rev. ii. 27.* It is not fit, that the first minister of the empire of the king of heaven, and the brightest image of his majesty, and of his love, should appear always in the character of a lamb, a meek and unrepenting creature. He will put on the lion, when his commission of grace is ended: He is the "lion of the tribe of *Judah*," *Rev. v. 5.* and will rend the caul of the heart of those unrepenting sinners, who have resisted his authority, and abused his love.

And how will the wrath of the lamb of God penetrate the soul of sinners with intense anguish, when the meek and compassionate *Jesus* shall be commissioned and constrained to speak the language of resentment and divine indignation?

"Did you not hear of me, sinners, in yonder world, which lies weltering in flames? Did you not read of me in the gospel of my grace? Did you not learn my character and my salvation in the ministrations of my word? Were you not told, that I was appointed to be the Saviour of a lost world, and a minister of divine mercy to men? And was there not abundant evidence of it by miracles and prophecies? Were you not told, that I was exalted, after my sufferings, to the right hand of God, on purpose to "bestow repentance and remission of sins?" *Acts v. 31.* And were you not informed also, that I had a "rod of iron" given me, to dash rebels to death? *Psal. ii. 9.* What is the reason you never came to me, or submitted to my government, or accepted of my grace? Did you never hear of the threatenings that stood, like drawn swords, against those who wilfully refuse this mercy? Did you think these were mere bugbears, mere sounding words, to fright children with, and harmless thunder, that would never blast you? Did you think these flashes of wrath, in my word, were such sort of lightnings as you might safely play with, and flame that would never burn? What punishments, think you, do you deserve, first, for the abuse of my authority, and then for the wilful and obstinate refusal of my grace? Is it not divinely fit and proper my wrath should awake against such hainous criminals? Where is any proper object for my resentment, if you are not made objects of it? Take them, angels, bind them hand and foot, and cast them into outer darkness: Let them be thrown headlong into the prison of hell, where fire and brimstone burn unquenchably, where light, and peace, and hope can never come. Let them be crushed with the rod of iron, which the Father hath put into my hands, as the first minister of his kingdom, as the avenger of his despised grace?"

4. It is a wrath that is excited by a final and utter rejection of the last proposals of divine love. When mercy was offered to men by the blessed God at first, the discoveries were more dark and imperfect, there were still further discoveries to be made in following ages; Therefore the crime and guilt of sinners, in those former days, was much less than the crime and guilt of those who reject this last proposal of mercy. There is no further edition, of the covenant of grace, for those who refuse this offer. Those who neglect *Christ*, as he is set forth in the gospel, to be a sacrifice for sin, "there remains no more sacrifice for them, but a certain fearful expectation of vengeance, and fiery indignation, which shall consume the adversary," *Heb. x. 26, 28.*

All the former dispensations of grace are contained eminently, and completed in this dispensation of the gospel. God can send no greater messenger than his own Son, and he concludes and finishes the whole scene and period of grace with the gospel of *Christ*. There remains nothing but wrath to the uttermost for those who have abused this last offer of mercy. This was exemplified in the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the *Jews*, a little after they had put *Christ* to death, and rejected the salvation which he proposed; and this wrath will be more terribly glorified in the final destruction of every sinner that wilfully rejects the glad tidings of this salvation.

5. It is such wrath as arises from the patience of a God tired and worn out by the boldest iniquities of men, and by a final perseverance in their rebellions. It is the character and glory of God, to be long-suffering, and slow to anger. *Exod. xxxiv.* 6. "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth;" and *Jesus*, his Son, is the minister of this his patience, and the intercessor for this delay of judgment and vengeance. He is represented as interceding one year after another for the reprieve of obstinate sinners, and, at his intercession, God the Father waits to be gracious: But God will not wait, and delay, and keep silence for ever, nor will *Jesus* for ever plead, *Psal. l.* 1, 3, 21, 22. *Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* God will say then to obstinate sinners, as he did to the *Jews* of old, *Jer. xv.* 6. *I will stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee, I am weary of repenting:* And even the abused patience of *Jesus*, the Saviour, shall turn into fury, when the "day of recompence shall come, and the day of vengeance which is in his heart," *Isai. lxxiii.* 1, 4.

O let each of us consider, "How long have I made the grace of God wait on me? How many messages of peace and pardon have I neglected? How many years have I delayed to accept of this salvation, and made *Jesus* wait on an impenitent rebel, with the commission of mercy in his hand, while I have refused to receive it? Let my soul be this day awakened to lay hold of the covenant of grace, to submit to the gospel of *Christ*, lest to-morrow the days of his commission of mercy toward me expire, lest the patience of a God be finished, lest the abused love of a Saviour turn into fury, and nothing remains for me but unavoidable destruction.

6. It is a sentence of divine wrath, which shall be attended with the fullest conviction of sinners, and self-condemnation in their own consciences. This doubles the sensations of divine wrath, and enhances the anguish of the criminal to a high degree.

This final unbelief, and rejection of grace, is a sin against so much light, and so much love, that, however men cheat their consciences now, and charm them into silence, yet, at the last great day, their own consciences shall be on the side of the judge, when he pronounces wrath and damnation upon them. What infinite terrors will shake the soul when there is not one of its own thoughts can speak peace within? When all its own inward powers shall echo to the sentence of the judge, and acknowledge the justice and equity of it for ever?

Oh, who can express the agonies of pain and torture, when the impenitent sinner shall be awakened into such reflexions as these? "I was placed in a land of light and knowledge; the light of the gospel of grace shone all round me; but I winked my eyes against the light, and now I am plunged into utter and eternal darkness. I was convinced often, that I was a sinner, and in danger of death and hell; I was convinced of the truth of the gospel, and the all-sufficiency of the salvation of

*Christ*, but I loved the vanities of this life ; I followed the appetites of the flesh, and the delusive charms of a tempting world, I delayed to answer to the voice of providence, and the voice of mercy ; the voice of the gospel inviting me to this salvation, and the voice of *Christ* requiring me to be saved. My own heart condemns me with ten thousand reproaches : How righteous is God in his indignation ! How just is the resentment of the lamb of God in this day of his wrath ! What clear, and convincing, and dreadful equity attends the sentence of my condemnation, and doubles the anguish of my soul ?”

7. It is such wrath as shall be executed immediately and eternally, without one hour of reprieve, and without the least hope of mercy, and that through all the ages to come : For though *Jesus* is the mediator between God and man, to reconcile those to God, who have broken his law, there is no mediator appointed to reconcile those sinners to *Christ*, when they have finally resisted the grace of his gospel. There is no blood nor death that can atone for the final rejection of the blood of this dying Saviour. If we resist *Jesus Christ* the Lord, and his atonement, and his sacrifice, his gospel, and his salvation, there remains no more atonement for us. Let us consider each of these circumstances apart, and dwell a little on these terrors, that our hearts may be affected with them.

1. This wrath shall be executed immediately, for the time of reprieve is come to an end. Here divine wisdom and justice have set the limits of divine patience, and they reach no further.

2. It is wrath that shall be executed without mercy, because the day and hour of mercy is for ever finished. That belongs only to this life. The day of grace is gone for ever : “ He that once made them, will now have no mercy upon them, and he that formed them, will shew them no favour,” *Isai.* xxvii. 11. The very mercy of the mediator, the compassion of the lamb of God, is turned into wrath and fury. The lamb himself has put on the form of a lion, and there is no redeemer or advocate to speak a word for them, who have finally rejected *Jesus*, the only mediator, worn out the age of his pity, and provoked his wrath, as well as his Father’s.

3. It is wrath without end, for their souls are immortal, their bodies are raised to an immortal state, and their whole nature being sinful, and miserable, and immortal, they must endure a wretched and miserable immortality. This is the representation of the book of God, even of the new testament, and I have no commission from God, either to soften these words of terror, or to shorten the term of their misery.

#### REMARKS on this DISCOURSE.

Remark I. “ What a wretched mistake is it, to imagine the great God is nothing else but mercy, and *Jesus Christ* is nothing else but love and salvation.” It is true, God has more mercy than we can imagine ; his love is boundless in many of it’s exercises, and *Jesus* his Son, who is the image of the Father, is the fairest image of his love and grace. His compassions have “ heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths in them, that pass all our knowledge,” *Eph.* iii. 18. But God is an universal sovereign, a wise and righteous governor : There is majesty with him, as well as grace ; and *Jesus* is Lord of lords, and king of kings :” He bears the image of his Father’s justice, as well as of his Father’s love ; otherwise he could not be the full “ brightness of his glory, nor the express image of his person,” *Heb.* i. 3.

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And besides, the Father hath armed him with powers of divine vengeance, as well as with powers of mercy and salvation. *Psal.* ii. 9. He has put the "rod of iron into his hand, to dash the nations like a potter's vessel." *Rev.* ii. 27. and xix. 15. He is the "elect and precious corner-stone laid in Zion," *1 Pet.* ii. 6. But he is a stone that "will bruise those who stumble at him, and those on whom he shall fall, he will grind them to powder," *Matth.* xxi. 44. He is a lamb and a lion too: He can suffer at *Jerusalem* and mount *Calvary* with silence, "and not open his mouth," *Isai.* liii. 7. and he can roar from heaven with overspreading terror, and shake the world with the sound of his anger. See that his mercy be not abused.

Remark II. "The day of *Christ's* patience makes haste to an end." Every day of neglected grace hastens on the hour of his wrath and vengeance. Sinners waste their months and years in rebellion against his love, while he waits months and years to be gracious: But *Christ* is all-wise, and he knows the proper period of long-suffering, and the proper moment to let all his wrath and resentment loose on obstinate and unreclaimable sinners. Oh may every one of our souls awake to faith and repentance, to religion and righteousness, to hope and salvation, before this day of our peace be finished, and gone for ever. *Psal.* ii. 12. *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.* There was once a season when he saw the nation of the *Jews*, and the people of *Jerusalem*, wasting the proposals of his love; they let their day of mercy pass away unimproved, and he foretold their destruction with tears in his eyes. *Luke* xix. 41, 42. *He beheld the city, and wept over it;* alas, for the inhabitants, who would not be saved! He was then a messenger of salvation, and clothed with pity to sinners; but, in the last great day of his wrath, there is no place for these tears of compassion, no room for pity or forgiveness.

Remark III. "When we preach terror to obstinate sinners, we may preach *Jesus Christ*, as well as when we preach love and salvation, for he is the minister of his Father's government, both in vengeance and in mercy." The lamb hath wrath, as well as grace, and he is to be feared, as well as to be trusted; and he must be represented under all the characters of dignity to which he is exalted, that, "knowing the terrors of the Lord, as well as the compassion of the Saviour, we may persuade sinful men to accept of salvation and happiness," *2 Cor.* v. 11.

## DISCOURSE VI.

## The vain refuge of sinners ;

O R,

A meditation on the rocks near *Tunbridge-wells*, 1729.

REV. vi. 15, 16, 17.

*And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man bid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb : For the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ?*

**I**N the former discourse on this text, we have taken a survey of these two persons, and their characters, God and the lamb, whose united wrath spreads so terrible a scene through the world at the great judgment-day ; we have also enquired and found sufficient reasons, why the anger and justice of God should be so severe against the sinful sons and daughters of men, who have wilfully broken his law, and refused the grace of his gospel, and why the indignation of the Son of God should be superadded to all the terrors of his Father's vengeance.

We are come now to

The third, and last general head of discourse, and that is to consider, "How vain will all the refuges and hopes of sinners be found in that dreadful day, when God and the lamb shall join to manifest their wrath and indignation against them."

These hopes, and shifts, and refuges of rebellious and guilty creatures, are represented by a noble image and description in my text : "They shall call to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, and to cover them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb." As this address to mountains and rocks, appears to be but a vain hope in extreme distress, when a feeble and helpless criminal is pursued by a swift and mighty avenger, so vain and fruitless shall all the hopes of sinners be to escape the just indignation and sentence of their judge. In order to shew the vanity of all the refuges and shifts to which sinners shall betake themselves in that day, let us spread abroad this sacred description of them in a paraphrase under the following heads.

1. Let us consider the rocks and mountains, as vast and mighty created beings, of huge figure, and high appearance, whose aid is sought in the last extremity of distress ; and what is this but calling upon creatures to help them against their creator ? What is it but flying to creatures, to deliver and save them, when their offended God resolves to punish ? A vain refuge indeed, when God, the almighty maker of all things, and *Jesus*, his Son, by whom all things were made, shall agree

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to arise, and go forth against them in their robes of judgment, and with their artillery of vengeance! What created being dares interpose, in that hour, to shelter or defend a condemned criminal? What high and mighty creature is able to afford the least security or protection?

The princes of the earth, and the captains, the kings, and heroes, and conquerors, with all their millions of armed men, are not able to lift a hand for the defence of one sinner against the anger of God and the lamb. They themselves shall quake and shiver at the tremendous sight, and they shall fly into the holes of the rocks, like mere cowards, and shall join their outcries with the poor and the slave, entreating the rocks and mountains to befriend them with shelter and safety.

Not the highest mountains, not the hardest or the strongest rocks, not the most exalted, or most powerful persons, or things in nature can defend, when the God of nature resolves to destroy: When he, who is higher than the highest, and stronger than the strongest, shall pronounce destruction upon rebels, what creature can speak deliverance?

The rocks and the mountains obey their maker, they shiver in pieces at the word of his wrath, and will yield no relief to criminals: But man, rebellious man, disobeys his maker, and calls to the rocks and mountains to protect him. Vain hope, Oh sinner! to make the most exalted creatures your friends, when God, the creator, is your enemy. These inanimate things have never learned disobedience to their maker, and, rather than screen a rebel from his deserved judgments, they will offer themselves as instruments of divine vengeance.

2. Rocks and mountains, in their cliffs and dens and caverns, are sometimes considered as places of secrecy and concealment. My text tells us, that "kings, and mighty men, the rich and the free-man, as well as the poor and the slave, hid themselves in dens, and in the rocks of the mountains." They hoped there might be some secret corner, whose thick shadows and darkness were sufficient to hide them, where the judge might not spy or find them out. Vain hope for sinners to hide in the holes of the rocks, and the deepest caverns of the mountains, to escape the notice of that God, who is all eye and all ear, and present at once in every place of earth and heaven! Foolish expectation indeed, to avoid the notice of the Son of God, "whose eyes are as a flame of fire," *Rev. i. 14.* and shoot through the earth, and its darkest caves!

Read the *cxxxix. Psalm*, Oh sinner! and then think, if it be possible to flee from the eye of God, and to hide thy self in the clefts of the rock, where his hand shall not find thee. — He has already "beset thee behind and before, and his hand already compasses thee round about in all thy paths. Darkness itself cannot cover thee: The night shines as the day before him, and scatters light round about the criminal, that would hide himself from the wrath of God. Ask *Jeremy* the prophet, and he shall tell thee, that "none can hide himself in secret places, where God shall not see him, the God who fills heaven and earth," *Jer. xxiii. 24.* He shall hunt obstinate sinners from every mountain, and out of the holes of the rocks, for his eyes are upon all their ways, neither their persons, nor their iniquities, can be hid from him.

And as you can never conceal your selves from the sight and notice of the judge, so neither can you turn your eyes away from him: You must behold his face in vengeance, and endure the distressing sight. The rays of his majesty, in the day of his wrath, shall strike through all the crannies of the darkest den, and pierce the deepest shade. *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see, and be ashamed,*  
*Isai.*

*Isai. xxvi. 11.* And the face of the lamb must be seen in all it's unknown terrors. *Rev. i. 7.* Behold, he comes in the clouds, and every eye shall see him: The guilty creature, and the divine avenger, shall meet eye to eye, though the creature has hid himself under rocks and mountains.

3. These rocks and mountains are designed to represent not only concealment and darkness, by their holes and caverns, but they are known bulwarks of defence, and places of security and shelter, by reason of their strength and thickness. When the prophet would express the safety of the man, who practises righteousness in a vicious age, *Isai. xxxiii. 16.* he says, *He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks.* These shall be a bulwark round him for his guard and safety. When sinners, therefore, flee to the mountains and to the rocks, they may be supposed to seek a thick covering, or a shield of defence, to secure them, where the strokes of divine anger shall not break through, and reach them: They trust to the solid protection of the rocks, and the strength of the mountains to guard them; but these, alas, can yield no shelter from the stroke of the arm of God. Should the rocks, Oh sinner! attempt to befriend thee, and surround thee with their thickest fortification, his wrath would cleave them asunder, and pierce thee to the soul with greater ease, than thou canst break through a paper-wall with the battering engines of war. Ask the prophet *Nabum*, who was acquainted with the majesty of God, and he shall tell thee, how it "throws down the mountain, and tears the rock in pieces: When his fury is poured out like fire, the mountains quake at him, the hills melt, the earth is burned at his presence, with all that dwell therein. He that has his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet, what mountain can stand before his indignation, and where is the rock that can abide in the fierceness of his anger?" *Nab. i. 2—6.* Were the whole globe of the earth one massy rock, and should it yawn to the very center, to give thee a refuge and a hiding-place, and then close again, and surround thee with it's solid defence, yet when the Lord commands, the earth will obey the voice of him that made it; this solid earth would cleave again, and resign the guilty prisoner, and yield thee up to the sword of his justice. Wheresoever a God resolves to strike, safety and defence are impossible things. The sinner must suffer without remedy, and without hope, who has provoked an almighty God, and awakened the wrath of that Saviour, "who can subdue all things to himself."

4. Rocks and mountains falling upon us, are instruments of sudden and overwhelming death. When sinners therefore call to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and cover them, they are supposed to endeavour to put an end to their own beings by some overwhelming destruction, that they may not live to feel and endure the resentments of an affronted God, and an abused Saviour. Though they are just raised to life, they would fain die again; but God, who calls the dead from their graves, will forbid the rocks and the mountains, and every creature, to lend sinners their aid to destroy themselves. Sinners, in that dreadful day, shall seek death, but death shall flee from them. Their natures are now made immortal, and the fall of rocks and mountains cannot crush them to death. They must live to sustain the weight of divine wrath, which is heavier than rocks and mountains.

The life which God hath now given to men, in this mortal state, may be given up again, or thrown away by the daring impiety of self-murder; and they may make many creatures instruments of their own destruction; but the life which the Son of God shall give them, when he calls them from the dead, is everlasting; they cannot resign their existence and immortality, they cannot part with it, nor can any creature

creature take it from them. They would rather die, than see God in his majesty, or the lamb arrayed in his robes of judgment; but the wretches are immortalized to punishment, by the long abused majesty and power of God: And they must live for ever to learn what it is to despise the authority of a God, and to abuse the grace of a Saviour. Their doom is "everlasting burnings: They have no rest day nor night, the smoke of their torment will ascend for ever and ever in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb," *Rev. xiv. 10, 11.*

Thus have we considered those huge and bulky beings, the rocks and the mountains, in all their vast and mighty figures and appearances, with all their clefts, and dens, and caverns for shelter and concealment, with all their fortification and massy thickness for defence, and with all their power to crush and destroy mankind, and yet we find them utterly insufficient to hide, cover, or protect guilty creatures in that great day of the wrath of God and the lamb.

#### REFLEXIONS ON THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE.

Reflexion I. "How strangely do all the appearances of *Christ* to sinners, in the several seasons and dispensations of his grace, differ from that last great and solemn appearance, which, to them, will be a dispensation of final vengeance?" He visited the world in divine visions of old, even from the day of the sin of *Adam*, and it was to reveal mercy to sinful man; and he sometimes assumed the majesty of God, to let the world know he was not to be trifled with. He visited the earth at his incarnation: How lowly was his state! How full of grace his ministry! Yet he then gave notice of this day of vengeance, when he should appear in his own, and his Father's most awful glories.

He visits the nations now with the word of salvation, he appears in the glass of his gospel, and in the ordinances of his sanctuary, as a Saviour whose heart melts with love, and, in the language of his tenderest compassions, and of his dying groans, he invites sinners to be reconciled to an offended God: He appears as a lamb made a sacrifice for sin, and, as a minister of his Father's mercy, offering and distributing pardons to criminals. But when he visits the world, as a final judge, how solemn and illustrious will that appearance be? How terrible his countenance to all those who have refused to receive him as a Saviour? "Behold, he cometh in flaming fire, with ten thousand of his angels, to render vengeance to them that resisted his grace, and disobeyed the invitation of his gospel," *2 Thess. i. 7.*

Time was, when the "Father sent forth his Son, not to condemn the world, but that through him the world might have life," *John iii. 17.* But the time is coming, when God shall send him arrayed with majesty and with righteous indignation, to condemn the rebellious world, and inflict upon them the pains of eternal death. Hast thou seen him, Oh my soul! in the discoveries of his mercy? Fly to him with all the wings of faith and love, with all the speed of desire and joy fly to him, receive his grace, and accept of his salvation, that, when the day of the wrath of the lamb shall appear, thou mayst behold his countenance without terror and confusion.

Reflexion II. "How very different will the thoughts of sinners be in that day from what they are at present? How different their wishes and their inclinations?" And that with regard to this one terror which my text describes, *viz.* that they shall address themselves to the rocks and mountains for shelter, and fly into the dens and caverns

caverns of the earth for concealment and safety. Let us survey this in a few particulars.

Sinners, whose looks were once lofty and disdainful, whose eyes were exalted in pride, their mouths set against the heavens, and their hearts haughty and full of scorn, they shall be humbled to the dust of the earth, they shall creep into the hiding-places of the moles and the bats, and thrust their heads into holes, and caverns, and dens of desolation, at the appearance of God, their creator, in flaming fire, and the Son of God, their judge; for he is the avenger of his own and his Father's injured honours.

Sinners, who were once fond of their idols and their sensual delights, who made idols to themselves of every agreeable creature, and gave it that place in their hearts which belongs only to God, they shall be horribly confounded in that day, when God shall appear in his majesty, to shake the earth to the center, and to burn the surface of it with all its bravery. This is nobly described by the prophet *Isaiab*, chapter the second, from 10—21. "In that day shall a man cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats, to go into the clefts of the rock, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."

Sinners, who once could not tell how to spend a day without gay company, those sons and daughters of mirth, who turned their midnights into noon, with the splendor of their lamps, and the rich and shining furniture of their palaces; those noisy companions of riot, who made the streets of the city resound with their midnight revels, they shall now fly to the solitary caverns of the rocks, and would be glad to dwell there in darkness and silence for ever, if they might but avoid the wrath of a provoked God, and the countenance of an abused Saviour. They would fain be shut up for ever from day-light, lest they should see the face of an almighty enemy, whose name and honour have been reproached in their songs of lewd jollity and profaneness.

Sinners, who once were fond of liberty in the wildest sense, and could not bear that any restraints should be laid upon their persons or their wishes, who never could endure the thought of a confinement to their closets for one half hour to converse with God, or with their own souls there, they now call aloud to the rocks and the mountains, to immure them round, as a refuge from the eye of their judge. They were once perpetually roving abroad, and gadding through all the gay scenes of sensuality, in quest of new and flowery pleasures, but now they beg to be imprisoned for ever in the dens and caves of the earth; the deepest and most dismal caves are their most ardent wishes, that they might never see the countenance of their divine avenger, nor feel the weight of his hand.

Sinners, who, heretofore, thought themselves, and their deeds of darkness, secure enough from the eye of God, and from the strokes of his justice, while they revelled in their common habitations; those who, even under the open sky, could defy the almighty, could laugh at his threatenings, and mock the prophecies of his vengeance, now they can find no caverns deep or dark enough to hide them from his sight; his lightnings penetrate the hardest rocks, and shine into the deepest solitudes: There is no screen or shelter thick and strong enough to stand between God and them, and to cover and shield them from his thunder. They call now to the mountains and the rocks to be an eternal screen; but the rocks and the mountains are deaf to their cry; then shall they remember, with unknown regret and anguish,

anguish, those days of grace when *Christ Jesus*, who is now their judge, offered himself to become a screen to them, and a defence from the anger of God, their creator: But they rejected this offered grace. He would have been the rock of their safety, where they should have found refuge from the fiery threatenings of the broken law, and the majesty of an offended God: The Father himself hath appointed him for this kind office to repenting sinners; and, perhaps, he gave *Moses* a type or emblem of it, when he commanded himself to hide in the clefts of the rock, to secure him from destruction, while the burning blaze of his glory passed by, *Exod. xxxiii. 22.* And *Isaiab* the prophet had foretold, that this *Jesus* should be as "the shadow of a great rock," *Isai. xxxii. 2.* to shelter them from the beams of the wrath of God; but they refused this blessing, they renounced this refuge; and now they find there is no other rock sufficient to become a shelter from the stroke of his almighty arm, or a sufficient shadow from the burning vengeance.

Sinners, who once over-rated their flesh and blood, and loved it with infinite fondness, who treated their fleshly appetites with excessive nicety and elegance, and affected a humorous delicacy in every thing round about them, and would now gladly creep into the mouldy caverns of the rocks, they would be glad to hide, and defile themselves in the dark and noisome grotto's of the earth, and squeeze their bodies into the rough and narrow clefts, to shield themselves from the indignation of him that sits upon the throne, and of the lamb.

Those, who once were so tender of this mortal life and limbs, and could not think of bearing the least hardship for the sake of virtue and piety, are now wishing to have those delicate limbs of their's crushed by the fall of rocks and mountains: They wish earnestly to have their lives and their souls destroyed for ever, and their whole natures buried in desolation and death, if they might but avoid the eternal agonies and torments that are prepared for them. Now they long for caverns and graves to hide them for ever from the justice of God, whose authority they have despised, and from the wrath of a Saviour, whose mercy they have impiously renounced.

"Look forward, Oh my soul, to this awful and dreadful hour; survey this tremendous scene of confusion, when sinners shall run counter to all their former principles and wishes, and pass a quite different judgment upon their sinful delights from what they were wont to do in the days of this life of vanity. Learn, Oh my soul, to judge of things more agreeable to the appearances of that day: Never canst thou set the flattering pleasures of sense, and the joys of sin, in a truer and juster view, than in the light of this glorious and tremendous judgment."

Reflexion III. "How great and dreadful must the distress of creatures be, when they cannot bear to see the face of God, their creator?" How terrible must be the circumstances of the sons of men, when they cannot endure to see the face of the Son of God, but would fain hide themselves from the sight under rocks and mountains? How wretched must their state be, who avoid the face of the blessed God with horror, which the holy angels ever behold with most intense delight, and which the saints rejoice in as their highest happiness? It is their heaven to see God, and behold the glory of his Son *Jesus*, *Matth. v. 8. John xvii. 24.* But this is the very hell of sinners in that dismal hour, and will fill their souls with such inexpressible anguish, that they call to the rocks and mountains, to hide them from the sight. Dreadful and deplorable is their case indeed, who cannot endure to see the countenance of *Jesus*, the Son of God, *Jesus* the Saviour of men, the copy of the Father's glory, and the image of his beauty and love. They cannot bear to see, that *Jesus*, who is

the chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely; they fly from that blessed countenance, which is the ornament and the joy of all the holy and happy creation: That blessed countenance is become the terror and confusion of impenitent and guilty rebels.

“And what shall I do, if I should be found among this criminal number in that great day? If I look at the wisdom and the righteousness of God, these will reflect the keenest rays of horror and anguish upon my soul, for it is that wisdom and that righteousness that have joined to prepare the salvation which I have rejected, and, therefore, now that wise and righteous God seeth it proper and necessary, to punish me with everlasting sorrows. If I look at the power of God, it is a dreadful sight: Eternal and almighty power, that can break through rocks and mountains to inflict vengeance upon the guilty, and stands engaged by his honour to break my rebellious spirit with unknown torments. If I look at his goodness or his love, it is love and goodness that I have despised and abused, and it is now changed into divine fury. If I look at the face of *Jesus*, and find there the correspondent features of his Father, I shall then hate to see it — for this very reason, because it bears his Father’s image, who is so terrible to my thoughts. I shall neither be able to bear the sight of God, or of his fairest copy, that is, *Jesus* his Son, because I am so shamefully unlike them both, and besides, I have affronted their majesty, and despised their mercy.

“How painful and smarting will be the reflexion of my heart in that day, when I shall remember, that *Jesus* called out to me from heaven, by the messengers of his grace, and said, “Behold me, behold me, look unto me from the ends of the earth, and be saved,” *Isai.* xlv. 22. But now he is armed with a commission of vengeance, and he strikes terror and exquisite pain into my soul with every frown, so that I shall wish to be for ever hid from the face of the lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to endure this wrath, to stand before his thunder, or bear the lightening of this day? Alas, how miserable must I be, by an everlasting necessity, if I cannot bear the countenance of God and *Christ*, which is the spring of unchangeable happiness to all the saints and the blessed angels? Oh may I timely secure the love of my God, and gain an interest in the favour and salvation of the blessed *Jesus*! Here, Oh Lord, at thy foot I lay down all the weapons of my former rebellions; I implore thy love through the interest of thy Son, the great mediator: Let me see the light of thy countenance, and the smiles of thy face: Let me see a reconciled God, and let him tell me, that my sins are all forgiven; then shall I not be afraid to meet the countenance of him that sits upon the throne, or the lamb, when *Christ* shall return from heaven to punish the impenitent rebels against divine grace.”

Reflexion IV. “How hopeless, as well as distressed, is the case of sinners in that day, when they are driven to this last extremity, to seek help from the rocks and the mountains?” It is the last, but the fruitless refuge of a frightened and perishing creature: The rocks and mountains refuse to help them; they will not crush to death those wretches, whom the justice of God has doomed to a painful immortality, nor will they conceal, or shelter those obstinate rebels, whom the Son of God has raised out of their graves, to be exposed to public shame and punishment. Those high and hollow rocks, those dismal dens and caverns dark as midnight, those deep and gloomy retreats of melancholy and sorrow, which they shunned with utmost aversion, and could hardly bear to think of them without horror, here on earth, are now become their only retreat and shelter; but it is a very vain and hopeless one.

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“When I see such awful appearances in nature, huge and lofty rocks hanging over my head, and at every step of my approach, they seem to nod upon me with overwhelming ruin, when my curiosity searches far into their hollow clefts, their dark and deep caverns of solitude and desolation, methinks while I stand amongst them, I can hardly think myself in safety, and, at best, they give a sort of solemn and dreadful delight: Let me improve the scene to religious purposes, and raise a divine meditation. Am I one of those wretches, who shall call to these huge impending rocks to fall upon me? Am I that guilty and miserable creature, who shall entreat these mountains to cover me from him that sits on the throne, and the lamb? Am I prepared to meet the countenance of the blessed *Jesus*, the judge in that day? Have I such an acquaintance with the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, such a holy faith in his mediation, such a sincere love to him, and such an unfeigned repentance of all my sins, that I can look upon him as my friend and my refuge, and a friend infinitely better than rocks and mountains, for he not only screens me from the divine anger, but introduces me into the Father's love, and places me in his blissful presence for ever?”

Reflexion V. “What hideous and everlasting mischief is contained in the nature of sin, especially sin against the gospel of *Christ*, against the methods of grace, and the offers of salvation, which exposes creatures to such extreme distress?” The fairest and the most flattering iniquity, what beautiful colours soever it may put on in the hour of temptation, yet it carries all this hidden mischief and terror in the bosom of it, for it frights the creature from the sight of his creator, and his Saviour, and makes him fly to every vain refuge. *Adam* and *Eve*, the parents of our race, when they lost their innocence, and became criminals, fled from the presence of God, whom they conversed with before in holy friendship. *Gen.* iii. 8. “They hid themselves among the trees of paradise,” and the thickest shadows of the garden; but the eye and the voice of God reached them there: The curse found them out, though that was a curse allayed with the promised blessing of a Saviour. Guilt will work in the conscience, and tell us, that God is angry, and the next thought is, “Where shall I hide myself from an angry God?” But when the mercy of God has taught us where we may hide our selves, even under the shadow of the cross of his Son, and we refuse to make him our refuge, there remains nothing but a final horror of soul, and a hopeless address to rocks and mountains to hide us from an offended God, and a provoked Saviour.

“Whensoever, Oh my soul, thou shalt find or feel some flattering iniquity alluring thy senses, making court to thy heart, and ready to gain upon thy inward wishes, remember the distress and terror of heart that sinners must undergo in the great and terrible day of the Lord. Think of the rocks and mountains which they vainly call upon to befriend them, to shield them from the vengeance of that almighty arm, which is provoked by sin to make his creatures miserable. Remember, O my soul, and fear; remember, and resist the vile temptation, and stand afar off from that practice which will make thee afraid to see the face of God.”

Reflexion VI. “Of what infinite importance is it then to sinners to gain a humble acquaintance and friendship with the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, that we may be able, with comfort, to behold the face of him that sits on the throne in that day.” Which of us can say, “I am not a sinner, I am not guilty before God?” And which of us then has the courage and hardness to declare, “I have no need of a Saviour?” And is there any one amongst us, who hath not yet fled for refuge to *Jesus*, our only and sufficient hope? There is a protection provided

against a provoked God, but there is none against a neglected and abused Saviour: I mean, where this neglect and abuse is final and unrepented. "Oh, how solicitous should every soul be in a matter of this divine moment, this everlasting importance? What words of compassion shall we use, what words of awakening terror, to put sinners in mind of their extreme danger, if they neglect the only security which the gospel has appointed? What language of fear and importunity shall we make use of, to hasten you, Oh sinners, to the acquaintance, the faith and the love of *Jesus*, the Saviour, that you may behold his face, and the face of the Father, with serenity and joy, in the last day? Give your selves up to him then without further delay, as your teacher, your high-priest, your reconciler, your Lord and king. His blessed offices are the only chambers of protection, when God shall arise to burn the world, and to avenge himself on his enemies that will not be reconciled."

Reflexion VII. Let us take occasion from my text, also, to meditate on the "happy circumstances of true christians, in that day of terror:" Behold, the judge appears, he cometh in the clouds surrounded with armies of avenging angels, the ministers of his indignation; he rideth on a chariot of flaming fire, the earth, with all it's mountains, melt like wax, at the presence of the Lord, the fields and the forests become one spacious blaze, the sea grows dry, and forsakes it's shores, and rivers flee away at his lightening; the rocks are broken and shivered, at the appearance of his majesty, the tombs are thrown open, and with terrible dismay shall the graves give up their dead; the pyramids of brick and stone moulder and sink into dust, the sepulchres of brass and marble yield up their royal prisoners, and all the captives of death awake, and start into life, at the voice of the Son of God. Amidst all these scenes of surprize and horror, with how serene a countenance, and how peaceful a soul do the saints awake from their beds of earth? Calm and serene, among all these confusions, they arise from their long slumber, and go to meet their returning Saviour and their friend. They have seen him in the glass of his gospel, submitted to his laws, and rejoiced in his grace, and they now delight to see him face to face in his glory. They have seen him vested with his commission of mercy, they have heard and received his message of goodness and love, and they cannot but rejoice to see him coming to fulfil his last promises. They have cheerfully subjected themselves to his government here on earth, they have followed him in paths of holiness through the wilderness of this world, and what remains but that they be publicly acknowledged by *Jesus*, the judge of all, and follow him up to the place of blessedness, which he hath prepared for them.

Perhaps, some of these holy ones, in the days of the flesh, were banished from the cities, and the societies of men, for the sake of *Christ*, they were driven out from their native towns, and forced to seek a shelter in solitary "dens and caves, among rocks and mountains, to wander through deserts in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented," *Heb. xi. 31.* they made the clefts of the rock, and caverns of the earth, their refuge from the face of their cruel persecutors: The mountains and rocks sheltered them from the wrath of princes, and the dark grotto's of the earth, and the dens of wild beasts concealed them from the rage of men, from the sword of the mighty; but now the scene is gloriously changed, the martyrs and holy confessors, awaking from their graves, exult and triumph in the smiles of their judge, and receive public honours before the whole creation of God. They behold the infinite consternation of haughty tyrants and persecuting princes, of proud generals and bloody captains in that day: They hear them "call to rocks and mountains, to hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and the lamb."

The



The authority, and regal honour of the emperors of the earth, hath long slept in the dust, but it is lost there for ever; their glory shall not awake, nor arise with them: Behold the mighty sinners, who have been the enemies of *Christ*, or negligent of his salvation, how they creep affrighted out of their shattered marbles, and leave all that pomp and pride of death in ruins, to appear before God with shame and everlasting contempt. The men of arms, the captains and sons of valour, whose swords lay under their heads, with their trophies and titles spread around them, shall raise their heads up from the dust with utmost affright and anguish of spirit: Their courage fails them before the face of *Jesus*, the Lord and judge of the whole creation. They would fly to the common refuge of slaves, they shrink into the holes of the rocks, and call to the mountains to screen and protect them: "And every bond-man, and every free-man," who have not known, nor loved God and *Christ*, are plunged into extremest distress; but the humble christian is serene and joyful, and lifts up his head, with courage and delight, in the midst of these scenes of astonishment and dismay.

"He is come, he is come, saith the faint, even that Lord *Jesus*, whom I have seen, whom I have known, and loved in the days of my mortal life, whom I have long waited for in the dust of death; he is come to reward all my labours, to wipe away all my sorrows, to finish my faith, and turn it into sight, to fulfil all my hopes, and his own promises; he is come to deliver me for ever from all my enemies, and to bear me to the place which he has prepared for those that love him, and long for his appearance.

"O blessed be the God of grace, who hath convinced me of the sins of my nature, and the sins of my life in the days of my flesh; who hath discovered to me the danger of a guilty and sinful state, hath shewn me the commission of mercy in the hands of his Son, hath pointed me to the lamb of God, who was offered as a sacrifice to take away the sins of men, and hath inclined me to receive him in all his divine characters and offices, and to follow the captain of my salvation through all the labours and dangers of life. I have trusted in him, I have loved him, I have endeavoured, though under many frailties, to honour and obey him, and I can now behold his face without terror: While the mighty men of the earth tremble with amazement, and call to the rocks and mountains to hide them from his face, I rejoice to see him in his robes of judgment, for he is come to pronounce me righteous, in the face of men and angels, to declare me a good and faithful servant before the whole creation, to set the crown of victory on my head, to take me to heaven with him, that "where he is, I may be also, to behold his glory," *John xvii. 24.* and to partake for ever of the blessings of his love." Amen.

## D I C O U R S E VII.

## No night in heaven.

R E V. xxi. 25.

*— For there shall be no night there.*

**L**ENGTH of night, and over-spreading darkness in the winter-season, carries so many inconveniencies with it, that it is generally esteemed a most uncomfortable part of our time. Though night and day necessarily succeed each other all the year, by the wise appointment of God in the course of nature, by means of the revolution of the heavenly bodies, or rather of this earthly globe, yet the night-season is neither so delightful, nor so useful a part of life, as the duration of day-light. It is the voice of all nature, as well as the word of *Solomon*, “Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing to enjoy the sun-beams,” *Eccles. xi. 7.* Light gives a glory and beauty to every thing that is visible, and shews the face of nature in it’s most agreeable colours; but night, as it covers all the visible world with one dark and undistinguishing vail, is less pleasing to all the animal parts of the creation. Therefore as hell, and the place of punishment, is called utter darkness in scripture, so heaven is represented as a mansion of glory, as the “inheritance of the saints in light,” *Col. i. 12.* And this light is constant, without interruption, and everlasting, or without end. So my text expresses it, “there shall be no night there.”

Let it be observed, that, in the language of the holy writers, light is often ascribed to intellectual beings, and is used as a metaphor to imply knowledge and holiness and joy. Knowledge, as the beauty and excellency of the mind, holiness as the best regulation of the will, and joy as the harmony of our best affections in the possession of what we love: And, in opposition to these, ignorance, iniquity, and sorrow, are represented by the metaphor of darkness. Then we are in darkness, in a spiritual sense, when the understanding is beclouded, or led into mistake, or when the will is perverted or turned away from God and holiness, or when the most uncomfortable affections prevail in the soul. I might cite particular texts of scripture to exemplify all this. And when it is said, “there shall be no night in heaven,” it may be very well applied in the spiritual sense; there shall be no errors or mistakes amongst the blessed, no such ignorance as to lead them astray, or to make them uneasy; the will shall never be turned aside from it’s pursuit of holiness and obedience to God; nor shall the affections ever be ruffled with any thing that may administer grief and pain. Clear and unerring knowledge, unspotted holiness, and everlasting joy shall be the portion of all the inhabitants of the upper world. These are more common subjects of discourse.

But I chuse rather at present to consider this word, NIGHT, in it’s literal sense, and shall endeavour to represent part of the blessedness of the heavenly state under this special description of it. “There is no night there.”

Now,

Now, in order to pursue this design, let us take a brief survey of the several evils or inconveniences, which attend the night, or the season of darkness here on earth, and shew how far the heavenly world is removed, and free from all manner of inconvenience of this kind.

1. Though night be the season of sleep, for the relief of nature, and for our refreshment after the labours of the day, yet it is a certain sign of the weakness and weariness of nature, when it wants such refreshments, and such dark seasons of relief. But there is no night in heaven. "Say, O ye inhabitants of that vital world, are ye ever weary? Do your natures know any such weakness? Or are your holy labours of such a kind, as to expose you to fatigue, or to tire your spirits?" "The blessed above mount up towards God as on eagles wings, they run at the command of God, and are not weary, they walk on the hills of paradise, and never faint," as the prophet *Isaiab* expresses a vigorous and pleasurable state, chapter xl. 31.

There are no such animal bodies in heaven, whose natural springs of action can be exhausted or weakened by the business of the day: There is no flesh and blood there to complain of weariness, and to want rest. O blessed state, where our faculties shall be so happily suited to our work, that we shall never feel our selves weary of it, nor fatigued by it.

And as there is no weariness, so there is no sleeping there. Sleep was not made for the heavenly state. Can the spirits of the just ever sleep under the full blaze of divine glory, under the incessant communications of divine love, under the perpetual influences of the grace of God the Father, and of *Jesus* the Saviour, and amidst the inviting confluence of every spring of blessedness.

2. Another inconvenience of night, near a-kin to the former, is, that business is interrupted by it, partly for want of light to perform it, as well as for want of strength and spirits to pursue it. This is constantly visible in the successions of labour and repose here on earth; and the darkness of the night is appointed to interrupt the course of labour, and the business of the day, that nature may be recruited. But the business of heaven is never interrupted; there is everlasting light, and everlasting strength. "Say, ye blessed spirits on high, who join in the services which are performed for God, and the lamb there; ye who unite all your powers in the worship and homage that is paid to the Father, and to the Son; ye that mingle in all the joyful conversation of that divine and holy assembly, say, is there found any useless hour there? Do your devotions, your duties and your joys, ever suffer such an entire interruption of rest and silence, as the season of darkness on earth necessarily creates amongst the inhabitants of our world?"

The living creatures\* which are represented by *John* the apostle in *Rev. iv. 6—8.* whether they signify saints or angels, yet they were "full of eyes that never slumber; they rest not day nor night; this is spoken in the language of mortals, to signify, that they are never interrupted by any change of seasons, or intervening darkness, in the honours they pay to God: They are described as ever saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." And the same sort of expression is used concerning the saints in heaven. *Rev. vii. 14, 15.* "They who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb, they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple;" that is, they constantly serve or worship him in his holy temple in heaven. Perhaps, the different orders and ranks of them, in a continual succe-

\* The word ζῴα, which is translated "beasts," signifies only "animals," or "living creatures," and does not carry with it so mean and so disagreeable an idea as the word "beasts" in english.

succession, are ever doing some honours to God. As there is no night there, so there is no cessation of their services, their worship, and their holy exercises, in one form or another, throughout the duration of their being.

Our pleasures here on earth are short-lived: If they are intense, nature cannot bear them long, any more than constant business and labour: And if our labours and our pleasures should happily join, and mingle here on earth, which is not always the case, yet night compels us to break off the pleasing labour, and we must rest from the most delightful business. Happy is that region on high, where business and pleasure are for ever the same among all the inhabitants of it, and there is no pause, or entire cessation of the one or the other. "Tell me, ye warm and lively christians, when your hearts are sweetly and joyfully engaged in the worship of God, in holy conversation, or in any pious services here on earth, how often you have been forced to break off these celestial entertainments by the returning night. But in the heavenly state there is everlasting active service with everlasting delight and satisfaction."

In that blessed world there can be no idleness, no inactivity, no trifling intervals to pass away time, no vacant or empty spaces in eternal life. Who can be idle under the immediate eye of God? Who can trifle in the presence of *Christ*? Who can neglect the pleasurable work of heaven under the sweet influences of the present Deity, and under the smiles of his countenance, who approves all their work and worship.

3. As in our present world, the hours of night are unactive, if we sleep, so they seem long and tedious, when our eyes are wakeful, and sleep flies from us. Perhaps we hear the clock strike one hour after another, with wearisome longings for the next succeeding hour: We wish the dark season at an end, and we long for the approach of morning, we grow impatient for the dawning of the day. But in heaven, "ye spirits, who have dwelt longest there, can ye remember one tiresome or tedious hour, through all the years of your residence in that country? Is there not eternal wakefulness among all the blessed? Can any of you ever indulge a slumber? Can you sleep in heaven? Can you want it, or wish for it? No, for that world is all vital, and sprightly for ever." When we leave this flesh and blood, farewell to all the tedious measures of time, farewell tiresome darkness; our whole remaining duration is life and light, vital activity and vigour, attended with everlasting holiness and joy.

4. While we are here on earth the darkness of the night often exposes us to the danger of losing our way, of wandering into confusion, or falling into mischief. When the sun-beams have withdrawn their light, and midnight clouds over-spread the heaven, we cannot see our path before us, we cannot pursue our proper course, nor secure our selves from stumbling. How many travellers have been betrayed by the thick shadows of the night into mistaken ways, or pathless deserts, into endless mazes among thorns and briars, into bogs and pits and precipices, into sudden destruction and death? But there are no dangers of this kind in the heavenly world: All the regions of paradise are for ever illuminated by the glory of God: The light of his countenance shines upon every step that we shall take, and brightens all our way. We shall walk in the light of God, and under the blessed beams of the sun of righteousness, and we are secured for ever against wandering, and against every danger of tripping or falling in our course. "Our feet may stumble on the dark mountains here below," *Jer. xiii. 16.* but there is no stumbling-block on the hills of paradise, nor can we go astray from our God, or our duty. The paths of that country

are

are all pleasure, and ever-living day-light shines upon them without end. Happy beings, who dwell or travel there!

5. In the night we are exposed here on earth to the violence and plunder of wicked men, whether we are abroad, or at home. There is scarce any safety now a-days to those who travel in the night, and even in our own habitations there is frequent fear and surprize. At that season the sons of mischief "dig through houses in the dark which they had marked for themselves in the day-time: They lurk in corners to seize the innocent, and to rob him of his possessions." But, in the heavenly world, there is no dark hour; there is nothing that can encourage such mischievous designs; nor are any of the sons of violence, or the malicious powers of darkness suffered to have an abode or refuge in that country. No surprize nor fear belongs to the inhabitants of those regions. Happy souls, who spend all their life in the light of the countenance of God, and are for ever secure from the plots and mischievous devices of the wicked!

While we dwell here below amongst the changing seasons of light and darkness, what daily care is taken to shut the doors of our dwellings against the men of mischief? What solicitude in a time of war to keep the gates of our towns and cities well secured against all invasion of enemies? *Cantic. iii. 8.* "Every man with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night." But, in that blessed world, there is no need of such defences; no such guardian cares to secure the inhabitants. "The gates of that city shall not be shut by day, and there is no night there." There shines perpetual day-light, and the gates are ever open to receive newcomers from our world, or for the conveyance of orders and messages to and from the throne, through all the dominions of God, and of the lamb. Blessed are the inhabitants of that country, where there are no dangers arising from any of the wicked powers of darkness, nor any dark minute to favour their plots of mischief.

6. "The time of night and darkness is the time of the concealment of secret sins." Shameful iniquities are then practised amongst men, because the darkness is a cover to them. "The eye of the adulterer watches for the twilight, saying, no eye shall see me." *Job. xxiv. 15.* "In the black and dark night he hopes for concealment as well as the thief and the murderer, and they that are drunken, are drunken in the night, *1 Thes. v. 7.*" The hours of darkness are a temptation to these iniquities, and the shadows of the evening are a vail to cover them from the sight of men: They find a screen behind the curtains of the night, and a refuge in thick darkness. But, in the heavenly world, there is no temptation to such iniquities, no defilement can gain an entrance there, nor could it find any vail or covering. The regions of light, and peace, and holy love, are never violated with such scenes of villany and guilt. No secret sins can be committed there, nor can they hope for any screen to defend them from the eye of God, and the lamb, whose eyes are like a flame of fire. The light of God shines round every creature in that country, and there is not a saint or angel there, that desires a covering from the sight of God, nor would accept of a vail or screen to interpose between him, and the lovely glories of divine holiness and grace. To behold God, and to live under the blessings of his eye is their everlasting and chosen joy. O that our world were more like it!

7. When the night returns upon us here on earth, the pleasures of sight vanish and are lost. Knowledge is shut out at one entrance, in a great degree, and one of

our senses is with-held from the spreading beauties and glories of this lower creation, almost as though we were deprived of it, and were grown blind for a season.

It is true, the God of nature has appointed the moon and stars to relieve the darkness, at some seasons, that when the sun is withdrawn, half the world, at those hours may not be in confusion: And, by the inventions of men, we are furnished with lamps and candles to relieve our darkness within doors: But if we stir abroad, in the black and dark night, instead of the various and delightful scenes of the creation of God, in the skies and the fields, we are presented with an universal blank of nature, and one of the great entertainments and satisfactions, of this life, is quite taken away from us. But, in heaven, the glories of that world are for ever in view: The beautiful scenes and prospects of the hills of paradise are never hidden: We shall there continually behold a rich variety of "things which eye hath not seen on earth, which ear hath not heard, and which the heart of man hath not conceived." 1 Cor. ii. 9. Say, ye souls in paradise, ye inhabitants of that glorious world, is there any loss of pleasure by your absence from those works of God, which are visible here on earth, while you are for ever entertained with those brighter works of God in the upper world? While every corner of that country is enlightened by the glory of God himself, and while the Son of God, with all his beams of grace, shines for ever upon it?

8. It is another displeasing circumstance of the night season, that it is the coldest part of time. When the sun is sunk below the earth and its beams are hidden from us, its kindly and vital heat as well as its light, are removed from one side of the globe; and this gives a sensible uneasiness in the hours of midnight to those, who are not well provided with warm accommodations.

And, I might add also, it is too often night with us in a spiritual sense, while we dwell here on earth: Our hearts are cold as well as dark: How seldom do we feel that fervency of spirit in religious duties which God requires? How cool is our love to the greatest and the best of beings? How languid and indifferent are our affections to the Son of God, the chiefest of ten thousand and altogether lovely? And how much doth the devotion of our souls want its proper ardour and vivacity.

But, when the soul is arrived at heaven, we shall be all warm and fervent in our divine and delightful work. As there shall be nothing painful to the senses in that blessed climate, so there shall not be one cold heart there, nor so much as one lukewarm worshipper; for we shall live under the immediate rays of God, who formed the light, and under the kindest influences of *Jesus*, the sun of righteousness. We shall be made like his angels, who are most active spirits, and his ministers, who are flames of fire." *Psal.* civ. 4. Nor shall any dullness or indifferency hang upon our sanctified powers and passions: They shall be all warm and vigorous in their exercise, amidst the holy enjoyments of that country.

In the ninth and last place, as night is the season appointed for sleep, so it becomes a constant periodical emblem of death, as it returns every evening. Sleep and midnight, as I have shewn before, are no seasons of labour or activity, nor of delight in the visible things of this world: It is a dark and stupid scene, wherein we behold nothing with truth, though we are sometimes deceived and deluded by dreaming visions and vanities: Night and the slumbers of it are a sort of shorter death and burial, interposed between the several daily scenes and transactions of human life. But, in heaven, as there is no sleeping, there is no dying, nor is there any thing  
there

there, that looks like death. Sleep, the image or emblem of death, is for ever banished from that world. All is vital activity there: Every power is immortal, and every thing that dwells there is for ever alive. There can be no death, nor the image of it, where the ever-living God, dwells, and shines with his kindest beams: His presence maintains perpetual vitality in every soul, and keeps the new creature in it's youth and vigour for ever. The saints shall never have reason to mourn over their withering graces, languid virtues or dying comforts; nor shall they ever complain of drowsy faculties or unactive powers, where God and the lamb are for ever present in the midst of them. Shall I invite your thoughts to dwell a little upon this subject?

[Here this discourse may be divided.]

Shall we make a more particular enquiry, whence it comes to pass that there is no night nor darkness in the heavenly city? We are told a little before the words of my text, that the glory of God enlightens it, and the lamb is the light thereof. There is no need of the sun by day, or of the moon by night; there is no need of any such change of seasons as day and night in the upper regions, nor any such alternate enlighteners of a dark world, as God has place in our firmament, or in this visible sky. The inheritance of the saints, in light, is sufficiently irradiated by God himself, who at his first call made the light spring up out of darkness over a wide chaos of confusion, before the sun and moon appeared; and the beams of divine light, grace and glory, are communicated from God, the original fountain of it, by the lamb to all the inhabitants of the heavenly country. It was by *Jesus*, his Son that God made the light at first, and by him he conveys it to all the happy worlds.

There is no doubt of this in the present heaven of saints departed from flesh, who are ascended "to the spirits of the just made perfect." It is one of their privileges that they go to dwell, not only where they see the face of God, but where they behold the glory of *Christ*, and converse with "*Jesus*, the mediator of the new covenant," *Heb.* xii. 23, 24. and are "for ever with the Lord who redeemed them." *2 Cor.* v. 8. Since his mediatorial kingdom and offices are not yet finished in the present heaven of separate souls, we may depend on this blessedness to be communicated through *Christ*, the lamb of God, and all the spiritual enjoyments and felicities, which are represented under the metaphor of light, are conveyed to them through *Jesus*, the mediator.

The sun, in the natural world, is a bright emblem of divinity, or the godhead; for it is the spring of all light and heat and life to the creation. It is by the influences of the sun that herbs, plants and animals are produced in their proper seasons, and in all their various beauties, and they are all refreshed and supported by it. Now if we should suppose this vast globe of fire, which we call the sun, to be inclosed in a huge hollow sphere of chrystal, which should temper it's rays like a transparent vail, and give milder and gentler influences to the burning beams of it, and yet transmit every desirable and useful portion of light or heat, this would be a happy emblem of the man "*Christ Jesus*, in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily," *Col.* ii. 9. It is the lamb of God, who, in a mild and gracious manner, conveys the blessings originally derived from God, his Father, to all the saints. We partake of them in our measure in this lower world, among his churches here

on earth; but it is with a nobler influence, and in a more sublime degree, the blessings of paradise are diffused through all the mansions of glory, by this illustrious medium of conveyance, *Jesus*, the Son of God; and there can be no night nor coldness, death nor darkness in this happy state of separate souls.

When the bodies of the saints shall be raised again, and re-united to their proper spirits, when they shall ascend to the place of their final heaven, and supreme happiness, we know not what manner of bodies they shall be, what sort of senses they shall be furnished with, nor how many powers of conversing with the corporeal world shall be bestowed upon them. Whether they shall have such organs of sensation as eyes and ears, and stand in need of such light as we derive from the sun or moon, is not absolutely certain. The scripture tells us, it shall not be a body of flesh and blood: These are not materials refined enough for the heavenly state; "that which is corruptible cannot inherit incorruption." *1 Cor. xv. 50.* But, this we may be assured of, that whatsoever inlets of knowledge, whatever avenues of pleasure, whatever delightful sensations are necessary to make the inhabitants of that world happy, they shall be all united in that spiritual body, which God will prepare for the new-raised saints. If eyes and ears shall belong to that glorified body, those sensitive powers shall be nobly enlarged and made more delightfully susceptible of richer shares of knowledge and joy.

Or, what if we shall have that body furnished with such unknown mediums or organs of sensation, as shall make light and sound such as we here partake of, unnecessary to us? These organs shall certainly be such as shall transcend all the advantages that we receive, in this present state, from sounds or sun-beams. There shall be no disconsolate darkness, nor any tiresome silence there. There shall be no night to interrupt the business, or the pleasures of that everlasting day.

Or, what if the whole body shall be endued all over with the senses of seeing and hearing? What if these sort of sensations shall be diffused throughout all that immortal body, as feeling is diffused through all our present mortal flesh? What if God himself shall, in a more illustrious manner, irradiate all the powers of the body and spirit, and communicate the light of knowledge, holiness and joy in a superior manner to what we can now conceive or imagine? This is certain, that darkness in every sense, with all the inconveniencies and unhappy consequences of it, is and must be for ever banished from the heavenly state. There is no night there.

When our Lord *Jesus Christ* shall have given up his mediatorial kingdom to the Father, and have presented all his saints spotless and without blemish before his throne, it is hard for us mortals in the present state to say, how far he shall be the everlasting medium of the communication of divine blessings to the happy inhabitants on high. Yet when we consider that the saints and angels and the whole happy creation are gathered together in him, as their head\*, it is certain they shall all be accounted in some sense his members; and it is highly probable he as their head, shall be for ever active in communicating and diffusing the unknown blessings of that world, amongst all the inhabitants of it, who are gathered and united in him.

I come in the last place to make a few remarks upon the foregoing discourse, and in order to render them more effectual for our spiritual advantage, I shall consider

\* The greek word *ἀνακεφαλαίω*, used in *Eph. i. 10.* favours this meaning, and perhaps *Col. i. 20.* includes the same thing.



consider the words of my text, “there shall be no night there, in their metaphorical or spiritual meaning, as well as in their literal sense. There is no night of ignorance or error in the mind, no night of guilt or of sorrow in the soul: But the blessed above shall dwell surrounded with the light of divine knowledge, they shall walk in the light of holiness, and they shall be for ever filled with the light of consolation and joy, as I have explained it at the beginning of this discourse.

The first remark then is this. “When heaven, earth and hell are compared together with relation to light and darkness, or night and day,” we then see them in their proper distinctions and aspects. Every thing is set in it’s most distinguishing situation and appearance, when it is compared with things which are most opposite.

The earth, on which we dwell, during this state of trial, has neither all day nor all night belonging to it, but sometimes light appears, and again darkness, whether in a natural or a spiritual sense.

Though there be long seasons of darkness in the winter, and darkness, in the summer also, in it’s constant returns, divides one day from another, yet the God of nature hath given us a larger portion of light than there is of darkness throughout the whole globe of the earth: And this benefit we receive by the remaining beams of the sun after it’s setting, and by the assistance of the moon and the stars of heaven. Blessed be God for the moon and stars, as well as for the sun-beams and the brightness of noon. Blessed be God for all the lights of nature, but we still bless him more for the light of the gospel, and for any rays from heaven, any beams of the sun of righteousness, which diffuse, in lower measures, knowledge and holiness and comfort, among the inhabitants of this our world. God is here manifesting his love and grace in such proportions as he thinks proper. Some beams of the heavenly world break out upon us here in this dark region. God the spring of all our light, and the lamb of God by his spirit communicates sufficient light to us, to guide us on in our way to that heavenly country.

In hell there is all night and darkness, thick darkness in every sense, for the God of glory is absent there, as to any manifestations of his face and favour. And, therefore, it is often called “outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. There is no holiness, there is no comfort, there are no benefits of the creation, no blessings of grace; all are forfeited and gone for ever. It is everlasting night and blackness of darkness in that world: Horror of soul without a beam of refreshment from the face of God, or the lamb for ever. The devils are now “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day.” *Jude* verse 6. But then their confinement shall be closer, and their darkness, guilt and sorrow shall be more overwhelming. Is it lawful for me in this place to mention the description which *Milton*, our english poet, gives of their wretched habitation?

“ A dungeon horrible on all sides round  
As one great furnace flam’d; yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible  
Serv’d only to discover sights of woe;  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,  
That comes to all: But torture without end

Still

Still urges, and a fiery deluge fed  
 With ever-burning sulphur unconsum'd.  
 Such place eternal justice had prepar'd  
 For rebel-angels? here their pris'n ordain'd  
 In utter darkness, and their portion set  
 As far remov'd from, God and light of heaven,  
 As from the center thrice to th' utmost pole.

To this the poet adds,

O how unlike the place from whence they fell!"

How unlike to that heaven, which I have been describing, in which there is no night; and all the evils of darkness, in every sense, are for ever secluded from that happy region, where knowledge, holiness and joy are all inseparable and immortal.

Remark. II. "What light of every kind we are made partakers of here on earth, let us use it with holy thankfulness, with zeal and religious improvement." Hereby we may be assisted and animated to travel on through the mingled stages and scenes of light and darkness in this world, till we arrive at the inheritance of the saints in perfect light. It is a glorious blessing to this dark world, that the light of christianity is added to the light of judaism and the light of nature; and that the law of *Moses* and the gospel of *Christ*, are set before us, in this nation, in their distinct views, on purpose to make our way to happiness more evident and easy. May the song of *Moses*, and the song of the lamb be sung in our land! But let us never rest satisfied till the light that is let into our minds become a spring of divine life within us, a life of knowledge, holiness and comfort. Let us not be found amongst the number of those who when "light is come into the world, love darkness rather than light, lest we fall under their condemnation." *John* iii. 19. Let us never rest till we see the evidences of the children of God wrought in us with power; till the "day spring that has visited us from on high" has entered into our spirits, and refined and moulded them into the divine image; till we who are by nature all darkness are made light in the Lord.

O what a blessed change does the converting grace of *Christ* make in the soul of a son or daughter of *Adam*? It is like the beauty and pleasure which the rising morning diffuses over the face of the earth, after a night of storm and darkness: It is so much of heaven let into all the chambers of the soul: It is then only that we begin to know our selves aright, and know God in his most awful and most lovely manifestations: It is in this light, we see the hateful evil of every sin, the beauty of holiness, the worth of the gospel of *Christ*, and of his salvation. It is a light that carries divine heat and life with it; it renews all the powers of the spirit, and introduces holiness, hope and joy, in the room of folly and guilt, sin, darkness and sorrow.

Remark III. If God has wrought this sacred and divine change in our souls, if we are made the children of light, or if we profess to have felt this change, and hope for an interest in this bright inheritance of the saints, "let us put away all the works of darkness, with hatred and detestation. Let us walk in the light of truth and holiness." *Eph.* v. 8. "Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light." And the apostle repeats his exhortation to the *Thessalonians*.

*Ionians.* “Ye are all children of the light and of the day, and not the sons of night or darkness; therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober; — putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation, for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord *Jesus Christ.* 1 *Thess.* v. 5 — 9.

To animate every christian to this holy care and watchfulness, let us think what a terrible disappointment it will be, after we have made a bright profession of christianity in our lives, to lie down in death, in a state of sin and guilt, and to awake in the world of spirits, in the midst of the groans and agonies of hell, surrounded and covered with everlasting darkness. Let our public profession be as illustrious and bright as it will, yet if we indulge works of darkness in secret, night and darkness will be our eternal portion, with the anguish of conscience, and the terrors of the almighty, without one glimpse of hope or relief. It is only those who walk in the light of holiness here, who can be fit to dwell in the presence of a God of holiness hereafter. “Light is sown only for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart;” *Psal.* xcvii. 11. and it shall break out, one day, from amongst the clouds, a glorious harvest; but only the sons and the daughters of light shall taste of the blessed fruits of it.

Think again with your selves when you are tempted to sin and folly, what if I should be cut off, on a sudden, practising the works of darkness, and my soul be summoned into the eternal world, covered with guilt and defilement? Shall I then be fit for the world of light? Will the God of light ever receive me to his dwelling? Do I not hereby render my self unfit company for the angels of light? And what if I should be sent down, to dwell among the spirits of darkness, since I have imitated their sinful manners and obeyed their cursed influences?

O may such thoughts as these dwell upon our spirits with an awful solemnity, and be a perpetual guard against defiling our garments with any iniquity, lest our Lord should come and find us thus polluted. Let us walk onwards in the paths of light which are discovered to us in the word of God, and which are illustrated by his holy ordinances, to guide us through the clouds and shades, which attend us in this wilderness, till our Lord *Jesus* shall come, with all his surrounding glories, and take us to the full possession of the inheritance in light.

Remark IV. “Under our darkest nights, our most unactive and heavy hours, our most uncomfortable seasons here on earth, let us remember we are travelling to a world of light and joy.” If we happen to lie awake, in midnight darkness, and count the tedious hours one after another in a mournful succession, under any of the maladies of nature, or the sorrows of this life, let us comfort ourselves, that we are not shut up in eternal night and darkness without hope, but we are still making our way towards that country, where there is no night, where there is neither sin nor pain, malady nor sorrow.

What if the blessed God is pleased to try us by the with-holding of light from our eyes for a season? What if we are called to seek our duty in dark providences, or are perplexed in deep and difficult controversies, wherein we cannot find the light of truth? What if we “sit in darkness and mourning, and see no light, and the beams of divine consolation are cut off, let us still trust in the name of the Lord, and stay ourselves upon our God, especially as he manifests himself in the lamb that was slain, the blessed medium of his mercy.” *Isai* 1. 10. Let us learn to say with the prophet *Micah*, in the spirit of faith, *Micah* vii. 8, 9. “When I sit

in

in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me ; — he will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold his righteousness."

"Blessed be God, that the night of ignorance, grief or affliction which attends us in this world, is not everlasting night. Heaven and glory are at hand ; wait and watch for the morning star, for *Jesus*, and the resurrection. Roll on apace in your appointed course, ye suns and moons, and all ye twinkling enlighteners of the sky, carry on the changing seasons of light and darkness in this lower world with your utmost speed, till you have finished all my appointed months of continuance here. The light of faith shews me the dawning of that glorious day, which shall finish all my nights and darknesses for ever. Make haste, O delightful morning, and delay not my hopes. Let me hasten, let me arrive at that blessed inheritance, those mansions of paradise, where night is never known, but one eternal day shall make our knowledge, our holiness, and our joy eternal." Amen.

T H E

T H E  
P R E F A C E

T O T H E

Second volume of the octavo edition.

**I**N the first volume of these discourses, I made an introduction to them, by endeavouring to prove, that “ at the departure of the soul from the body by death, the rewards or punishments, that is, the joys or the sorrows of the other world are appointed to commence : And I hope I have there given, from the evidence of scripture, such arguments to support this doctrine, as that the faith of christians may not be staggered and confounded by different opinions, or made to wait for these events, through all the many years that may arise between death and the resurrection.

I know nothing besides this, that is made a matter of controversy in that volume ; and I hope those sermons, and these that follow, by the blessing of God, will be made happily useful to christians, to awaken and warn them against the danger of being seized by death in a state unprepared for the presence of God, and the happiness of heaven, and to raise the comforts and joys of many pious souls in the lively expectation of future blessedness.

The last discourses of this second volume, especially the eternity of the punishments of hell, have been in latter and former years made a matter of dispute ; and were I to pursue my enquiries into this doctrine, only by the aids of the light of nature and reason, I fear my natural tenderness might warp me aside from the rules and the demands of strict justice, and the wise and holy government of the great God.

But as I confine myself almost entirely to the revelation of scripture in all my searches into things of revealed religion and christianity, I am constrained to forget or to lay aside that softness and tenderness of animal nature which might lead me astray, and to follow the unerring dictates of the word of God.

The scripture frequently, and in the plainest and strongest manner, asserts the everlasting punishment of sinners in hell ; and that by all the methods of expression which are used in scripture to signify an everlasting continuance.

God’s utter hatred and aversion to sin, in this perpetual punishment of it, are manifested many ways ; 1. By the just and severe threatenings of the wise and righteous governor of the world, which are scattered up and down in his word. 2. By

Vol. I.

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the veracity of God in his intimations or narratives of past events, as *Jude* verſe 7. “*Sodom and Gomorrah* ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” 3. By his expreſs predictions, *Matt.* xxv. 46. “*Theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment.*” 2 *Thess.* i. 9. “*Who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction;*” and I might add, 4. By the veracity and truth of all his holy prophets and apoſtles, and his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, at the head of them, whom he has ſent to acquaint mankind with the rules of their duty; and the certain judgment of God in a holy correſpondence therewith, and that in ſuch words as ſeem to admit of no way of eſcape, or of hope for the condemned criminals.

I muſt confeſs here, if it were poſſible for the great and bleſſed God any other way to vindicate his own eternal and unchangeable hatred of ſin, the inflexible juſtice of his government, the wiſdom of his ſevere threatenings, and the veracity of his predictions, if it were alſo poſſible for him, without this terrible execution, to vindicate the veracity, ſincerity and wiſdom of the prophets and apoſtles, and *Jeſus Chriſt*, his Son, the greateſt and chiefeſt of his divine meſſengers; and then if the bleſſed God ſhould at any time, in a conſiſtence with his glorious and incomprehenſible perfections, releaſe thoſe wretched creatures from their acute pains and long impriſonment in hell, either with a deſign of the utter deſtruction of their beings by annihilation, or to put them into ſome unknown world, upon a new foot of trial, I think I ought chearfully and joyfully to accept this appointment of God, for the good of millions of my fellow-creatures, and add my joys and praifes to all the ſongs and triumphs of the heavenly world, in the day of ſuch a divine and glorious releaſe of theſe priſoners.

But I feel myſelf under a neceſſity of confeſſing, that I am utterly unable to ſolve theſe difficulties according to the diſcoveries of the new teſtament, which muſt be my conſtant rule of faith, and hope, and expectation, with regard to myſelf and others. I have read the ſtrongeſt and beſt writers on the other ſide, yet after all my ſtudies I have not been able to find any way how theſe difficulties may be removed, and how the divine perfections, and the conduct of God in his word, may be fairly vindicated, without the eſta bliſhment of this doctrine, as awful and formidable as it is.

The ways indeed of the great God, and “his thoughts, are above our thoughts and our ways, as the heavens are above the earth;” *Iſa.* lv. 8, 9. yet I muſt reſt and acquieſce where our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, the Father’s chief miniſter, both of his wrath and his love, has left me in the divine revelations of ſcripture; and I am conſtrained therefore to leave theſe unhappy creatures under the chains of everlaſting darkneſs, into which they have caſt themſelves by their wilful iniquities, till the bleſſed God ſhall ſee fit to releaſe them.

This would be indeed ſuch a new, ſuch an aſtoniſhing and univerſal jubilee, both for devils and wicked men, as muſt fill heaven, earth and hell with hallelujahs and joy: In the mean time it is my ardent wiſh, that this awful ſenſe of the terrors of the almighty, and his everlaſting anger, which the word of the great God denounces, may awaken ſome ſouls timely to bethink themſelves of the dreadful danger into which they are running, before theſe terrors ſeize them at death, and begin to be executed upon them without releaſe and without hope.

D I S-

## DISCOURSE VIII.

## A soul prepared for heaven.

2 COR. V. 5.

*Now be that bath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God.*

**W**HEN this apostle designs to entertain our hope in the noblest manner, and raise our faith to it's highest joys, he generally calls our thoughts far away from all present and visible things, and sends them forward to the great and glorious day, of the resurrection: He points our meditations to take a distant prospect of the final and complete happiness of the saints, in heaven, when their bodies shall be raised shining and immortal; whereas it is but seldom, that he takes notice of the heaven of separate souls, or that part of our future happiness, which commences at the hour of death. But, in this chapter, the holy writer seems to keep both these heavens in his eye, and speaks of that blessedness, which the spirits of the just shall enjoy, in the presence of the Lord, as soon as they are absent from the body, and yet leads our souls onwards also to our last and most perfect state of happiness, which is delayed till our corruptible bodies shall be raised from the dust, and mortality shall be swallowed up in life. "We know, saith he in the first verse of this chapter, we know that as soon as our mortal tabernacle, in which we now dwell, is dissolved, we have a building ready for us in the heavens: that is, an investiture in a glorious state of holiness and immortality, which waits to receive our spirits when we drop this dying flesh: Yet the felicities of this paradise, or first heaven, shall receive an unspeakable addition and advancement, when *Christ* shall come the second time, with all his saints, to complete our salvation."

But which heaven soever we arrive at, whether it be this of the separate state, or that when our bodies shall be restored, still we must be wrought up to a proper fitness for it by God himself; and as the end of this verse tells us, he gives us his own Spirit as an earnest of these future blessings.

The observation which shall be the subject of my discourse, is this: "Those who shall enjoy the heavenly blessedness hereafter, must be prepared for it here in this world, by the operation of the blessed God."

Here we must take notice, in the first place, that since we are sinful and guilty creatures in ourselves, and have forfeited all our pretences to the favour of God and happiness, we must be restored to his favour, we must have our sins forgiven, we must be justified in his sight with an everlasting righteousness, we must be adopted as the children of God, and have a right and title given us to the heavenly inheritance, before we can enter into it, or possess it; and this blessing is procured for us, by the obedience and death of the Son of God. It is in his blood that we find an atonement for our iniquities, and we must be made heirs of glory, by becoming

the adopted children of God, and so we are joint-heirs with his Son *Jesus*, and shall be glorified with him, *Rom.* viii. 17.

And it is by a true and living faith in the Son of God, that we become partakers of this blessing. God has "set forth his Son *Jesus*, as a propitiation for sinners through faith in his blood," *Rom.* iii. 24. "We are justified by faith in his blood, and have hope of eternal life through him," *Rom.* v. 2. We also receive our adoption, and "become the children of God through faith in *Christ Jesus*," *Gal.* iii. 26. and thereby we obtain a title to some mansion in our Father's house in heaven, since *Jesus* our elder brother, and our forerunner, is admitted into it to take a place there in our name. This is a very considerable part of our necessary preparation for the heavenly world, that we should be believers in the Son of God, and united to him by a living faith; and this "faith also is the gift of God," *Eph.* ii. 8. We are wrought up to it by his grace.

But as this does not seem to be the chief thing designed in the words of my text, I shall pass it over thus briefly, and apply myself to consider what that further fitness or preparation for heaven intends, for which we are said here to be wrought up by God himself. The former preparation for heaven, may rather be said to be a relative change, which is included in our pardon or justification, and alters our state from the condemnation of hell, to the favour and love of God: But this latter preparation implies a real change of our nature by sanctifying grace, and gives us a temper of soul suited to the business and blessedness of the heavenly world. This is the preparation which my text speaks of.

The great enquiry therefore at present is, "What are those steps, or gradual operations, by which the blessed God works us up to this fitness for heaven?"

And here I shall not run over all the parts and lineaments of the new creature, which is formed by regeneration, nor the particular operations of converting grace, whereby we are convinced of sin, and led to faith and repentance, and new obedience, though these are all necessary to this end; but I shall confine myself only to those things which have a more immediate reference to the heavenly blessedness, and they are such as follow.

1. "God works us up to a preparation for the heavenly felicity, by establishing and confirming our belief, that there is a heaven provided for the saints, and by giving us some clearer acquaintance with the nature, the business, and the blessedness of this heaven." All this is done by the gospel of *Christ*, and by the secret operation of the blessed God, teaching us to understand his gospel.

Alas! how ignorant were the heathen sages about any future state for the righteous? How bewildered were the best of them in all their imaginations? How vain were all their reasonings upon this subject, and how little satisfaction could they give to an honest enquirer, whether there was any reward provided for good men beyond this life? The light of nature was their guide; and those in whom this feeble taper burned with the fairest lustre, were still left in great darkness about futurity. As the gentile philosophers were left in great uncertainties whether there was any heaven or no, so were their conceptions of heavenly things very absurd and ridiculous; and their various fancies about the nature and enjoyments of it, were all impertinence.

And how little knowledge had the patriarchs themselves, if we may judge of their knowledge by the five books of *Moses*, which give no plain and express promise of future happiness in another world, neither to *Abel* nor *Noah*, to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, or to *Moses* himself? And were it not for some expressions in the new testament,



testament, and by that xi. chapter to the *Hebrews*, where we are told, that these good men sought a heavenly country, and hoped for happiness in a future and invisible state, we should sometimes be ready to doubt whether they knew almost any thing of the future resurrection and glory.

That great and excellent man *Job*, had one or two lucid intervals of peculiar brightness, which shone upon him from heaven, in the midst of his distresses, and raised him above and beyond the common level of the dispensation he lived in; yet in the main, when he describes the state of the dead, how desolate and doleful is his language, and what heavy darkness hangs upon his hope? See his expressions, *Job* x. 21, 22. "Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death, a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Mark how this good man heaps one darkness upon another, and makes so formidable a gloom, as was hardly to be dispelled by the common notices given to men in that age.

And if we look into the jewish writings, in and after the days of *Moses*, we find the men of righteousness, frequently entertained with promises of corn, and wine, and oil, and other blessings of sense; and few there were amongst them who saw clearly, and firmly believed the heavenly inheritance through the types, and shadows, and figures of *Canaan*, the promised land, which flowed with milk and honey.

It is granted there are some hints and discoveries of a blessedness beyond the grave in the writings of *David*, *Isaiab*, *Daniel*, and some of the prophets: But the brightest of these notices fall far short of what the gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ* has set before us. The Son of God, who came down from heaven, where he had lived from before the creation of this world, has revealed to us infinitely more of the invisible state than all that went before him: He tells us of the pure in heart enjoying the sight of God, and conversing with *Abram*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, the ancient saints: He assures us there are many mansions in his Father's house, and that he went to prepare a place there for his followers. "I tell you, says he, *John* viii. 38. I tell you the things which I have seen with my Father." And when he came again from the dead, he made it appear to his disciples, that he had brought life and immortality to light by his gospel, *2 Tim.* i. 10.

It is only the new testament that gives us so bright and satisfactory an account what our future heaven is: The righteous shall be with God, shall behold him, shall dwell with *Christ*, and see his glory; "they shall worship day and night in his temple, and sing the praises of him that sits upon the throne, and of the lamb that has redeemed them by his blood; there shall be no sin, no sorrow, no death, nor any more pain;" *Rev.* xxi. 4. they shall have such satisfactions and employments as are worthy of a rational nature, and a soul refined from sense and sin. *St. Paul*, one of his disciples, was transported into the third heaven before he died, and there learned "unspeakable things," *2 Cor.* xii. 2, 4. and he, together with the other apostles, have published the glories of that future world, which they learned from *Jesus*, their Lord, and confirmed these things to our faith, by prophecies and miracles without number.

Now the blessed God himself prepares his own people for this heaven of happiness, by giving them a full conviction and assurance of the truth of all these divine discoveries; he impresses them upon their heart with power, and makes them attend to those divine impressions. Every true christian has learned to say within himself, "This celestial blessedness is no dream, is no painted vision, no gay scene of flattering

flattering fancy, nor is it a matter of doubtful dispute, or of uncertain opinion. I am assured of it from the words of *Christ*, the Son of God, and from his blessed followers, whom he authorized to teach me the things of a future world." He that is taught of God, beholds these glories in the light of a divine faith, which is to him, the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not yet seen." *Heb. xi. 1.*

2. God works up the souls of his people to a preparation for the heavenly state, by "purifying them from every defilement, that might unfit them for the blessedness of heaven." The removal of the guilt of sin, by his pardoning mercy, I have mentioned before, as necessary to our entrance into the heavenly state; and we must walk through this world, this defiling world, with all holy watchfulness, lest our souls be blemished with new pollutions, lest new guilt come upon our consciences, and the thoughts of appearance before God be terrible to us. That soul is very much unfit for an entrance into the presence of a holy God, who is ever plunging itself into new circumstances of guilt, by a careless and unholy conversation. To stand upon the borders of life, and the very edge of eternity, will be dreadful to those who have given themselves a loose to criminal pleasures, and indulged their irregular appetites and passions.

But it is not only a conscience purged from the guilt of sin, by the blood of *Christ*, but a soul washed also from the defiling power and taint of sin, by the sanctifying Spirit, that is necessary to make us meet for the heavenly inheritance. This is that purification which I now chiefly intend, *Matth. v. 8.* "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Nothing that defileth must enter into the city of God on high, nor whosoever maketh a lie, or loveth it." *Rev. xxi. 27.* No injustice, no falsehood, no guile or deceit, can be admitted within those gates: They must be without guile, both in their heart and tongue, if they will stand before the throne of God, *Rev. xiv. 5.* Sincerity and truth of soul, with all the beauties of an upright heart and character, are necessary to prepare an inhabitant for that blessed state. There must be no envy, no wrath or malice, no revenge, nor any of the angry principles that dwell in our flesh and blood, or that inflame and disturb the mind, will be found in those regions of peace and love. There must be no pride or ambition, no self-exaltation and vanity that can dwell in heaven, for it cast out the angels of glorious degree, when they would exalt themselves above their own station. "Pride was the condemnation of the devil," and it must not dwell in a human heart, that ever hopes for a heavenly dwelling-place, *1 Tim. iii. 6.* and *Jude* verse 6. There must be no sensual and intemperate creature there, no covetous selfishness, no irregular passions, no narrowness of soul, no uncharitable and party spirit, will ever be found in that country of diffusive love and joy.

And since the best of christians have had the seeds of many of these iniquities in their hearts, and they have made a painful complaint of these rising corruptions of nature upon many occasions, these iniquities must be mortified and slain by the work of the Spirit of God within us, if ever we ourselves would live the divine life of heaven, *Rom. viii. 13.* There is a great deal of this purifying work to be done in the souls of all of us, before we can be prepared for the heavenly world, and though we cannot arrive at perfection here, yet we must be wrought up to a temper in some measure fit to enter into that blessedness: And God is training his people up for this purpose, all the days of their travels through this desert world. Happy souls, who feel themselves more and more released from the bonds of these iniquities, day  
by

by day, and thereby feel within themselves the growing evidences of a joyful hope!

3. God does not only purify us from every sin, in order to prepare us for heaven, but "he is ever loosening and weaning our hearts from all those lawful things in this life, which are not to be enjoyed in heaven." Our sensual appetites, and our carnal desires, so far as they are natural, though not sinful, must die before we can enter into eternal life. Flesh and blood cannot inherit that divine, incorruptible, and refined happiness. *1 Cor. xv. 50.* Riches and treasures of gold and silver "which the rust can corrupt, and which thieves can break through and steal, are not provided for the heavenly state:" *Matth. vi. 19.* They are all of the earthly kind, and too mean for the relish of a heavenly spirit. Although a christian may possess many of these things in the present life, yet his affections must be divested of them, and his soul divided from them, if he would be a saint indeed, and ever ready for the purer blessings of paradise. The businesses, the cares and the concerns of this secular life, are ready to drink up our spirits too much while we are here; we are too prone to mingle our very souls with them, and thereby grow unfit for heavenly felicities: And therefore it is that our Saviour has warned us, *Luke xxi. 34.* "Let not your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this world, any more than with surfeiting and drunkenness," if you would be always ready for your flight to a better state, and meet the summons of your Lord to paradise.

There are also many curious speculations and delightful amusements, which may lawfully entertain us while we are here; there are sports and recreations which may divert the flesh or the mind in a lawful manner, whilst we dwell in tabernacles of flesh and blood, and are encompassed with mortal things: But the soul that is wrought for heaven must arise to a holy indifference to all the entertainments of flesh and sense, and time, if it would put on the appearance of an heavenly inhabitant. Christians that would be ever ready for the glories of a better world must be such in some measure, as the apostle describes, *1 Cor. vii. 29—31.* They must rejoice with such moderation in their dearest comforts of life, as though they rejoiced not; they must weep and mourn for the loss of them, with such a divine self-government, as though they wept not; they must buy as though they possessed not; they must use this world as not abusing it in any instance; but must look upon the fashions and the scenes of it as vanishing things, and have their hearts "set on the things that are above, where *Christ Jesus* is at the Father's right hand," *Colos. iii. 1, 2.*

If you ask me, what methods the blessed God uses in order to attain these ends, and to purify and refine the soul for heaven; I answer, he sometimes does it by sharp strokes of affliction, making our interests in the creature bitter to us, that we may be weaned from the relish of them, and the power of divine grace, must accompany all his weaning providences, or the work will not be done.

Sometimes again he weans the soul from the lawful things of this world, by permitting our earthly enjoyments to plunge us into difficulties, to seize the heart with anxieties, or to surround us with sore temptations: Then, when we feel ourselves falling into sin, and bruised or defiled thereby, we lose our former gust of pleasure in them; and when we are recovered by divine grace, we are more effectually weaned from such kind of temptations for the future; but it is impossible in the compass of a few lines to describe the various methods which the blessed God uses to wean the spirit from all its earthly attachments, and to work it up to a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Blessed souls, who are thus loosened and weaned from sensible things, though it be done by painful sufferings!

4. The great God not only weans our hearts from those things that are not to be enjoyed in heaven, but he gives us a holy appetite and relish, suited to the provisions of the heavenly world, and raises our desires and tendencies of soul toward them. By nature our minds are estranged from God, and from all that is divine and holy; we have no desires after his love, nor delight in the thoughts of dwelling with God: But when divine grace has effectually touched the heart, it ever tends upwards to that world of holiness and peace. So the needle, when it is touched by the loadstone, ever points to the beloved pole-star, and seems uneasy when it is diverted from it, nor will it rest till it return thither again.

Do the sweet sensations of divine love make up a great part of the heavenly blessedness? The soul is in some measure fitted for it, who can say with *David* in *Psal.* iv. 6. "Lord, lift thou up upon me the light of thy countenance, and it shall rejoice my heart more than if corn, and wine, and oil abounded," and all earthly blessings were multiplied upon me; for in thy love is the life of my soul, and thy loving kindness is better than life, *Psal.* lxxiii. 3.

Is the felicitating presence of God to be enjoyed in the future world, and shall we see his face there with unspeakable delight? Then those souls are prepared for heaven, who can say with the psalmist, *Psal.* xlii. 2. "When shall I come and appear before God?" When shall I have finished my travels through this wilderness, that I may arrive at my Father's house? "This one thing have I desired, that I may dwell in the house of God for ever, to behold the beauty of the Lord there." *Psal.* xxvii. 4. "It is enough for me that I shall behold thy face in righteousness, and I shall be satisfied when I awake out of the dust with thy likeness." *Psal.* xvii. 15. "With my soul have I desired thee, O Lord, in the night, in the darkness of this desert world I have longed for the light of thy face, and with my spirit within me I will seek thee early." *Ijai.* xxvi. 9. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, neither is there any on earth that I desire beside thee." *Psal.* lxxiii. 25. O when shall the day come when there shall be no more distance and estrangement of my heart from God, but I shall feel all my powers for ever near him?

Is the sweet society of *Jesus* to be enjoyed in the heavenly region, then those are prepared for this happiness, who feel in themselves a desire to depart, and to be with *Christ*, which is far better than the most pleasurable scenes on earth, *Phil.* i. 23. I am willing, and rejoice in the thought of it, rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord, *2 Cor.* v. 8. I behold in the light of faith, the dawning glory of that day, when *Jesus* shall return from heaven, when he shall revisit this wretched world, and put an end to these wretched scenes of vanity. "Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him." *Rev.* i. 7. He comes into our world to them that look for him, not to be made a sacrifice for sin, but to complete our salvation. *Heb.* ix. 28. I long to behold him, and I love the thought of his appearance, *2 Tim.* iv. 8.

Is there not only a freedom from pain and sorrow among the saints on high, but is there also an eternal release from all the bonds of sin and temptation? Then that soul discovers a degree of preparation for it, who can say with a holy groan and grief of heart, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death? *Rom.* vii. 24. In this tabernacle we groan, indeed, being burdened, and are desirous rather to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, with our holy state of immortality, *2 Cor.* v. 4. That God who has wrought these divine breathings in the soul will one day fulfil them all; and he is working up the christian to a blessed meetness for this felicity by awakening these wishes in the

very

very center of the heart. Happy heart, which feels these holy aspirations, these divine breathings.

5. The blessed God is pleased to work us up to a preparation for the heavenly world by forming the temper of our minds into a likeness to the inhabitants of heaven, that is, to God himself, to *Christ Jesus*, the Son of God, to angels and saints, to the spirits of the just made perfect. From the children of folly and sin we must be transformed into the children of God, we must be created a-new after his image, and resemble our heavenly Father, that we may be capable of enjoying his love, and rejoicing in his presence. We must be conformable to the image of his only begotten Son *Christ Jesus*, and walk and live as he did in this world, that we may be prepared to dwell with him in the world to come, *Rom. viii. 29.* 1 *John iv. 17.* We must have the same temper and spirit of holiness wrought in us, that we may be imitators of all the holy ones that dwell in heaven, and that we may be followers of the saints, who have been strangers and travellers in this world in all former ages.

How can we hope to have free conversation with glorious beings, which are so unlike to ourselves, as God, and *Christ*, and angels, are unlike to the sinful children of men? How can we imagine ourselves to be fit company for such pure and perfect beings, beautiful, and shining in holiness, while we are defiled with the iniquities of our natures, and ever falling into new guilt and pollution? Happy souls, who can say, through grace, I have "walked in the light as God is in the light," 1 *John i. 7.* and I trust, O Father, I shall dwell for ever with thee there. I have been a follower of the lamb through the thorny and rugged passages of this wilderness, and I humbly hope I shall sit with thee, O *Jesus*, upon a throne, glorious and holy. I have been a companion of them who have finished the christian race, who have fought the good fight, and obtained the victory, and I trust I shall have a name and a place amongst all you holy ones who have fought and overcome. O for a heart and tongue furnished for such appeals to all the blessed inhabitants of paradise, the possessors of those mansions on high!

6. The grace of God works us up to a preparation for heaven "by carrying us through those trials and sufferings, those labours and conflicts here in this life, which will not only make heaven the sweeter to us, but will make it more honourable for God himself to bestow this heaven upon us."

When the spirits of a creature are almost worn out with the toilsome labours of the day, what an additional sweetness does he find in rest and repose? What an inward relish and satisfaction to the soul, that has been fatigued under a long and tedious war with sins and temptations, to be transported to such a place where sin cannot follow them, and temptation can never reach them? How will it enhance all the felicities of the heavenly world when we enter into it, to feel ourselves released from all the trials and distresses, and sufferings which we have sustained in our travels thitherwards? The review of the waves and the storms wherein we had been tossed for a long season, and had been almost shipwrecked there, will make the peaceful haven of eternity, to which we shall arrive, much more agreeable to every one of the sufferers, 2 *Cor. iv. 17.* "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are in this way working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and preparing us for the possession of it.

But it should be added also, that the prize of life, and the crown of glory, is much more honourably bestowed on those who have been long fighting, running, and labouring to obtain it. Heaven will appear as a condecant reward of all the faithful servants of God upon earth, and a divine recompence of their labours and

sufferings, *2 Thess. i. 6.* "As it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, so to give to those who are troubled rest and salvation." This is that equitable or condecent fitness that God, as governor of the world, has wisely appointed and made necessary before our entrance into heaven. *Christ* himself our forerunner, and the "captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings," *Heb. ii. 10.* and was trained up for his throne on high "by enduring the contradiction of sinners," and the variety of agonies which attended his life and death in this lower world, this stage of conflict and sufferings. *Heb. xii. 1*  
—3.

Though we cannot pretend by our labours in the race to have merited the prize, yet we must labour through the race before we receive it. Our conflicts cannot pretend to have deserved the crown which is promised, but we must fight the battles of the Lord before we obtain it. This was *St. Paul's* encouragement and hope, *2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.* "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me,—and not to me only, but to all those who love his appearance." There is a great deal of divine wisdom in this appointment, that the children of God may be counted in this sense worthy of his kingdom for which they also suffer, *2 Thess. i. 5.* and that the relish of those satisfactions may be doubled to all the sufferers.

7. God yet further prepares and works up his people for heaven by "teaching them some of the employments of the heavenly world, and initiating and inuring them to the practice thereof." Is the contemplation of the blessed God, in his nature, and his various perfections, the business of glorified souls? God teaches his children, whom he is training up for glory, to practise this holy contemplation: He fixes their thoughts upon the wonders of his nature and his grace, his works of creation and providence, the blessings of his redeeming love by his Son *Jesus*, and the terrors of his justice which shall be executed by the same hand, while the soul at the same time can appeal to God with holy delight, "My meditation of thee shall be sweet indeed," *Psal. civ. 34.* O may I dwell for ever in the midst of thy light, and see all thy wonderful glories diffused around me, and make my joys everlasting!

Are we told that heaven consists also in "beholding the glory of *Christ*," *John xvii. 24.* And how happily does God prepare his saints for this part of heaven, by filling their thoughts with the various graces and honours of *Jesus* the Saviour? And when they are in their lonely retirements, they trace the footsteps of their beloved through all his labours and sorrows in this mortal state, even from his cradle to his cross; they follow him in their holy meditations to his agonies in the garden, to his anguish of soul there; through all his sufferings in death, through the grave his bed of darkness, and trace him on still to his glorious resurrection, and to his ascent to his Father's house, when a bright cloud like a chariot bore him up to heaven with attending angels: "This is my beloved, says the soul, and this is my friend," whom I shall see with joy in the upper world: He is altogether lovely, and he demands my highest love.

Is it part of the happiness of heaven to converse with the blessed God by holy addresses of acknowledgments and praise, as it is described in *Rev. iv. and v. and vii.* "They are before the throne of God day and night, and serve him in his temple," *Rev. vii. 15.* and join with holy joy to pronounce that divine song, "Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb  
for

for ever and ever:" chapter v. 13. "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory and honour,—for thou hast created all things for thy pleasure:" chapter iv. 11. "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and strength, glory and blessing, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God, by thy blood, out of every kindred and nation." chapter v. 9, 12. Now it is evident that those whose hearts and lips are joyfully fitted to pronounce this holy song, and to join in this harmony, is fitted also for these blessed employments of the heavenly state: And yet at the same time they abase themselves in the dust of humility, and, with the living creatures, or angels, they fall down before the throne, and with the elders they cast down their crowns at his foot, they confess themselves the sons of earth and dust, and would appear as nothing while God is all, *Rev.* iv. 9, 10. and v. 8.

Are all the powers of glorified nature in heaven active in the unknown services of God and *Christ* there? So the saints are trained up for this service and this activity, here on earth, by diligence and delight in their less noble employments, the inferior labours and duties that providence demands of them here, whereby they are prepared for more glorious employment on high; for heaven is no idle or unactive state.

Do some of the satisfactions of the heavenly world arise from the "sweet society of the blessed above, their fervent love to each other, their mutual delight in holy converse, the joy that arises in the heart of each upon a survey of the happiness of all the holy and blessed inhabitants? Does benevolence and goodness of every kind overflow in the heavenly world?" It is plain that God is training up his own children for this blessedness, by employing them in this manner while they are below: He is in some measure fitted for this heaven, who can say, the "saints are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight:" *Psal.* xvi. 3. I love them from my soul, because they love my God, and my Saviour. I see the image of the Father, and of *Jesus* his Son in them, and I cannot but love that image wheresoever I behold it. I feel myself ready to rejoice when my fellow-christians partake of joy, and I long for that temper of mind when I shall delight myself in the felicity of all my fellow-saints in perfection, and shall make their heaven a part of my own. But I proceed not here, because this would anticipate what I design hereafter.

8. God is pleased to work up his people to a preparation for the heavenly state, by "giving them a pledge and earnest of the blessedness of heaven," that is, by sending his own Spirit into their hearts under this very character, both as the spring of a divine life, and as the evidence of our hope, and sometimes bestowing upon them such foretastes of the heavenly world, by the operations of his holy Spirit, which are too joyful and glorious to be fully expressed in mortal language; but we shall attempt something of it in another discourse.

[Here this discourse may be divided.]

I proceed now to seek what inferences or edifying remarks may be made upon our meditations thus far.

Remark I. We learn from my text "what are the brightest, the plainest, and the surest evidences of our interest in the heavenly blessedness: Are we trained up to it, and prepared for it?" Has the blessed God wrought up our souls to any hopeful degrees of this preparation? Has he in any measure made us meet for this inheritance of the saints in light?

I grant the scripture teaches us, that it is by a true and living faith in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that we obtain a title to eternal life; according to the proposals of the covenant of grace in the gospel; but our preparation for heaven by a holy and heavenly temper of mind and conduct of life, is the fairest and most uncontested evidence of the truth and life of our faith, and such a proof of it as will stand the test both in life and death, in this world, and in the world to come. If we would manifest our faith in *Christ* to be sincere and genuine and effectual for our salvation, we must make it appear that we are growing up into the image of *Christ* in all things, we must be formed after the likeness of the Son of God, who is our great example, and our forerunner into heaven; and where this evidence is found the soul cannot fail of salvation. Wheresoever there is this fitness for the joys on high, God will assuredly bestow these divine pleasures. It is for such souls that he has prepared a heaven, and when he has prepared such souls for the heavenly world, he will surely bring them to the possession of it.

Of how great moment and importance is it then for each of us to examine ourselves with watchful diligence and sincerity, whether we are in any measure fitted for the blessedness above: And to this end we may run over in our enquiries all the former steps of preparation.

Let us enquire of our souls then, am I so fully persuaded of this state of future happiness, as to resolve, this shall be my aim, this my everlasting pursuit? Have we seen this blessedness in the various representations of it in the word of God, as the most amiable and desirable thing, and have we set our faces to travel thither with an holy purpose and determination, through grace, never to tire or grow weary till we arrive at the enjoyment of it? Have we fixed our hope and expectation upon the blessed promises in the word, and are we by these promises endeavouring daily to cleanse ourselves from all defilements of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God? Do we obtain any victories over our spiritual enemies, and maintain our pious conflicts against all the oppositions which we meet with in our way? Do we labour to suppress every rising ferment of envy, pride, wrath, sensuality, and those corrupt appetites and passions which render us unfit for that holy and heavenly world? Are our hearts daily more mortified to the things of this world, the enjoyments of flesh and sense, which are not to be found in heaven? Are our hearts more weaned from the sensual satisfactions and intemperate delights of the animal life? Are we dead to the temptations of gold and silver, the grandeurs and the gaieties, and splendors of this present low life of flesh and blood, which are no part nor portion of the heavenly felicity? Do we view the tempting things of this world with a holy indifference, and possess and use them with affections so calm and so cool, as becomes a rank of beings that have a nobler, a richer, and a more exalted hope? Have we found the labours and burdens, the sorrows and afflictions of the present state, happy instruments to prepare us for the blessedness above, by curing all our vain and carnal desires? Are we in any measure imitators of those who have gone before us "through faith and patience," and are made possessors of the promised joy? *Heb. v. 12.* Are we "followers of God as dear children?" *Eph. v. 1.* Have we the image of our heavenly Father created a-new in us, and do we walk as our Lord *Jesus Christ* also walked, while he was in this wilderness travelling to his Father's house? Are our earnest desires towards this sort of felicity excited and raised high? Have we a strong tendency of soul to the holy enjoyments of the upper world? Do we sigh and groan after a complete freedom from sin, and a deliverance from every temptation? Do we employ ourselves with pleasure in the work and business of heaven, in the  
holy



holy contemplation of God, in a delightful survey of the person and offices of his Son *Jesus*, his wonderful condescension, and his amazing compassion? Do we take pleasure in conversing with God our Father by holy addresses of praise and thankfulness? Do we love all the saints, and delight in their society, and do we rejoice to spend our time with them in heavenly conversation, though they may be amongst the lower ranks of life here on earth? And do we diffuse our love through all who wear the image of God, and take a pleasing satisfaction of soul in their increase of holiness, and rejoice in their joys?

If God has thus fitted thee, "O christian, in this manner, for the mansions of the happy world, then surely he has set thee apart for himself, he has begun eternal life in thee, the dawn of eternal glory is risen upon thee, and he will bring thee into the complete noon of blessedness, into the overflowing light of divine beatitudes." "Arise and shine, O christian, for thy life is come, the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; *Isa. lx. 1.* thou hast no need to ascend into heaven to search for thy evidences among the decrees of God, and to pry into the rolls of electing grace; for if thou hast been transformed into a heavenly temper, thy name is surely written in the lamb's book of life; heaven is begun within thee, and God will fulfil his own work."

Remark II. "What a solid comfort is it to poor, mourning, troubled, afflicted souls under all their sorrows, their frailties, their temptations, and infirmities here on earth, that they have a clear evidence of heaven within them." This is such a peace as *Jesus Christ* left to his disciples by legacy, *John xiv. 27.* "Such as the world cannot give," and such as the world cannot take away.

This is a spring of constant and divine consolation to those who seem to be worn out with old age or infirmities of nature, and they complain they are fit for no service in this world; but if they can feel in themselves this holy fitness for the enjoyments of heaven, they have a rich and living fountain of pleasure in their own breasts, ever springing, ever flowing, and such as will follow them with daily supplies of pleasure, if they are not wanting to themselves, through all this wilderness, till they arrive at that land where all the rivers of blessing meet and join in a full stream, to make the inhabitants for ever happy.

"It may be, O christian, thou art afraid that thou hast felt but little of this divine preparation; thou seest so many defects in thyself daily, so much unlikeness to God, so much working of iniquity, such restless efforts of the body of sin, so much prevalence of temptation, so much coldness in duty, such deadness in acts of devotion, such frequent returns of guilt and pain in a tender conscience, and so many enemies to struggle with every step of thy way to heaven, that thou art greatly discouraged and afraid this divine preparation is not wrought in thee. Enquire then yet further; Are all these melancholy scenes both within and without, the matter of thy sincere grief and burden? Canst thou say in this tabernacle, I groan, being burdened with the body of sin, as well as with the frailties and pains of nature? Canst thou say sincerely, that thy inmost desires are towards God and his glory in the present life, and towards his enjoyment in the life to come? Dost thou maintain a constant converse with heaven as well as thou canst, though it be so much broken, and so often painfully interrupted? Hast thou a continual and settled aversion and hatred to sin, and a holy jealousy and fear of its defilements? Hast thou a restless breathing of soul after greater likeness to God, and greater communion with him? Dost thou delight in spiritual and holy conversation; and does thy zeal for the honour of God, and his Son *Jesus*, carry thee forth to those actions which are suitable to thy station,

tion, for the advancement of religion in the world? Be assured then that God is training thee up for this heavenly state, and has in some measure prepared thee for it. God has begun in thee the business and blessedness of the upper world. In the midst of all thy sorrows and complaints here below, peace be with thee, and joy in the Lord, for thy salvation and thy felicity shall be completed."

Remark III. "How vain, and idle, and unreasonable, are all the hopes of sinners, that they shall ever arrive at heaven without any preparation for it here?" There is nothing divine and holy begun in them in this world, and yet they hope to be made happy in the world that is to come; there is nothing of true grace wrought in their hearts here, and yet they vainly expect to be made perfect in pleasure and glory hereafter.

"Think with thyself, O carnal creature, that heaven will be a burden to thee; the powers, the appetites, and passions of thy sinful nature, will not suffer thee to relish the joys of the heavenly state. Dost thou imagine that a worm or serpent of the earth, or a swine which is ever tumbling in the mire, can be entertained with the golden ornaments and splendors of a palace? Or will the stupid ass be delighted with the harmony of a harp or viol? No more can a soul of a carnal and sensual taste, and which is ever seeking and groveling after earthly gratifications, be pleased or gratified with the refined enjoyments of the heavenly world. Thou must have a new nature, new appetites and affections, ere thou canst partake of divine joys, or relish them if thou wert placed in the midst of them. Holy adoration of God, and humble converse with him in worship, converse with the saints about divine things, perfect purity and devotion, with the meditation of the excellencies of *Christ*, and the sight of him in his ordinances, have never yet been the object of thy delight or joy: nay, they have rather been thy aversion; and shouldst thou have the gates of heaven open before thee, and see what business the holy souls there are employed in, thou wouldst find no desire to such sort of satisfactions; the place and the company would be thy burden, if thou couldst be let at once into the midst of them.

"Think again, O sinful wretch, thy carnality of soul, thy supreme love of sensual and brutal joys, the secret malice or envy, the pride and impiety of thy heart, have prepared thee for another sort of company; thou art fitted for hell by the very temper of thy spirit, for such are the inhabitants of that miserable world, and in thy present state there can be no admission for thee into heaven. Thou hast treasured up food for the worm that never dies, for the eternal anguish of conscience; thou hast made thyself fit fuel by indulgence of thy sinful and rebellious appetites and passions, for the fiery indignation of God; and every day thou persistest in this state, thy preparation for the dark regions of sin and sorrow is increased." But this leads me to the last remark.

Remark IV. "How dangerous a thing it is for a sinner to continue a day longer in a state so unprepared for the heavenly world." Dost thou not know, whilst we are inhabitants in these regions of mortality, we are borderers upon death; and if we are unprepared for heaven, we are borderers upon damnation and hell? Our life is but a vapour, and the next puff may blow us away into the regions of everlasting darkness, misery, and despair.

Alas! how much of this divine preparation do the best of saints stand in need of for an immediate entrance into heaven? What care do they take, how constant are their labours, and how fervent their prayers to increase in this divine fitness, in these holy and heavenly qualifications! And dost thou vainly imagine to exchange earth for heaven at once, and to be received into the pure and holy mansions of paradise, without

without any conformity to God or *Christ*, or the rest of the inhabitants of that world?

Objection. But some idle and slothful creatures will be ready to object and say, If it be God who creates his people a-new, according to his own Image, and fits them for heaven; if we must be wrought up by his power and grace for the participation of this glory, what can we do towards it ourselves? Or why are we charged and exhorted to prepare ourselves for heaven? Since then it is God must do this work, why may we not lie still, and wait till his grace shall prepare us?

I answer, No, by no means; for God is wont to exert his grace only while creatures are in the use of his appointments, and fulfil their duty. This language therefore, and these excuses, seem to be the mere cavils of a carnal mind, or the voice of sloth and indolence. Those who have no inclination to prepare themselves for the joys of the heavenly state, may wait and expect divine influences in vain, if they will never stir up themselves to practise what is in their own power, and to attempt what the gospel of grace demands.

In almost all the transactions of God with men, it is the way of his wisdom to join our diligence and his grace together; and there are many scriptures that give us sufficient notice of this. See how *St. Paul* argues with the *Philippians*, and stirs them up to zeal and activity in securing their own salvation by the hope of divine assistances: *Phil.* ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." So said *David* to his son *Solomon*, when he appointed him to build the temple of the Lord, *1 Chron.* xxviii. 20. "Be strong and of good courage, and do it,—for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee, and will not fail thee nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work." This was the charge also that God gave to his people *Israel*, *Lev.* xx. 7. "Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy,—keep my statutes; I am the Lord who sanctifieth you." So the psalmist tells us, *Psal.* iv. 3. "The Lord hath set apart, or separated him who is godly for himself; and yet, *2 Cor.* vi. 17. The Lord commands his people to "separate themselves unto him, to come out from amongst the sinners of this world; and be you separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you." So in other places of scripture, divine wisdom commands sinners to fulfil their duty, *Prov.* i. 23. "Turn ye at my reproof:" And yet in *Psal.* lxxx. 3. the church prays, "Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be saved." The case is very much the same even in the things that relate to this life, wherein divine assistance and blessing are connected with our diligence in duty. *Solomon* tells us, *Prov.* x. 4. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich; and yet verse 22. it is "the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich also." We can never expect the favours of heaven, unless we are zealous to obey the commands of heaven.

When the sinful children of men are found waiting on God in his own appointed ordinances, then they are in the fairest way to receive divine communications, and be transformed into saints. If the blind man had not obeyed the voice of *Christ*, *John* ix. 7. and washed himself in the pool of *Siloam*, he could not expect to have received his eye-sight. If the man with the withered hand, *Matth.* xii. 10, 13. had not used his own endeavours to stretch forth his hand at the command of *Christ*, I can hardly believe it would have been restored to its ancient vigor and usefulness. If the poor impotent creature had not been waiting at the side of the pool of *Bethesda*, *John* v. 5—9. he had not met with the blessed *Jesus*, nor been healed by his miraculous power. You will say, perhaps, that our blessed Saviour could have visited him in his own house, could have directed his journey towards his habitation, or have sent for

for him into the public, and healed him there. No; our Lord did not chuse either of these ways; but while the man was waiting at the pool, where he had encouragement to hope for a cure, there the Lord found him, and healed him.

Let not any presuming sinner therefore, who is sensible of his own unfitness for heaven, dare to continue in a careless indifference about so important a concern: Let him not put off his own conscience with this foolish excuse, "It is God must do all in us and for us, and therefore I will do nothing my self." Dost thou think, O soul, that this will be a sufficient answer to him that shall judge thee in the great and solemn day? May you not expect to hear the judge reply terribly to such an excuse, "You never sought after this preparation for heaven, and you must be plunged into hell, for which your own rebellion and slothfulness have prepared you.

But perhaps you will object again, What can so feeble, so sinful a creature as I am, do towards this divine work?

I answer, Canst thou not separate one quarter of a hour daily to think of thy dreadful circumstances, and thy eternal danger in a sinful and defiled state of soul? Think of the uncertainty of life, and how sudden thy summons may be into the eternal and unchangeable state. Survey thyself in thy sinful condition both of heart and life, and see how unfit thou art for the company of all the holy ones above. Meditate on these thy perilous circumstances, till thy heart be deeply affected therewith; fall down before God in humble acknowledgment of thy former guilt and pollutions: Give up thyself to him with holy solemnity, to have thy heart turned away from every sin, and strongly inclined to holiness and heaven. Commit thy soul, guilty and defiled as it is, into the hands of *Jesus* the mediator; entrust thy case with him as an all-sufficient Saviour; entreat that he would cleanse thee from all thy guilt and pollution, by the blood of his sacrifice, and the grace of his spirit; that blood of atonement which has procured for sinners pardon and peace with God, and those operations of his grace which may sanctify thy sinful nature. Address thyself to the exalted Saviour for healing influences from his hand to cure all the maladies of thy soul, to form thee after his image, and to make thee a son of God. Pray with holy importunity for this necessary and divine blessing, wait on God in secret and in public; give him no rest night or day, till he has renewed thy soul, and transformed thee into a new creature, and given thee a relish of the heavenly enjoyments: Dwell at the throne of grace till thou feelest thy heart drawn upward and heavenward, and watch against every thing that would defile thy soul a-new, or make thee unfit to enter into the company of the blessed.

Permit me here to dwell a little upon those motives that should awaken thee to bethink thyself ere it be too late, before the grave has shut it's mouth upon thee, and thou art consigned to the place of eternal misery. Awake, awake, O impenitent sinners, who are as yet unprepared for the business and blessedness of the heavenly state; awake and exert your souls in warmest reflexions on matters of infinite importance.

1. Think with yourselves how much the great God has done towards the preparation of sinful men for this heaven; think seriously of his long-suffering goodness, and his sparing mercy, which should have led you long ago to a melting sense of your own folly, and brought you back unto him by humble repentance. For what reason were his patience and his long-suffering exercised towards you, if not for this very purpose? *Rom. ii. 4.* Think of the blessings of nature with which he has surrounded you, and the comforts of this life wherewith he has furnished you, in order to allure

allure your thoughts towards him, who is the spring of all goodness; and to raise your desires towards him: It is he invites you, who will be the everlasting portion and happiness of his people, and in whose favour consists life and felicity; and dare not any longer neglect your preparation for this happiness, which consists in the enjoyment of God, lest you should be cut off before you are prepared.

2. Consider again what *Jesus* the Son of God has done and suffered; and consider what he is yet doing towards the preparation of souls for heaven: He came down to our world to undertake the glorious and dreadful work of the redemption of sinners from the curse of the law and the terrors of hell, and to procure a heaven for every rebellious creature that would return to God his Father. Think of the agonies of his death with which he purchased mansions of glory for those that receive his grace in his own appointed methods, those that are willing to have their hearts and minds formed into a suitable frame to receive this felicity. Remember that he is risen from the dead, he is ascended to prepare a place in glory for those that are willing to follow him through the paths of holiness. Hearken to the many kind invitations and allurements of his gospel, which calls to the worst of sinners to return and live, and intreats and exhorts those who are in the ends of the earth, and upon the borders of hell, "to look unto him that they may be saved," *I/ai.* xlv. 22. Take heed that you suffer not these seasons of his inviting love to slide away and vanish unimproved; take heed how you rebel against the language of the grace of his gospel, and thereby prepare yourselves for double and everlasting destruction.

3. Think again, what blessed assistances he has proposed to those who are desirous to be trained up for heaven; how many thousand souls, as carnal, as sensual, and as criminal, as your's are, have been recovered by the word of his gospel, and the influences of his Spirit, to a new nature and life of holiness? How many are there, who from children of wrath, have become the sons and daughters of the most high God, heirs of this blessedness, and prepared for the enjoyment of it? O take heed that you resist not his grace, nor rebel against the kind and sacred motions of the blessed Spirit within you, when his very office and business is to change your sinful natures, and to prepare you for the regions of eternal holiness and peace.

4. Think, yet further, what advantages you have had from the weekly ministrations of the word of grace, from reading the book of God in your own language, and from the pious education many of you have enjoyed in the families from whence you sprung. Think what awakening hints you have received by the inward conviction of your own consciences, and by the christian friends you may have conversed with: Have you not been told plainly enough by the voice of conscience, that you are now utterly unprepared for heaven? Have not public and private admonitions given you sufficient warning of the danger of your present state? And after all this will you proceed in your sinful course, till you arrive at the very gates of hell and destruction, till you have prepared yourselves, and made your souls ripe for the vengeance of God, and are plunged into it by death without remedy or relief?

5. Consider how dreadful will your state be, if death meet you in all your guilt and defilements, unwashed, unpardoned, and un sanctified, without any garment of righteousness, without any robe of salvation. What a terrible sentence is that which death will pronounce upon every such sinner the moment that he strikes their heart? Hear it and tremble, O miserable creature! Hear the formidable and eternal sentence, "Let him that is unholy be unholy still:" *Rev.* xxii. 11. Let him that is unprepared for heaven go down to the regions of death and hell, for which his iniquities have best prepared him.

6. Think with yourselves, if you have any thing of importance to do in this world, or have any momentous scene of life to pass through, how diligent are you in preparation for it? If you are but to visit the court of a prince, or go to make your addresses to any great man of honour and power, or to be admitted into any numerous society of a superior character, how diligently do you endeavour to furnish yourselves with such knowledge of the common ceremonies of life, and such ornaments about your body, as may render you acceptable amongst those whom you are going to converse with? And does not an entrance into the court of heaven, into the presence of a God of holiness, and into the society of pure and blessed spirits, require some solicitude and care about those ornaments and qualifications which are necessary for so solemn and glorious an appearance? If you are designing in this life to commence any trade or business for your employment and your support, you are willing to serve an apprenticeship of seven years in order to a preparation for the exercise of this public business; and can you not afford one day in a week to learn the business of heaven, and to prepare for the blessedness of it?

And let parents also consider with themselves, what pains they have taken that their children may be fit for the trades and employments of life to which they design them, and then let each enquire of their own consciences, "have I ever done so much to train up my son for the heavenly world, to fit him for the appearance before God, and saints and angels, and for all the unknown services of that celestial country?"

7. Go on yet further, O impenitent sinners, and consider with yourselves what a blessedness it is to be prepared for heaven; for then you are prepared for death, and at once you take away all the terrors of it. O what an unspeakable happiness is it to pass through this world daily without the fear of dying? What is it that makes life so bitter to multitudes of souls, and every malady or accident so frightful to them, but the perpetual terrors of death? Think what a divine satisfaction it is to walk up and down in this desert land, ready prepared for an entrance into the land of promise, the inheritance of the saints in light: Think of the solid joy and inward consolation of those souls who feel in themselves a habitual readiness for a departure hence, and who are wrought up by divine grace to a preparation for the business and the joys above. Think of the victory over death, which is obtained by such a readiness for heaven, and how glorious a thing it is to meet that last enemy the king of terrors, and encounter him without fear, and to triumph over him with divine language, "O death! where is thy sting?" *1 Cor. xv. 55.* How joyful a scene would it be to take leave of all our friends in this land of mortality, with an assured hope that we are entering into a happier climate, and a better country, ready prepared for all the more glorious scenes that shall meet us in the invisible world?

It is an amazing thing to me, how the children of men, who are dying daily off from this stage of life, who must all shortly die, and enter into a world of eternal futurity, should be no more concerned about a preparation for their departure hence: That they should be so stupidly thoughtless of a world to come, while they are on the very borders of it, and eternal joy or eternal sorrow depends on this one question, "Am I prepared for heaven, or not?" O those two awful regions of the unseen world; where the love of God shines with its brightest glories, or where the vengeance of God is discovered in all its anguish and horror! One of these will be the certain and eternal dwelling-place of the souls that are prepared for them, and there must they pass their long immortality, either in joy, or in sorrow, without a  
change;

change; and yet the foolish and befotted tribes of mankind seem to have abandoned all thought and concern about them. A dangerous lethargy, or distraction!

What shall we do to cure sinners of this madness? Shall I try to rouse these indolent unthinking wretches out of their dangerous and mortal slumbers with the loudest voice of thunder and divine terror? But the lethargy of sin is proof against all these terrors and thunders. Shall I call for a fountain of tears into my eyes, and weep over them with the tenderest sympathy and compassion? But they feel not any meltings of pity for themselves, nor are their hearts to be softened by all our tears and wallings. Shall I beseech them in the name of *Christ* by the bowels of his dying love, and the blood and anguish of his sufferings for our salvation? But even these divine and astonishing instances of tenderness and mercy make no impression on their souls. While *Satan* holds them in his chains, they are sleeping the sleep of death. O for a word of sovereign and almighty grace to reach the center of their spirits! To shake all the powers of their nature! To awaken them to behold their eternal interest! and to prepare for heavenly felicity! Awake, O sleepers, ere the angel of death seize you, and the grave shut it's mouth upon you; then all your seasons and hopes of mercy are cut off for ever, and you will awake hopeless immortals.

I shall conclude this discourse with one word of exhortation to those who are in any measure wrought up to a preparation for the heavenly blessedness. "O happy creatures! whatsoever pains you have taken, whatever conflicts you have endured in the matter of your own salvation, yet let God and his grace have all the honour of this work. It is to God you owe your sacrifices of praise. He that hath wrought you up for this felicity is God. It was he who awakened you first, and set you a thinking of your most important concerns: It was he that led you first into the way of salvation by *Jesus Christ* his Son, and hath thus far crowned your labours and your prayers with success and blessing. Every stumbling-block in your way might have thrown you down to perdition: Every temptation might have turned you back from this glorious pursuit: Every enemy of your souls might have discouraged or overcome you, if God and his grace had not been engaged on your side.

It is he hath upheld you when you were falling, he hath taken you by the hand and led you right onward when you were wandering, and he hath supported you by his divine cordials of promise when you were fainting. It is God who hath enabled you to maintain your conflict with all the mighty obstacles of your faith and hope; it is his grace hath renewed your nature, hath weaned you from this vain flattering world, and given you a sacred relish of divine blessedness. It is he who hath formed you again after his own image, and hath trained you up, and made you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Call up all your powers to praise his goodness, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bleis his holy name: Bless the Lord for ever, and forget not all his benefits," *Psal.* ciii. 1, 2. It is God who hath "called me out of darkness into his marvellous light," and given me to see the things that belong to my everlasting peace. It is God who washed away my iniquities in the blood of his own Son, and hath renewed me unto holiness by his blessed Spirit. It is God who hath taken me out of the family of sin and *Satan*, and given me a place among his children; who hath begun to prepare me for the joys and blessings of heaven, and in his own time he will fulfil all my hopes, and complete my felicity. Walk before him with all holy care and watchfulness, and take heed that you lose not the things which you have wrought, nor the things which God has wrought in you, but that persevering to the end you may receive the full reward, and obtain the crown of everlasting life, 2 *John*, verse 8. Amen.

## DISCOURSE IX.

## No pain among the blessed.

REV. XXI. 4.

*—Neither shall there be any more pain.—*

**T**HERE have been some divines in ancient times, as well as in our present age, who suppose this prophecy relates to some glorious and happy event here on earth, wherein the faints and faithful followers of *Christ* shall be delivered from the bondage and miseries to which they have been exposed in all former ages, and shall enjoy the blessings which these words promise. Among these writers some have placed this happy state before the resurrection of the body; others make it to belong to that first resurrection which is spoken of in *Rev. xx. 6.* But let this prophecy have a particular aspect upon what earthly period soever, yet all must grant it is certainly true concerning the heavenly state; from whose felicities, taken in the literal sense, these figurative expressions are derived to foretel the happiness of any period of the church in this world; and in this sense, as part of our happiness in heaven, I shall understand the words here, and propose them as the foundation of my present discourse.

Among the many things that make this life uncomfortable, and render mankind unhappy here below, this is one that has a large influence, namely, that in this mortal state we are all liable to pain, from which we shall be perfectly delivered in the life to come. The *greek* word which is here translated pain, signifies also toil and fatigue and excessive labour of the body, as well as anguish and vexation of the spirit: But since in the two other places of the new testament where it is used, the word more properly signifies the pain of the body, I presume to understand it chiefly in this sense also in my text.

I need not spend time in explaining what pain is to persons who dwell in flesh and blood: There is not one of you in this assembly but is better acquainted with the nature of it by the sense of feeling, than it is possible for the wisest philosopher to inform you by all his learned language. Yet that I may proceed regularly, I would just give you this short description of it. "Pain is an uneasy perception of the soul, occasioned by some indisposition of the body to which it is united;" whether this arise from some disorder or malady in the flesh itself, or from some injury received from without by wounds, bruises, or any thing of the like kind. Now this sort of uneasy sensations is not to be found or feared in heaven.

In order to make our present meditations on this part of the blessedness of heaven useful and joyful to us while we are here on earth, let us enquire,

I. What



- I. What are the evils or grand inconveniencies that generally flow from the pains we suffer here ; and as we go we shall survey the satisfactions which arise by our freedom from them all in heaven.
- II. What just and convincing proofs may be given that there are no such uneasy sensations to be felt in heaven, or to be feared after this life.
- III. What are the chief reasons or designs of the blessed God in sending pain on his creatures in this world ; and at the same time I shall shew that pain is banished from the heavenly state, because God has no such designs remaining to be accomplished in that world.
- IV. What lessons we may learn from the painful discipline which we feel while we are here, in order to shew there is no need of such discipline to teach us those lessons in heaven. Let us address ourselves to make these four inquiries in their order.

### S E C T I O N I.

First. "What are the evils which flow from pain, and usually attend it in this life ; and all along as we go we shall take a short view of the heavenly state, where we shall be released from all these evils and inconveniencies.

1. "Pain has a natural tendency to make the mind sorrowful as well as the body uneasy." Our souls are so nearly united to flesh and blood, that it is not possible for the mind to possess perfect happiness and ease, while the body is exposed to so many occasions of pain. It is granted, that natural courage and strength of heart may prevail in some persons to bear up their spirits under long and intense pains of the flesh ; yet they really take away so much of the ease and pleasure of life, while any of us lie under the acute sensations of them. Pain will make us confess that we are flesh and blood, and force us sometimes to cry out and groan. Even a stoic in spite of all the pride of his philosophy, will sometimes be forced, by a sigh or a groan, to confess himself a man. What are the greatest part of the groans and outcries, that are heard all round this our globe of earth, but the effects of pain, either felt or feared ?

But in heaven, where there is no pain, there shall be no sighing or groaning, nor any more crying, as my text expresses. There shall be nothing to make the flesh or the spirit uneasy, and to break the eternal thread of peace and pleasure that runs through the whole duration of the saints : Not one painful moment to interrupt the everlasting felicity of that state. When we have done with earth and mortality, we have done also with sickness and anguish of nature, and with all sorrow and vexation for ever. There are no groans in the heavenly world to break in upon the harmony of the harps and the songs of the blessed ; no sighs, no outcries, no anguish there to disturb the music and the joy of the inhabitants. And though the soul shall be united to the body new-raised from the dead, to dwell for ever in union, yet that new-raised body shall have neither any springs of pain in it, nor be capable of giving anguish or uneasiness to the indwelling spirit for ever.

2. Another evil which attends on pain is this, that "it so indisposes our nature as often to unfit us for the businesses and duties of the present state." With how much coldness and indifferency do we go about our daily work, and perform it too with many interruptions, when nature is burdened with continual pain, and the vital springs of action are overborn with perpetual uneasiness ? What a listlessness do we find

find to many of the duties of religion at such a season, unless it be to run more frequently to the throne of God, and pour out our groanings and our complaints there? Groanings and cries are the language of nature, and the children of God address themselves in this language to their heavenly Father: Blessed be the name of our gracious God, who hears every secret sigh, who is acquainted with the sense of every groan, while we mourn before him, and make our complaints to him, that we cannot worship him, nor work for him as we would do, because of the anguish and maladies of nature.

And what an indisposition and backwardness do we feel in ourselves to fulfil many of the duties towards our fellow-creatures while we ourselves are under present smart and anguish? Pain will so sensibly affect self as to draw off all our thoughts thither, and center them there, that we cannot so much employ our cares and our active powers for the benefit of our neighbours: It abates our concern for our friends, and while it awakens the spirit within us into keen sensations, it takes away the activity of the man that feels it from almost all the services of human life. When human nature bears so much it can act but little.

But what a blessed state will that be, when we shall never feel this indisposition to duties, either human or divine, through any uneasiness of the body? When we shall never more be subject to any of these painful impediments, but for ever cast off all those clogs and burdens which fetter the active powers of the soul? Then we shall be joyfully employed in such unknown and glorious services to God our Father, and to the blessed *Jesus*, as require much superior capacities to what we here possess, and shall find no weakness, no weariness, no pain throughout all the years of our immortality, *Rev. vii. 15.* None of the blessed above are at rest or idle, either day or night, but they serve him in his temple, and never cease. And chapter iv. 8. no faintness, no languors are known there. The "inhabitants of that land shall not say, I am sick:" Everlasting vigour, cheerfulness and ease shall render every blessed soul for ever zealous and active in obedience, as the angels are in heaven.

3. "Pain unfits us for the enjoyments of life, as well as for the labours and duties of it." It takes away all the pleasing satisfactions which might attend our circumstances, and renders the objects of them insipid and unrelishing. What pleasure can a rich man take in all the affluence of earthly blessings around him, while some painful distemper holds him upon the rack, and distresses him with the torture? How little delight can he find in meats or in drinks which are prepared for luxury, when sharp pain calls all his attention to the diseased part? What joy can we find in magnificent buildings, in gay and shining furniture, in elegant gardens, or in all the glittering treasures of the *Indies*, when the gout torments his hands and his feet, or the rheumatism afflicts his limbs with intense anguish? If pain attacks any part of the body, and rises to a high degree, the luxuries of life grow tasteless, and life itself is imbittered to us: Or when pains less acute are prolonged through weeks and months, and perhaps stick in our flesh all the night as well as in the day; how vain and feeble are all the efforts of the bright and gay things around us to raise the soul into cheerfulness? Therefore *Solomon* calls "old age the years wherein there is no pleasure." *Eccles. xii. 1.* because so many aches and ails in that season pursue us in a continual succession; so many infirmities and painful hours attend us usually in that stage of life, even in the best situation that mortality can boast of, as cuts off and destroys all our pleasures.

But O what a wonderful, what a joyful change shall that be, when the soul is commanded to forsake this flesh and blood, when it rises as on the wings of angels to  
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the heavenly world, and leaves every pain behind it, together with the body in the arms of death? And what a more illustrious and delightful change shall we meet in the great rising day, when our bodies shall start up out of the dust with vigorous immortality, and without any spring or seat of pain? All the unknown enjoyments with which heaven is furnished, shall be taken in by the enlarged powers of the soul with intense pleasure, and not a moment's pain shall ever interrupt them.

4. Another inconvenience and evil which belongs to pain is, that "it makes time and life itself appear tedious and tiresome, and adds a new burden to all other grievances." Many evidences of this truth are scattered throughout all nature, and on all sides of this globe. There is not one age of mankind but can furnish us with millions of instances. In what melancholy language does *Job* discover his sensations of the tiresome nature of pain? "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me: When I lie down I say, when shall I rise and the night be gone? And I am full of tossing to and fro unto the dawning of the day," *Job* vii. 3, 4. When pain takes hold of our flesh it seems to stretch the measures of time to a tedious length: We cry out as *Moses* expresses it, *Deut.* xxviii. 67. "In the morning we say, would to God it were evening; and at the return of the evening we say again, would to God it were morning."

Long are those hours indeed, whether of day-light or darkness, wherein there is no relief or intermission of acute pain. How tiresome a thing is it to count the clock at midnight in long successions, and to wait every hour for the distant approach of morning, while our eyes are unable to close themselves in slumber, and our anguish admits not the common refuge of sleep. There are multitudes among the race of mortals who have known these truths by sore experience. Blessed be God that we do not always feel them.

But when we turn our thoughts to the heavenly world, where there is no pain, there we shall find no wearisome hours, no tedious days, though eternity with all its unmeasurable lengths of duration lies before us. What a dismal thought is eternal pain? The very mention of it makes nature shudder and stand aghast; but futurity with all its endless years, in a land of peace and pleasure gives the soul the most delightful prospect, for there is no shadow of uneasiness in that state to render our abode there tiresome, or to think the ages of it long.

5. Another evil that belongs to pain is, that "it has an unhappy tendency to ruffle the passions, and to render us fretful and peevish within ourselves, as well as towards those who are round about us." Even the kindest and the tenderest hand that ministers to our relief, can hardly secure itself from the peevish quarrels of a man in extreme pain.

Not that we are to suppose that this peevish humour, this fretfulness of spirit are thereby made innocent and perfectly excused: No, by no means; but it must be acknowledged still that continuance in pain is too ready to work up the spirit into frequent disquietude and eagerness: We are tempted to fret at every thing, we quarrel with every thing, we grow impatient under every delay, angry with our best friends, sharp and sudden in our resentments, with wrathful speeches breaking out of our lips.

This peevish humour in a day of pain is so common a fault, that I fear it is too much excused and indulged. Let me rather say with myself, "My God is now putting me to the trial what sort of christian I am, and how much I have learned of self-government, and through his grace I will subdue my uneasy passions, though I cannot relieve my pain." O it is a noble point of honour gained in a sick chamber,

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or on a bed of anguish, to lie pressed with extreme pain, and yet maintain a serenity and calmness of soul; to be all meekness, and gentleness, and patience, among our friends or attendants, under the sharp twinges of it; to utter no rude or angry language, and to take every thing kindly that they say or do, and "become like a weaned child." *Psal.* cxxxii. 2. But such a character is not found in every house.

A holy soul, through the severity of pain, may sometimes in such a hour be too much ruffled by violent and sudden fits of impatience. This proceeded to such a degree even in that good man *Job*, under his various calamities and the sore boils upon his flesh, that made him "curse the day wherein he was born, and cry out in the anguish of his spirit, my soul chuseth strangling and death rather than life," *Job* iii. 1—10. and vii. 15. and there have been several instances of those who, having not the fear of God before their eyes, with hasty violence and murderous hands, have put an end to their own lives, through their wild and sinful impatience of constant pain.

But these trials are for ever finished when this life expires: Then all our pains are ended for ever if we are found among the children of God. There is not, nor can be any temptation in heaven, to fretfulness or disquietude of mind: All the peevish passions are dropped into the grave, together with the body of flesh; and those evil humours which were the sources of smart and anguish here on earth have no place in the new raised body: Those irregular juices of animal nature which tormented the nerves, and excited pain in the flesh, and which at the same time provoked choler and irritated the spirit, are never found in the heavenly mansions. There is nothing but peace and pleasure, joy and love, goodness and benevolence, ease and satisfaction diffused through all the regions on high: There are no inward springs of uneasiness to ruffle the mind, none of those fretful ferments which were wont to kindle in the mortal body, and explode themselves with fire and thunder upon every supposed offence, or even sometimes without provocation. O happy state and blessed mansions of the saints, when this body of sin shall be destroyed, and all the restless atoms that disquieted the flesh and provoked the spirit to impatience, shall be buried in the dust of death, and never, never rise again!

6. "Pain carries a temptation with it, sometimes to repine and murmur at the providence of God." Not fellow-creatures alone, but even our sovereign creator comes within the reach of the peevish humours, which are alarmed and roused by sharp or continual pain. *Jonah* the prophet, when he felt the sultry heat of the sun smite fiercely upon him, and the gourd which gave him a friendly shadow was withered away, he told God himself in a passion, that "he did well to be angry, even unto death," *Jonah* iv. 9. And even the man of *Uz*, the pattern of patience, was sometimes transported with the smart and maladies that were upon him, so that he complained against God, as well as complained to him, and used some very unbecoming expressions toward his maker. When we are under the smarting rebukes of providence, we are ready to compare ourselves with others who are in peace, and then the envious and the murmuring humour breaks out into rebellious language, "Why am I thus afflicted more than others? Why hast thou set me as a mark for thy arrows? Why dost thou not let loose thy hand and cut me off from the earth?"

But in heaven there is a glorious reverse of all such unhappy scenes: There is no pain nor any temptation to murmur at the dealings of the almighty: There is nothing that can incline us to think hardly of God: The days of chastisement are for ever ended, and painful discipline shall be used no more. We shall live for ever in the embraces of the love of God, and he shall be the object of our everlasting praise.

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Perfect felicity without the interruption of one uneasy thought, for ever forbids the inhabitants of that world to repine at their situation under the eternal smiles of that blessed being that made them.

7. To add no more, "Pain and anguish of the flesh have sometimes prevailed so far as to distract the mind as well as destroy the body." It has overpowered all the reasoning faculties of man; it has destroyed natural life, and brought it down to the grave: The senses have been confounded, and the understanding overwhelmed with severe and racking pain, especially where there hath been an impatient temper to contest with them. Extreme smart of the flesh distresses feeble nature, and turns the whole frame of it upside down in wild confusion: It has actually worn out this animal frame, and stopped all the springs of vital motion. The gout and the stone have brought death upon the patient in this manner; and a dreadful manner of dying it is, to have breath, and life and nature quite oppressed and destroyed with intense and painful sensations.

But when we survey the mansions of the heavenly world, we shall find none of these evils there: No danger of any such events as these; for there is no pain, no sorrow, no crying, no death nor destruction there. The mind shall be for ever clear and serene in the ease and happiness of the separate state: And when the body shall be raised again, that glorified body, as was intimated a little before, shall have none of the seeds of distemper in it, no ferments that can rack the nerves, or create anguish; no fever, or gout, or stone, was ever known in that country, no head-ach or heart-ach have ascended thither.

That body also shall be capable of no outward wounds nor bruises, for it is raised only for happiness, and leaves all the causes of pain behind it. It is a body made for immortality and pleasure; there the sickly christian is delivered from all the maladies of the flesh, and the twinges of acute pain which made him groan here on earth night and day. There the martyrs of the religion of *Jesus*, and all the holy confessors are free from their cruel tormentors, those surly executioners of heathen fury, or anti-christian wrath: They are for ever released from racks, and wheels, and fires, and every engine of torture and smart. Immortal ease and unfading health and cheerfulness run through their eternal state, and all the powers of the man are composed for the most regular exercises of devotion and divine joy.

Thus I have endeavoured briefly to set the different states of heaven and earth before you under this distinguishing character, that "all the tempting, the distressing, and mischievous attendants and consequences of pain," to which we are exposed in our mortal life, are for ever banished from the heavenly world.

## S E C T I O N II.

The second general inquiry was this, "What just and convincing arguments or proofs can be given, that there are no pains or uneasy sensations to be felt by the saints in a future state, nor to be feared after this life."

My answers to this question shall be very few; because I think the thing must be sufficiently evident to those who believe the new testament, and have liberty to read it.

Argument I. "God has assured us so in his word, that there is no pain for holy souls to endure in the world to come?" My text may be esteemed a sufficient proof of it; for whatsoever particular event or period of the church on earth this prophecy may refer to, yet the description is borrowed from the blessedness of heaven; and if there

shall be any such state on earth, much more will it be so in the heavenly world, whereof that period on earth is but a shadow and emblem. We are expressly told, *Rev.* xiv. 13. in order to encourage the persecuted saints and martyrs, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth, for they rest from their labours, or pains, and their works follow them;" that is, in a way of gracious recompence.

It is granted indeed by the papists themselves, that in heaven there is no pain; yet they suppose there are many and grievous pains for the soul to undergo in a place called purgatory, after the death of the body, before it arrives at heaven.

But give me leave to ask, does not *St. Paul* express himself with confidence concerning himself and his fellow-christians—"that they shall be present with the Lord when they are absent from the body," *2 Cor.* v. 8? Surely the state wherein *Christ* our Lord dwells after all his sufferings and agonies, is a state of everlasting ease without suffering; and shall not his followers dwell with him? Do we not read in the parable of our Saviour, *Luke* xvi. 22. that "*Lazarus* was no sooner dead, but his soul was carried by angels into the bosom of *Abraham*, or paradise?" Every holy soul, wherein the work of grace is begun, and sin hath received it's mortal wound, is perfectly sanctified when it is released from this body; and it puts off the body of sin and the body of flesh together, for nothing that defileth must enter into paradise, or the heavenly state, *Rev.* xxi. 27.

The word of God has appointed but two states, viz. heaven and hell, for the reception of all mankind when they depart from this world: and how vain a thing must it be for men to invent a third state, and make a purgatory of it? This is a building erected by the church of *Rome* between heaven and hell, and prepared by their wild imagination for souls of imperfect virtue, to be tormented there, with pains equal to those of hell, but of shorter duration. This state of fiery purgation, and extreme anguish, is devised by that mother of lies, partly under a pretence of completing the penances and satisfactions for the sins of men committed in this life, and partly also to purify and refine their souls from all the remaining dregs of sin, and to fill up their virtues to perfection, that they may be fit for the immediate presence of God. But does not the scripture sufficiently inform us, that the atonement or satisfaction of *Christ* for sin is full and complete in itself, and needs none of our additions in this world or another? Does not the apostle *John* tell us, *1 John* i. 7. "The blood of *Jesus Christ* cleanseth us from all sin?" Nor shall the saints after this life sin any more, to require any new atonement; nor do they carry the seeds of sin to heaven with them, but drop them together with the flesh, and all the sources of pain together: Now since neither *Christ* nor his apostles give us any intimation of such a place as purgatory for the refinement or purification of souls after this life, we have no ground to hearken to such a fable.

Argument II. "God has not provided any medium to convey pain to holy souls after they have dropped this body of flesh." They are pardoned, they are sanctified, they are accepted of God for ever; and since they are in no danger of sinning afresh by the influences of corrupt flesh and blood, therefore they are in no fear of suffering any thing thereby. And if, as some divines have supposed, there should be any pure aethereal bodies or vehicles provided for holy separate spirits, when departed from this grosser tabernacle of flesh and blood, yet it cannot be supposed that the God of all grace would mix up any seeds of pain with that aethereal matter, which is to be the occasional habitation of sanctified spirits in that state, nor that he would make any avenues or doors of entrance for pain into these refined vehicles, when the state of their sinning and their trial is for ever finished.

Nor

Nor will the body at the final resurrection of the saints be made for a medium of any painful sensations. All the pains of nature are ended, when the first union between flesh and spirit is dissolved. When this body lies down to sleep in the dust, it shall never awake again with any of the principles of sin or pain in it: "Though it be sown in weakness, it is raised in power; though it be sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory;" 1 Cor. xv. 43. and we shall be made like the Son of God, without sorrow and without sin for ever.

Argument III. "There are no moral causes or reasons why there should be any thing of pain provided for the heavenly state." And if there be no moral reasons for it, surely God will not provide pains for his creatures without reason! But this thought leads me to the next general head of my discourse.

### S E C T I O N III.

The third general enquiry which I proposed to make was this, "What may be the chief moral reasons, motives, or designs of the blessed God in sending pain on his creatures here below; and at the same time I shall shew that these designs and purposes of God are finished, and they have no place in heaven."

I. Then, "Pain is sometimes sent into our natures to awaken slothful and drowsy christians out of their spiritual slumbers, or to rouse stupid sinners from a state of spiritual death." Intense and sharp pain of the flesh has oftentimes been the appointed and effectual means of providence to attain these desirable ends.

Pain is like a rod in the hand of God, wherewith he smites sinners that are dead in their trespasses, and his Spirit joins with it to awaken them into spiritual life. This rod is sometimes so smarting and severe, that it will make a senseless and ungodly wretch look upwards to the hand that smites it, and take notice of the rebuke of heaven, though all the thundering and lightening of the word, and all the terrors of hell denounced there, could not awaken them.

Acute pain is also a common instrument in our heavenly Father's hand, to recover backsliding saints from their secure and drowsy frames of spirit. David often found it so, and speaks it plainly in *Psalms xxxviii.* and *xxxix.* and in *Psal. cxix. 67.* he confesses, "before I was afflicted I went astray; but when he had felt the scourge, he learned to obey, and to keep the word of his God."

But there is no need of this discipline in heaven; no need of this smarting scourge to make dead sinners feel their maker's hand, in order to rouse them into life, for there are no such inhabitants in that world: Nor is there any need of such divine and paternal discipline of God in those holy mansions, where there is no drowsy christian to be awakened, no wandering spirit that wants to be reduced to duty: And where the designs of such smarting strokes have no place, pain itself must be for ever banished; for God does not willingly afflict, nor take delight in grieving the children of men, without substantial reasons for it. *Lam. iii. 33.*

2. Another use of bodily pain and anguish in this world is, "to punish men for their faults and follies, to make them know what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God, and thereby to guard them against new temptations," *Jer. ii. 19.* Thy own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; that is, by means of the smarting chastisements they bring upon men. When God makes the sinner taste of the fruit of his own ways, he makes others also observe how hateful a thing every sin is in the sight of God, which he thinks fit so terribly to punish.

This is one general reason why special diseases, maladies, and plagues, are spread over a whole nation, viz. to punish the sins of the inhabitants, when they have provoked God by public and spreading iniquities. War and famine, with all their terrible train of anguish and agony, and the dying pains which they diffuse over a kingdom, are rods of punishment in the hand of God, the governor of the world, to declare from heaven and earth his indignation against an ungodly and an unrighteous age.

This indeed is one design of the pains and torments of hell, where God inflicts pain without intermission: And this is sometimes the purpose of God in his painful providences here on earth: Shall I rise yet higher and say, that this was one great design in the eye of God, "when it pleased the Father to bruise" his best beloved Son, and put him under the impressions of extreme pain, *Ijai. liii. 10.* viz. to discover to the world the abominable evil that was in sin? While *Jesus* stood in the stead of sinners, then "his soul was exceeding sorrowful even to death, and he sweat drops of blood," *Luke xxii. 44.* under the pressure of his agonies, to let the world see what the sin of man had deserved: And sometimes God smites his own children in this world with smarting strokes of correction, when they have indulged any iniquity, to shew the world that God hates sin in his own people wheresoever he finds it, and to bring his children back again to the paths of righteousness.

But "in the heavenly state there are no faults to punish, no follies to chastise." *Jesus*, our surety in the days of his flesh, has suffered those sorrows which made atonement for sin, and that anguish of his holy soul, and the blood of his cross, have satisfied the demands of God; so that with honour he can pardon ten thousand penitent criminals, and provide an inheritance of ease and blessedness for them for ever. When once we are dismissed from this body, the spirit is thoroughly sanctified, and there is no fire of purgatory needful to burn out the remains of sin: Those foolish invented flames are but false fire, kindled by the priests of *Rome* to fright the souls of the dying, and to squeeze money out of them to purchase so many vain and idle masses to relieve the souls of the dead. Upon our actual release from this flesh and blood, neither the guilt nor the power of sin shall attend the saints in their flight to heaven: All the spirits that arrive there are made perfect in holiness without new scourges, and commence a state of felicity that shall never be interrupted.

3. God has appointed pain in this world, "to exercise and try the virtues and the graces of his people." As gold is thrown into the fire to prove and try how pure it is from any coarse alloy, so the children of God are sometimes left for a season in the furnace of sufferings, partly to refine them from their dross, and partly to discover their purity and their substantial weight and worth.

Sometimes "God lays smarting pain with his own hand" on the flesh of his people, on purpose to try their graces: When we endure the pain without murmuring at providence, then it is we come off conquerors. Christian submission and silence under the hand of God is one way to victory. "I was dumb, says *David*, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," *Psal. xxxix. 9.* Our love to God, our resignation to his will, our holy fortitude and our patience find a proper trial in such smarting seasons. Perhaps when some severe pain first seizes and surprizes us, we find ourselves "like a wild bull in a net," and all the powers of nature are thrown into tumult and disquietude, so that we have no possession of our own spirits; but when the hand of God has continued us a while under this divine discipline, we learn to bow down to his sovereignty, we lie at his footstool calm and composed: He brings our haughty and reluctant spirits down to his foot, and makes us lie humble in the dust, and we wait



wait with patience the hour of his release. *Rom. v. 3, 4.* "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience under tribulation gives us experience" of the dealings of God with his people, and makes our way to a confirmed hope in his love. The evidence of our various graces grows brighter and stronger under a smarting rod, till we are settled in a joyful confidence, and the soul rests in God himself.

Sometimes he has permitted evil angels to put the flesh to pain, for the trial of his children; so *Job* was smitten with sore boils from head to foot by the malice of *Satan*, at the permission of God; but "knows the way that I take, says this holy man, and when he has tried me I shall come forth as gold; for my foot hath held his steps through all these trials, neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips," *Job xxiii. 10—12.*

At other times "he suffers wicked men to spend their own malice, and to inflict dreadful pains on his own children:" Look back to the years of ancient persecution in the land of *Israel*, under Jewish or heathen tyrants; review the annals of *Great Britain*; look over the seas into popish kingdoms; take a view of the cursed courts of inquisition in *Spain*, *Portugal*, and *Italy*; behold the weapons, the scourges, the racks, the machines of torture and engines of cruelty, devised by the barbarous and inhuman wit of men, to constrain the saints to renounce their faith, and dishonour their Saviour. See the slow fires where the martyrs have been roasted to death with lingering torment: These are seasons of terrible trial indeed, whereby the malice of *Satan* and *Anti-christ* would force the servants of God, and the followers of the lamb, into sinful compliances with their idolatry, or a desertion of their post of duty: But the Spirit of God has supported his children to bear a glorious testimony to pure and undefiled religion; and they have seemed to mock the rage of their tormentors, to defy all the stings of pain, and triumphed over all their vain attempts, to compel them to sin against their God.

One would sometimes be ready to wonder, that a God of infinite mercy and compassion should suffer his own dear children to be tried in so terrible a manner as this; but unsearchable wisdom is with him, and he does not give an account to men of all the reasons and the rules of his conduct. This has been his method of providence with his saints at special seasons, under the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, and perhaps under all the dispensations of God to men, from the days of *Cain* and *Abel* to the present hour. Our blessed Lord has given us many warnings of it in his word by his own mouth, and by all his three apostles, *Paul*, *Peter*, and *John*: "They that will live godly in *Christ Jesus* shall suffer persecution:" *2 Tim. iii. 12.* "Think it not strange therefore concerning the fiery trial:" *1 Pet. iv. 12.* "The devil, by his wicked agents, shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days, but fear none of the things which thou shalt suffer: Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." *Rev. ii. 10.*

But blessed be God, that this world is the only state of such trials. As soon as the state of probation is finished, the state of recompence begins. Such hard and painful exercises to try the virtues of the saints, have no place in that world which was not made for a stage of trial and conflict, but a palace of glorious reward. "Heaven is the place where crowns and prizes are distributed to all those blessed ones who have endured temptation," and who have been found faithful to the death. These sharp and dreadful combats with pain, have no place among conquerors, who have finished their warfare, and have begun their triumph.

4. "Pain is sent us by the hand of providence to teach us many a lesson both of truth and duty, which perhaps we should never have learned so well without it." This sharp sensation awakens our best powers to attend to those truths and duties which we took less notice of before: In the time of perfect ease we are ready to let them lie neglected or forgotten, till God our great master takes his rod in hand for our instruction.

#### S E C T I O N IV.

And this leads me to the fourth general head of my discourse, and that is, to enquire what are those spiritual lessons which may be learned on earth, from the pains we have suffered, or may suffer in the flesh. I shall divide them into two sorts, viz. Lessons of instruction in useful truths, and lessons of duty, or practical christianity; and there are many of each kind with which the disciples of *Christ* in this world may be better acquainted, by the actual sensations of pain, than any other way: In this world, I say, and in this only; for in heaven most of these lessons of doctrine and practice are utterly needless to be taught, either because they have been so perfectly well known to all it's inhabitants before, and their present situation makes it impossible to forget them; or they shall be let into the fuller knowledge of them in heaven in a far superior way of instruction, and without any such uneasy discipline. And this I shall evidently make appear, when I have first enumerated all these general lessons both of truth and duty, and shewn how wisely the great God has appointed them to be taught here on earth, under the scourge and the wholesome discipline of pain in the flesh.

I. "The lessons of instruction here on earth, or the useful truths," are such as these:

1. Pain teaches us feelingly "what feeble creatures we are, and how entirely dependent on God our maker for every hour and moment of ease." We are naturally wild and wanton creatures, and especially in the season of youth, our gayer powers are gadding abroad at the call of every temptation; but when God sends his arrows into our flesh, he arrests us on a sudden, and teaches us that we are but men, poor feeble dying creatures, soon crushed, and sinking under his hand. We are ready to exult in the vigour of youth, when animal nature, in it's prime of strength and glory, raises our pride, and supports us in a sort of self-sufficiency; we are so vain and foolish, as to imagine nothing can hurt us: But when the pain of a little nerve seizes us, and we feel the acute twinges of it, we are made to confess that our flesh is not iron, nor our bones brass; that we are by no means the lords of ourselves, or sovereigns over our own nature: We cannot remove the least degree of pain, till the Lord who sent it takes off his hand, and commands the smart to cease. If the torture fix itself but in a finger or a toe, or in the little nerve of a tooth, what intense agonies may it create in us, and that beyond all the relief of medicines, till the moment wherein God shall give us ease. This lesson of the frailty of human nature must be some time written upon our hearts in deep and smarting characters, by intense pain, before we have learned it well; and this gives us, for time to come, a happy guard against our pride and vanity. *Psal. xxxix. 10.* When *David* felt the stroke of the hand of God upon him, and corrected him with sharp rebukes for his iniquity, he makes a humble address to God, and acknowledges that his "beauty, and all the  
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boasted excellencies of flesh and blood, consume away like a moth : surely every man is vanity !” *Psal.* xxxix. 10, 11.

2. The next useful truth in which pain instructs us, is “ the great evil that is contained in the nature of sin, because it is the occasion of such intense pain and misery to human nature.” I grant, I have hinted this before, but I would have it more powerfully impressed upon our spirits, and therefore I introduce it here again in this part of my discourse as a spiritual lesson, which we learn under the discipline of our heavenly Father.

It is true indeed that innocent nature was made capable of pain in the first *Adam*, and the innocent nature of the man *Jesus Christ* suffered acute pain, when he came in the likeness of sinful flesh : But if *Adam* had continued in his state of innocence, it is a great question with me, whether he or his children would have actually tasted or felt what acute pain is ; I mean such pain as we now suffer, such as makes us so far unhappy, and such as we cannot immediately relieve.

It may be granted, that natural hunger, and thirst, and weariness after labour, would have carried in them some degrees of pain or uneasiness, even in the state of innocence ; but these are necessary to awaken nature to seek food and rest, and to put the man in mind to supply his natural wants ; and man might have immediately relieved them himself, for the supplies of ease were at hand : and these sort of uneasinesses were abundantly compensated by the pleasure of rest and food, and perhaps they were in some measure necessary to make food and rest pleasant.

But surely if sin had never been known in our world, all the pain that arises from inward diseases of nature, or from outward violence, had been a stranger to the human race, an unknown evil among the sons of men, as it is among the holy angels, the sons of God. There had been no distempers or acute pains to meet young babes at their entrance into this world ; no maladies to attend the sons and daughters of *Adam* through the journey of life ; and they should have been translated to some higher and happier region, without death, and without pain.

It was the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that acquainted *Adam* and his offspring with the evil of pain. Or if pain could have attacked innocence in any form or degree, it would have been but in a way of trial, to exercise and illustrate his virtues ; and if he had endured the test, and continued innocent, I am satisfied he should never have felt any pain which was not over-balanced with superior pleasure, or abundantly recompensed by succeeding rewards and satisfactions.

Some persons indeed have supposed it within the reach of the sovereignty of God to afflict and torment a sinless creature : Yet I think it is hardly consistent with his goodness, or his equity, to constrain an innocent being, which has no sin, to suffer pain without his own consent, and without giving that creature equal or superior pleasure as a recompence. Both these were the case in the sufferings of our blessed Lord in his human nature, who was perfectly innocent : It was with his own consent that he gave himself up to be a sacrifice, when “ it pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief ;” *Isai.* liii. 10. and God rewarded him with transcendent honours and joys after his passion, he exalted him to his own right hand and his throne, and gave him authority over all things.

In general, therefore, we have sufficient reason to say, that as sin brought in death into human nature, so it was sin that brought in pain also ; and wheresoever there is any pain suffered among the sons and daughters of men, I am sure we may venture to assert boldly, that the sufferer may learn the evil of sin. Even the Son of God him-

himself, when he suffered pain in his body, as well as anguish in his spirit, has told us by his apostles, that our sins were the causes of it; "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and for our iniquities he was bruised," so says *Isaiab* the prophet, *Isai.* liii. 5. and so speaks *Peter* the apostle. *1 Pet.* ii. 24.

And sometimes the providence of God is pleased to point out to us the particular sin we are guilty of by the special punishment which he inflicts. In *Psal.* cvii. 17, 18. "Fools are said to be afflicted, that is, with pain and sickness, because of their transgressions of riot and intemperance; their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death." Sickness and pain over-balance all the pleasures of luxury in meats and drinks, and make the epicure pay dear for the elegance of his palate, and the sweet relish of his morsels or his cups. The drunkard in his debauches, is preparing some smarting pain for his own punishment. And let us all be so wise as to learn this lesson by the pains we feel, that sin which introduced them into the world is an abominable thing in the sight of God, because it provokes him to use such smarting strokes of discipline in order to recover us from our folly, and to reduce us back again to the paths of righteousness.

"O blessed smart! O happy pain, that helps to soften the heart of a sinner, and melts it to receive divine instruction, which before was hard as iron, and attended to no divine counsel! We are ready to wander from God, and forget him amongst the months and years of ease and pleasure; but when the soul is melted in this furnace of painful sufferings, it more easily receives some divine stamp, some lasting impression of truth, which the words of the preacher and the book of God had before inculcated without success, and repeated almost in vain. Happy is the soul that learns this lesson thoroughly, and gains a more lasting acquaintance with the evil of sin, and abhorrence of it, under the smarting stroke of the hand of God. "Blessed is the man whom thou correctest, O Lord, and teachest him the truths that are written in thy law," *Psal.* xciv. 12.

3. Pain in the flesh teaches us also "how dreadfully the great God can punish sin and sinners when he pleases, in this world, or in the other." It is written in the song of *Moses*, the man of God, *Psal.* xc. 11. "According to thy fear, so is thy wrath," that is, the displeasure and anger of the blessed God is as terrible as we can fear it to be; and he can inflict on us such intense pains and agonies, whose distressing smart we may learn by feeling a little of them. Unknown multiplications of racking pain, lengthened out beyond years and ages, is part of the description of hellish torments, and the other part lies in the bitter twinges of conscience, and keen remorse of soul for our past iniquities, but without all hope. Behold a man under a sharp fit of the gout or stone, which wrings the groans from his heart, and tears from his eye-lids; this is the hand of God in the present world, where there are many mixtures of divine goodness; but if ever we should be so wilfully unhappy as to be plunged into those regions where the almighty vengeance of God reigns, without one beam of divine light or love, this must be dreadful indeed. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, *Heb.* x. 31. to be banished far off from all that is holy and happy, and to be confined to that dark dungeon, that place of torture, "where the gnawing worm of conscience never dies, and where the fire of divine anger is never quenched." *Mark* ix. 43.

We who are made up of flesh and blood, and interwoven with many nerves and muscles, and membranes, may learn a little of the terrors of the Lord, if we reflect that every nerve, muscle, and membrane of the body is capable of giving us most sharp and painful sensations. We may be wounded in every sensible part of nature;  
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smart and anguish may enter in at every pore, and make almost every atom of our constitution an instrument of our anguish. "Fearfully and wonderfully are we formed," *Psal.* cxxxix. 14. indeed, capable of pain all over us; and if a God should see fit to punish sin to its full desert, and penetrate every atom of our nature with pain, what surprising and intolerable misery must that be? And if God should raise the wicked out of their graves to dwell in such sort of bodies again, on purpose to shew his just anger against sin in their punishment, how dreadful, beyond expression, must their anguish be through the long ages of eternity? God can form even such bodies for immortality, and can sustain them to endure everlasting agonies.

Let us think again, that when the hand of our creator sends pain into our flesh, we cannot avoid it, we cannot fly from it, we carry it with us wheresoever we go: His arrows stick fast in us, and we cannot shake them off; oftentimes it appears that we can find no relief from creatures: And if by the destruction of ourselves, that is, of these bodies, we plunge ourselves into the world of spirits at once, we shall find the same God of holiness and vengeance there, who can pierce our souls with unknown sorrows, equal, if not superior, to all that we felt in the flesh. "If I make my bed in the grave, Lord, thou art there," *Psal.* cxxxix. 6. thy hand of justice and punishment would find me out.

What a formidable thing it is to such creatures as we are, to have God, our maker for our enemy! That God, who has all the tribes of pain and disease, and the innumerable host of maladies at his command! He fills the air in which we breathe with fevers and pestilences as often as he will: The gout and the stone arrest and seize us by his order, and stretch us upon a bed of pain: Rheumatisms and cholics come and go wheresoever he sends them, and execute his anger against criminals. He keeps in his hand all the various springs of pain, and every invisible rack that can torment the head or members, the bowels or the joints of man: He sets them at their dreadful work when and where he pleases. Let the sinner tremble at the name of his power and terror, who can fill both flesh and spirit with thrilling agonies; and yet he never punishes beyond what our iniquities deserve. How necessary is it for such sinful and guilty beings as we are, whose natures are capable of such constant and acute sensations of pain, to have the God of nature our friend and our reconciled God?

4. When we feel the acute pains of nature, we may learn something of the exceeding greatness of the love of *Christ*, even the Son of God, that glorious spirit, who took upon him flesh and blood for our sakes, that he might be capable of pain and death, though he had never sinned. He endured intense anguish, to make atonement for our crimes. "Because the children whom he came to save from misery were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same," that he might suffer in the flesh, and by his sufferings put away our sins. *Heb.* ii. 14.

Happy was he in his Father's bosom, and the delight of his soul through many long ages before his incarnation: But he condescended to be born "in the likeness of sinful flesh," that he might feel such smart and sorrows as our sins had exposed us to. His innocent and holy soul was incapable of such sort of sufferings till he put on this clothing of human nature, and became a surety for sinful perishing creatures.

Let us survey his sufferings a little. He was born to sorrow, and trained up through the common uneasy circumstances of the infant and childish state, till he

grew up to man: What pains did attend him in hunger and thirst, and weariness, while he travelled on foot from city to city, through wilds and deserts, where there was no food nor rest? The Son of man sometimes wanted the common bread of nature, nor had he where to lay his head. What uneasy sensations was he exposed to, when he was buffeted, when he was smitten on the cheek, when his tender flesh was scourged with whips, and his temples were crowned with thorns, when his hands and his feet were barbarously torn with rude nails, and fastened to the cross, where the whole weight of his body hung on those wounds? And what man or angel can tell the inward anguish, when "his soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death," and the conflicts and agonies of his spirit forced out the drops of bloody sweat through every pore. It was by the extreme torture of his nature that he was supposed to expire on the cross; these were the pangs of his atonement and agonies that expiated the sins of men.

"O blessed *Jesus!* what manner of sufferings were these? And what manner of love was it that willingly gave up thy sacred nature to sustain them? And what was the design of them, but to deliver us from the wrath of God in hell, to save our flesh and spirit from eternal anguish and distress there? Why was he made such a curse for us, but that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, *Gal. iii. 13.* and the just punishment of our own iniquities?"

Let us carry our thoughts of his love, and our benefit by it, yet one step further: Was it not by these sorrows, and this painful passion, that he provided for us this very heaven of happiness, where we shall be for ever freed from all pain? Were they not all endured by him to procure a paradise of pleasure, a mansion of everlasting peace and joy for guilty creatures, who had merited everlasting pain? Was it not by these his agonies in the mortal body, which he assumed, that he purchased for each of us a glorified body, strong and immortal as his own when he rose from the dead, a body which has no seeds of disease or pain in it, no springs of mortality or death? May glory, honour and praise, with supreme pleasure, ever attend the sacred person of our redeemer, whose sorrows and anguish of flesh and spirit were equal to our misery, and to his own compassion.

5. Another lesson, which we are taught by the long and tiresome pains of nature, "is the value and worth of the word of God, and the sweetness of a promise, which can give the kindest relief to a painful hour, and sooth the anguish of nature." They teach us the excellency of the covenant of grace, which has sometimes strengthened the feeblest pieces of human nature to bear intense sufferings in the body, and which sanctifies them all to our advantage. Painful and tiresome maladies teach us to improve the promises to valuable purposes, and the promises take away half the smart of our pains by the sensations of divine love let into the soul.

We read of philosophers and heroes in some ancient histories, who could endure pain by dint of reasoning, by a pride of their science, by an obstinacy of heart, or by natural courage; but a christian takes the word of a promise, and lies down upon it in the midst of intense pains of nature; and the pleasure of devotion supplies him with such ease, that all the reasonings of philosophy, all the courage of nature, all the anodynes of medicine, and soothing plaisters have attempted without success. When a child of God can read his Father's love in a promise, and by searching into the qualifications of his own soul, can lay faster hold of it by a living faith, the rage of his pain is much allayed, and made half easy. A promise is a sweet couch to rest a languishing body in the midst of pains, and a soft repose for the head or heart-ach.

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The *stoics* pretended to give ease to pain, by persuading themselves there was no evil in it; as though the mere misnaming of things would destroy their nature: But the christian, by a sweet submission to the evil which his heavenly Father inflicts upon his flesh, reposes himself at the foot of God on the covenant of grace, and bears the wounds and the smart with much more serenity and honour. "It is my heavenly Father that scourges me, and I know he designs me no hurt, though he fills my flesh with present pain: His own presence, and the sense of his love, soften the anguish of all that I feel: He bids me not yield to fear, for when "I pass through the fires he will be with me; and he that loved me, and died for me, has suffered greater sorrows and more anguish on my account, than what he calls me to bear under the strokes of his wise and holy discipline: He has left his word with me as an universal medicine to relieve me under all my anguish, till he shall bring me to those mansions on high, where sorrows and pains are found no more."

6. Anguish and pain of nature here on earth teach us "the excellency and use of the mercy-seat in heaven, and the admirable privilege of prayer." Even the sons of mere nature are ready to think of God at such a season; and they who never prayed before, "pour out a prayer before him when his chastening is upon them." *Isai.* xxvi. 16. A hour of twinging and tormenting pain, when creatures and medicines can give no relief, drives them to the throne of God to try whether he will relieve them or no. But much more delightful is it for a child of God that has been used to address the throne of grace, to run thither with pleasure and hope, and to spread all his anguish before the face of his heavenly Father. The blessed God has built this mercy-seat for his people to bring all their sorrows thither, and spread them before his eyes in all their smarting circumstances, and he has been often pleased to speak a word of relief.

Our Lord *Jesus Christ*, when he dwelt in flesh and blood, practised this part of religion with holy satisfaction and success. "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and an angel was sent to strengthen and comfort him," *Luke* xxii. 43, 44. This was the relief of holy *David* in ancient times, *Psal.* xxv. 18. "Look upon my affliction and my pain, and pardon all my sins." *Psal.* cxvi. 3, 4. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell, or the grave, took hold of me; then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." And when he found a gracious answer to his request, he acknowledges the grace of God therein, and charges his soul to dwell near to God; "return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee: I was brought low, and he helped me, he delivered my soul from death, and my eyes from tears," verses 6—8.

But we have stronger encouragement than *David* was acquainted with, since it is revealed to us, that we have a high-priest at this throne ready to bespeak all necessary relief for us there, *Heb.* ii. 18. "A high-priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," who has sustained the same sorrows and pains in the flesh, who can pity and relieve his people under their maladies and acutest anguish, *Heb.* iv. 15. When we groan and sigh under continued pains, they are ready to make nature weary and faint: We groan unto the Lord, who knows the language of our frailty: Our high-priest carries every groan to the mercy-seat: His compassion works towards his brethren, and he will suffer them to continue no longer under this discipline, than is necessary for their own best improvement and happiness.

O how much of this sort of consolation has many a christian learned and tasted, by a holy intercourse with heaven, in such painful seasons? How much has he learned of the tender mercies of God the Father, and of the pity and sympathy of our great high-priest above? Who would be content to live in such a painful world as this is, without the pleasure and relief of prayer? Who would live without an interest at this mercy-seat, and without the supporting friendship of this advocate at the throne?

Thus I have run over the chief lessons of instruction or doctrine, which may be derived from our sensations of pain here in this world: But there is no need of this sort of discipline in the blessed regions of heaven to teach the inhabitants such truths.

They well remember what feeble helpless creatures they were, when they dwelt in flesh and blood; but they have put off those fleshly garments of mortality, with all it's weaknesses together. The spirits of the blessed know nothing of those frailties, nor shall the bodies of the saints, new-raised from the dust, bring back any of their old infirmities with them. These blessed creatures know well how intirely dependent they are for all things upon God, their creator, without the need of pains and maladies to teach them, for they live every moment with God, and in a full dependence upon him: They are supported in their life, and all it's everlasting blessings, by his immediate presence, power, and mercy.

They have no need of pain in those fields or gardens of pleasure to teach them the evil of sin; they well remember all the sorrows they have passed through in their mortal state, while they were traversing the wilderness of this world, and they know that sin was the cause of them all. They see the evil of sin in the glass of the divine holiness, and the hateful contrariety that is in it to the nature of God is discovered in the immediate light of all his perfections, his wisdom, his truth and his goodness. They behold the evil of sin in the marks of the sufferings of their blessed Saviour; he appears in glory "as the lamb that was slain," and carries some memorials of his death about him, to let the saints know for ever what he has suffered to make atonement for their sins.

Nor have the blessed above any need to learn how dreadfully God can punish sin and sinners, while they behold his indignation going forth in a long and endless stream, to make the wicked enemies of God in hell for ever justly miserable: And in this sense it may be said, that "the smoke of their torments comes up before God and his holy angels, and his saints for ever," *Rev. xiv. 10.*

Nor do these happy beings stand in need of new sensations of pain, to teach them the exceeding greatness of the love of *Christ*, who exposed himself to intense and smarting anguish, both of flesh and spirit, to procure their salvation: For while they dwell amidst the blessednesses of that state, which the redeemer purchased with the price of his own sufferings, they can never forget his love.

Nor do they want to learn in heaven the value of the word of God and his promises, by which they were supported under their pains and sorrows in this mortal state. Those promises have been fulfilled to them partly on earth, and in a more glorious and abundant manner in the heavenly world. They relish the sweetness of all those words of mercy, in reviewing the means whereby divine grace sustained them in their former state of trial, and in the complete accomplishment of the best of those promises in their present situation amidst ten thousand endless blessings.

And if any of them were too cold and remiss, and infrequent in their applications to the mercy-seat by prayer, when they were here on earth, and stood in need of chastisement



chastisement to make them pour out their prayers to God, yet they can never forget the value of this privilege, while they themselves dwell round about the throne, and behold all their ancient sincere addresses to the mercy-seat answered and swallowed up in the full fruition of their present glories and joys. Praise is properly the language of heaven, when all their wants are supplied, and their prayers on earth are finished; and whatever further desires they may have to present before God, the throne of grace is ever at hand, and God himself is ever in the midst of them to bestow every proper blessing in its season that belongs to the heavenly world. Not one of them can any more stand in need of chastisement or painful exercises of the flesh to drive them to the throne of God, while they are at home in their Father's house, and for ever near him and his all-sufficiency. It is from thence they are constantly deriving immortal supplies of blessedness, as from a spring that will never fail.

## S E C T I O N V.

I proceed now to consider in the last place, what are the "practical lessons which pain may teach us while we are here on earth, in our state of probation and discipline, and shall afterward make it evident, that there is no need of pain in heaven for the same purposes."

1. The frequent returns of pain may put us in mind "to offer to God his due sacrifices of praise for the months and years of ease which we have enjoyed." We are too ready to forget the mercy of God herein, unless we are awakened by new painful sensations; and when we experience new relief, then our lips are opened with thankfulness, and our mouth shews forth his praise: Then we cry out with devout language, "Blessed be the Lord that has delivered us!" When we have been oppressed for some time with extreme anguish, then one day, or one hour of ease fills the heart and the tongue with thankfulness; "blessed be the God of nature that has appointed medicines to restore our ease, and blessed be that goodness that has given success to them!" What a rich mercy is it, under our acute torments, that there are methods of relief and healing found among the powers of nature, among the plants and the herbs, and the mineral stores which are under ground? Blessed be the Lord, who in the course of his providence has given skill to physicians to compose and to apply the proper means of relief! Blessed be that hand that has planted every herb in the field or the garden, and has made the bowels of the earth to teem with medicines for the recovery of our health and ease; and blessed be his name who has rebuked our maladies, who has constrained the smarting diseases to depart by the use of balms and balsams that are happily applied!

While we enjoy the benefits of common life, in health of body and in easy circumstances, we are too often thoughtless of the hand of God, which showers down these favours of heaven upon us in a long and constant succession; but when he sees fit to touch us with his finger, and awaken some lurking malady within us, our ease vanishes, our days are restless and painful, and tiresome nights of darkness pass over us without sleep or repose. Then we repent that we have so long forgotten the God of our mercies; and we learn to lift up our praises to the Lord, that every night of our lives has not been restless, that every day and hour has not been a season of rack-ing pain. Blessed be the Lord that enables us, without anguish or uneasiness, to fulfil the common business of the day; and blessed be his hand that draws the peaceful curtains of the night round about us! And even in the midst of moderate pains,  
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we bless his name who gives us refreshing slumbers ; and we grow more careful to employ and improve every moment of returning ease, as the most proper way of expressing our thankfulness to our almighty healer.

Alas, what poor, sorry, sinful creatures are we in the present state, who want to be taught the value of our mercies by the removal of them ! The man of a robust and vigorous make, and a healthy constitution, knows not the true worth of health and ease, nor sets a due value upon these blessings of heaven ; but we are taught to thank God feelingly, for an easy hour after long-repeated twinges of pain : We bless that goodness which gives us an easy night after a day of distressing anguish. Blessed be the God of nature and grace, that has not made the gout or the stone immortal, nor subjected our sensible powers to an everlasting cholic or tooth-ach.

2. Pain in the flesh more effectually teaches us to sympathize with those who suffer. We learn a tenderness of soul experimentally by our own sufferings. We generally love self so well, that we forget our neighbours under special tribulation and distress, unless we are made to feel them too. In a particular manner, when our nature is pinched and pierced through with some smarting malady, we learn to pity those who lie groaning under the same disease. A kindred of sorrows and sufferings works up our natures into compassion, and we find our own hearts more sensibly affected with the groans of our friends under a sharp fit of the gout or rheumatism, when we ourselves have felt the stings of the same distemper.

Our blessed Saviour himself, though he wanted not compassion and love to the children of men, since he came down from heaven on purpose to die for them, yet he is represented to us as our merciful high-priest, who had learned sympathy and compassion to our sorrows in the same way of experience as we learn it. He was incompassed about with infirmities, when he took the sinless frailties of our nature upon him, that he might learn to pity us under those frailties. " In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted : For we have not a high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, though he was always without sin ; and by the things which he suffered, he may be said, after the manner of men, to learn sympathy and pity to miserable creatures, as well as obedience to God, who is blessed for ever," *Heb.* ii. 18. and chapter iv. 15. and chapter v. 2, 8.

3. Since our natures are subject to pain, it should teach us " watchfulness against every sin, lest we double our own distresses by the mixture of guilt with them." How careful should we be to keep always a clear conscience, that we may be able at all times to look up with pleasure to the hand of God who smites us, and be better composed to endure the pains which he inflicts upon us for our trial and improvement in grace. Innocence and piety, and a peaceful conscience, are an admirable defence to support the spirit against the overwhelming efforts of bodily pain : But when inward reproaches of mind, and a racking conscience join with acute pain in the flesh, it is double misery, and aggravated wretchedness. The scourges and inward remorse of our own hearts, joined to the sorrows of nature, add torment to torment. How dreadful is it when we are forced to confess, " I have procured all this to myself by intemperance, by my rashness, by my obstinacy against the advice of friends, and rebellion against the commands of God !"

Probably it was such circumstances as these, that gave the soul of *David* double anguish, " when his bones waxed old, through his roaring all the day long, when day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him ; and his moisture was turned in-

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to the drought of summer; when he complained unto God, thy arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore: There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thy anger; nor any rest in my bones, because of my sin. My iniquities are gone over my head as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts, all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." The deep of anguish in my flesh calls to the deep of sorrow in my soul, and make a tremendous tumult within me. "My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness: I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart;" nor could he find any rest or ease till he acknowledged his sin unto God, and confessed his transgressions, and till he had some comfortable hope that God had forgiven the iniquity of his sin. See this sorrowful scene exemplified in a very affecting manner in *Psalms* xxxii. and xxxviii. Happy is the man that walks closely with his God in the days of health and ease, that whenever it shall please his heavenly Father to try him with smarting pain, he may find sweet relief from a peaceful conscience, and humble appeals to God concerning his own sincerity and watchfulness.

4. Pain in the flesh may sometimes be sent by the hand of God, to teach us "to wean ourselves by degrees from this body, which we love too well; this body, which has all the springs of pain in it." How little should we be fond of this flesh and blood in the present feeble state, wherein we are continually liable to one malady or another; to the head-ach or the heart-ach, to wounds or bruises, and uneasy sensations of various kinds? Nor can the soul secure itself from them, while it is so closely united to this mortal body. And yet we are too fond of our present dwelling, though it be but in a cottage of clay, feeble and ruinous, where the winds and the storms are continually ready to break in and distress us. A sorry habitation indeed for an immortal spirit, since sin has mingled so many diseases in our constitution, has made so many avenues for smart and anguish in our flesh, and we are capable of admitting pain and agonies at every pore.

Pain is appointed to be a sort of balance to the "tempting pleasures of life, and to make us feel that perfect happiness does not grow among the inhabitants of flesh and blood. Pain takes away the pleasures of the day, and the repose of the night, and makes life bitter in all the returning seasons. The God of nature and grace is pleased, by sending sickness and pain, to loosen his own children by degrees from their fond attachment to this fleshly tabernacle, and to make us willing to depart at his call.

A long continuance of pain, or the frequent repeated twinges of it, will "teach a christian and incline him to meet death with courage, at the appointed hour of release." This will much abate the fierceness of the king of terrors, when he appears as a sovereign physician to finish every malady of nature. Death is sanctified to the holy soul, and by the covenant of grace this curse of nature is changed into a blessing. The grave is a safe retiring place from all the attacks of disease and anguish: And there are some incurables here on earth, which can find no perfect relief but in the grave. Neither maladies, nor tyrants, can stretch their terrors beyond this life; and if we can but look upon death as a conquered enemy, and it's sting taken away by the death of *Christ*, we shall easily venture into this last combat, and obtain an everlasting victory. Blessed be God for the grave as a refuge from smarting pains! Thanks be to God through *Christ Jesus*, who enables us to triumph over the last pain of nature, and to say, "O death! where is thy sting? And, O grave! where is thy victory?" *1 Cor. xv. 55.*

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In the fifth and last place, by the pains that we suffer in this body, "we are taught to breathe after the blessedness of the heavenly state, wherein there shall be no pain." When the soul is dismissed from the bonds of flesh, and presented before God in the world of spirits without spot or blemish by *Jesus*, our great forerunner, it is then appointed to dwell among the "spirits of the just made perfect," who were all released in their several seasons from the body of flesh and sin. Maladies and infirmities of every kind are buried in the grave, and cease for ever; and if we survey the properties of the new-raised body in the great resurrection-day, as described *1 Cor. xv. 42—44*. we shall find no room for pain there, no avenue or residence for smart or anguish. It will not be such a body of flesh and blood which can be a source of maladies, or subject to outward injuries; but by its own principles of innate vigour and immortality, as well as by the power and mercy of God, it shall be for ever secured from those uneasy sensations which made our flesh on earth painful and burdensome, and which tended toward dissolution and death. It is such a body as our Lord *Jesus* wore at his ascent to heaven in a bright cloud, for ever incorruptible; "for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption," verses 49, 50. "As we have born the image of the earthly *Adam* in the frailties and sufferings that belong to it, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly, even the Lord *Jesus Christ*, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself," *Phil. iii. 21*. "We shall hunger no more, we shall thirst no more, nor shall the sun light on us with its parching beams, nor shall we be annoyed with fire or frost, with heat or cold, in those temperate and happy regions." "The lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed his people for ever there with the fruits of the tree of life, and with unknown entertainments suited to a glorified state. He shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." *Rev. vii. 16, 17*.

Thus have I set before you the practical lessons which pain is designed to teach us in our present state; and we find that a body subject to maladies and pains, is a well appointed school, wherein our great master gives us these divine instructions, and trains us up by degrees for the heavenly world. It is rough discipline indeed for the flesh, but it is wholesome for the soul: And there is many a christian here on earth that have been made to confess, they had never learned the practice of some of these virtues, if they had not been taught by such sort of discipline. Pain, which was brought into human nature by sin, is happily suited by the providence of God to such a state of probation, wherein creatures born in the midst of sins and sorrows are by degrees recovered to the love of God and holiness, and fitted for a world of peace and joy.

But when we have done with this world, and departed from the tribes of mortal men, and from all the scenes of allurement and temptation, there is no more need that such lessons should be taught us in heaven, nor any painful scourge made use of by the Father of spirits, to carry on, or to maintain the divine work of holiness and grace within us. Let us survey this matter according to the foregoing particulars.

Is it possible that while the blessed above are surrounded with endless satisfactions flowing from the throne of God and the lamb, they should forget their benefactor, and neglect his praises? Is it possible they should dwell in immortal health and ease without interruption, under the constant vital influences of the king of glory, and yet want gratitude to the spring of all their blessings?

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Nor is there any need for the inhabitants of a world, where no pains nor sorrows are found, "to learn compassion and sympathy to those who suffer," for there are no sufferers there: But love and joy, intense and intimate love, and a harmony of joy runs through all that blessed company, and unites them in an universal sympathy, if I may so express it, or blissful sensation of each other's happiness. And I might add also, could there be such a thing as sorrow and misery in those regions, this divine principle of love would work sweetly and powerfully towards such objects in all necessary compassion.

What if pain was once made a spur to our duties in this frail state of flesh and blood? What if pain were designed as a guard against temptation, and a means to awaken our watch against new transgression and guilt? But in a climate where all is holiness, and all is peace, in the full enjoyment of the great God, and secured by that everlasting covenant which was sealed by the blood of the lamb, there is no more danger of sinning. The soul is moulded into the more complete likeness of God, by living for ever under the light of his countenance, and the warmest beams of his love.

What if we had need of the stings of pain and anguish in time past, to wean us by degrees from this body, and from all sensible things, and to make us willing to part with them all at the call of God? Yet when we arrive at the heavenly world, we shall have no more need of being weaned from earth, we shall never look back upon that state of pain and frailty with a wishful eye, being for ever satisfied in the affluence of present joys.

O glorious and happy state! where millions of creatures who have dwelt in bodies of sin and pain, and have been guilty of innumerable follies and offences against their maker, yet they are all forgiven, their robes are washed, and made white in the blood of *Jesus*, their iniquities are cancelled for ever, and there shall not be one stroke more from the hand of God to chasten them, nor one more sensation of pain to punish them. Divine and illustrious privilege indeed, and a glorious world, where complete sanctification of all the powers of nature shall for ever secure us from new sins, and where the springs and causes of pain shall for ever cease, both within us and without us! Our glorified bodies shall have no avenue for pain to enter; the gates of heaven shall admit no enemy to afflict or hurt us; God is our everlasting friend, and our souls shall be satisfied with the "rivers of pleasure which flow for ever at the right hand of God." *Psalms xvi. 11. Amen.*

## DISCOURSE X.

## The first fruits of the Spirit, or the foretaste of heaven.

ROMANS VIII. 23.

*And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body.*

## SECTION I.

**I**T is by a beautiful figure of speech the apostle had been describing, in the foregoing verses, the unnatural abuse which the creatures suffer through the sins of men, when they are employed to sinful purposes and the dishonour of God their creator. Permit me to read the words and represent the sense of them in a short paraphrase. Verse 22. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travelleth in pain together until now." The earth itself may be represented as groaning to bear such loads of iniquity, such a multitude of wicked men who abuse the creatures of God to the dishonour of him that made them: The air may be said to groan to give breath to those vile wretches who abuse it in filthiness and foolish talking, to the dishonour of God, and to the scandal of their neighbours; it groans to furnish men with breath that is abused in idolatry by the false worship of the true God, or the worship of creatures which is abominable in his sight: The sun itself may be said to groan to give light to those sinners who abuse both day-light and darkness in rioting and wantonness, in doing mischief among men and committing fresh iniquities against their maker: The moon and stars are abused by adulterers and thieves, and other midnight sinners, when they any way afford light enough to them to guide them in their pursuit of wicked ways and practices. The beasts of burthen may be said also to groan and be abused, when they bear the wicked sons and daughters of *Adam* to the accomplishment of their iniquities: And even all the parts of the brutal world, as well as of the inanimate creation, are some way or other made to serve the detestable and wicked purposes of the sinful children of men, and may be figuratively said to groan on this account. And if we have tasted of the fruits of the Spirit of grace, we cannot but in some measure groan with the rest of the creation in expectation of the blessed day, when the creatures shall be delivered from this  
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bondage of corruption, to which the providence of God has suffered them to be subjected in this degenerate state of things.

We hope there is a time coming, when the creatures themselves shall be used according to the original appointment of their maker, agreeable to their own first design, and for the good of their fellow-creatures, and supremely for the honour of their God, "in that day when holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the bells of the horses; and every pot in *Jerusalem* shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts." *Zech.* xiv. 20. Why should we not join then with the whole creation in groaning and longing after this promised time, when all the works of God shall be restored to their rightful use, and the glory of the maker shall some way or other be made to shine in every one of them?

The apostle then adds, in the words of my text, "and not these creatures only, but ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit," we who are filled with the gifts and graces of the holy Spirit, and eminently the first fruits hereof appear in our taste and relish of the divine provisions that God has given us here in this world to prepare for a better; and even bestows upon some of his christian servants these first fruits of the tree of paradise, these blessings and these foretastes which are near akin to those of the upper world, when the saints shall be raised from the dead, when their adoption shall be clearly manifested, and they shall look like the children of God, and their bodies and all their natural powers shall be redeemed from those disorders, whether of sin or sorrow, and from all the springs and seeds of them, which they are more or less liable to feel in the present state.

Here let it be observed, that the first fruits of any field, or plant or tree, are of the same kind with the full product or the harvest: Therefore it is plain, that the first fruits of the Spirit in this place cannot chiefly signify the gifts of the Spirit, such as the gifts of tongues, or of healing, or of miracles, nor the gifts of prophecy, preaching, or praying, because these are not the employments nor the enjoyments of heaven. The first fruits of the Spirit must rather refer therefore to the knowledge and holiness, the graces and the joys which are more perfect and glorious in the heavenly state, than they were ever designed to be here upon earth. Now these first fruits of graces and joys are sometimes bestowed upon christians in this world, in such a degree as brings them near to the heavenly state: And that is the chief observation I design to draw from these words, viz.

"That God has been pleased to give some of his children here on earth several of the foretastes of the heavenly blessedness, the graces and the joys of the upper world;" as they are the first fruits of that paradise to which we are travelling: And these privileges have brought some of the saints within the confines and borders of the celestial country. What that these are I shall shew immediately; but before I represent them I desire to lay down these few cautions.

Caution I. "These sensible foretastes of heaven do not belong to all christians; these are not such general blessings of the covenant of grace, of which every christian is made partaker;" but they are special favours now and then bestowed on some particular persons by the special will of God. 1. Such as are more eminent in faith, and holiness, and prayer than others are, such as have made great advancements in every part of religion, in mortification to the world, in spiritual-mindedness, in humility, and in much converse with God, &c. Or, 2. Sometimes these first fruits may be given unto such as are weak both in reason and in faith, and may be babes in *Christ*, and are not able by their reasoning powers to search out their evidences for heaven, especially under some present temptation or darkness. Or, 3. Sometimes

to those who are called by providence to go through huge and uncommon trials and sufferings, in order to support their spirits, and bear up their courage, their faith and patience.

It is true, the more general and common way whereby God prepares his people for heaven, is by leading them through several steps of advancing holiness, sincere repentance, mortification of sin, weanedness from the world, likeness to God, heavenly-mindedness, &c. These are indeed the usual preparatives for glory, and the surest evidences of a state of grace. Therefore let not any person imagine he is not a true christian, because he hath not enjoyed these special favours and signal manifestations.

Caution II. "If there be any who have been favoured with these peculiar blessings, they must not expect them to be constant and perpetual, nor always to be given in the same manner or same measure;" they are rare blessings and special reviving cordials; they are not the common food of christians, nor the daily nourishment of the saints. The word of God, and the grace of *Christ* in the promises is our daily support, and the constant nourishment of our souls. Cordials are not given for our daily nourishment in the life of grace.

Caution III. "However great and rapturous these foretastes may be, let us not so depend on them as to neglect the more substantial and solid evidences for heaven, and those steps of preparation," which I have elsewhere mentioned. Let not those who have enjoyed them give a loose to their souls, and let go their watchfulness, or neglect their daily mortification and diligence in every duty. Some of these divine raptures have sometimes been so nearly counterfeited by raptures of fancy, by warm self-love, or perhaps by the deceit of evil angels, that they are not so safe a foundation for our dependence and assured hope, as the soul's experience of a sincere repentance, and general turn of heart to God, and mortification of sin, and delight in every practice of holiness. The devil sometimes "has transformed himself into an angel of light," 2 *Cor.* xi. 14. And there have been some who at first hearing of the gospel have had wonderful raptures. *Heb.* vi. 4. "It is said, "they have tasted of the powers of the world to come,"—who have yet fallen away again, and having lost all their sense and favour of divine things, have become vile apostates.

Caution IV. "If you seem to enjoy any of these affectionate and rapturous foretastes of heaven, be jealous of the truth of them, if they have not a proportionable sanctifying influence upon your souls and your actions."

If you find they incline you to negligence in duty; to coldness in the common practices of religion and godliness, if they make you fancy that common ordinances are a low and needless dispensation, if they seem to excuse you from diligence in the common duties of life towards man, or religion towards God, there is great reason then to suspect them: There is danger lest they should be mere suggestions and deceitful workings either of your own natural passions, or the crafty snares of the artful and busy adversary of souls, on purpose to make you neglect solid religion, and make you part with what is substantial for a bright and flashy glimpse of heavenly things.

But, on the other hand, if you find that these special favours and enjoyments raise your hearts to a greater nearness to God, and more constant converse with him; if they keep you deep in humility, and in everlasting dependence on the grace of

*Christ*



*Christ* in the gospel, and warm and zealous attendance on the ordinances of worship; if they teach and incline you to fulfil every duty of love to your neighbour, and particularly to your fellow-christians, then they appear to be the fruits of the Spirit; and as they fit you for every duty and providence here upon earth, there is very good reason to hope they are real visits from heaven, and are sent from the God of all grace to make you more meet for the heavenly glory.

## S E C T I O N II.

These are the four cautions. I proceed now to describe some of these foretastes of the heavenly blessedness, and shew how nearly they resemble the blessedness and enjoyments of the heavenly world.

First, "In heaven there is a near view of God in his glories, with such a fixed contemplation of his several perfections, as draws out the heart into all correspondent exercises, in an uncommon, transcendent, and supreme degree." It is described as one of the felicities of heaven, that "we shall see God." *Matth.* v. 8. That we shall behold him "face to face," and not in shadows and glasses, *1 Cor.* xiii. 12. Let us exhibit some particulars of this kind, and dwell a little upon them in the most easy and natural method.

1. "In heaven the blessed inhabitants behold the majesty and greatness of God in such a light as fixes their thoughts in glorious wonder and the humblest adoration, and exalts them to the highest pleasure and praise. Have you never fallen into such a devout and fixed contemplation of the majesty of God, as to be even astonished at his glory and greatness, and to have your souls so swallowed up in this sight, that all the sorrows and the joys of this life, all the businesses and necessities of it have been forgotten for a season, all things below and beneath God have seemed as nothing in your eyes? All the grandeurs and splendors of mortality have been buried in darkness and oblivion, and creatures have, as it were, vanished from the thoughts and been lost, as the stars die and vanish at the rising sun, and are no more seen? Have you never seen the face of God in his sublime grandeur, excellence and majesty, so as to shrink into the dust before him, and lie low at his foot with humblest adoration? And you have been transported into a feeling acknowledgement of your own nothingness in the presence of God. Such a sight the prophet *Isaiab* seems to have enjoyed, *Isai.* xl. 12, 15, 17. "Behold the nations before him are as the drop of the bucket, and as the small dust of the balance, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity."

"When the lips are not only directed to speak this sublime language, but the soul, as it were, beholds God in these heights of transcendent majesty, it is overwhelmed with blessed wonder and surprising delight, even while it adores in most profound lowliness and self-abasement. This is the emblem of the worship of the heavenly world, see *Rev.* iv. 10. where the elders, saints and prophets, martyrs, angels, and dominions, and principalities of the highest degree cast down their crowns at the foot of him that made them, and exalt God in his supremacy over all."

2. "In heaven there are such blessed and extensive surveys of the infinite knowledge of God, and his amazing wisdom discovered in his works, as makes even all their own heavenly improvements in knowledge and understanding to appear as mere ignorance, darkness, and folly before him. In such a hour as this is, the holy angels may charge themselves with folly in his sight, as he beholds them in the imperfection of

of their understanding. Now have you never been carried away in your meditations of the all-comprehensive knowledge of God to such a degree, as to lose and abandon all your former pride and appearances of knowledge and wisdom in all the native and acquired riches of it, and count them all as nothing in his sight? Have you never looked upward to the midnight skies, and with amazement sent your thoughts upward to him who calls all the stars by their names, and brings them forth in all their sparkling glories, who marshals them in their nightly ranks and orders, and then stood overwhelmed with sacred astonishment at the wisdom which made and ranged them all in their proper situations, and there appointed them to fulfil ten thousand useful purposes, and that not only towards this little ball of earth, but to a multitude of upper planetary worlds? Have you never enquired into the wonders of his wisdom in framing the bodies, the limbs, and the senses of millions of animals, birds, and beasts, fishes, and insects, as well as men all around this globe, and who hath framed all their organs and powers of nature with exquisite skill, to see and hear, to run and fly, and swim, to produce their young in all their proper forms and sizes, furnished with their various powers, and to feed and nourish them in their innumerable shapes and colours, admirable for strength and beauty? And have you not felt your souls filled with devout adoration at the unspeakable and infinite contrivances of a God?

“And not only his works of creation, but of his providence too have afforded some pious souls such devout amazement. What astonishing wisdom must that be which has created mankind on earth near six thousand years ago, and by his divine word in every age continues to create them or give them being, with all the same natural powers and parts, beauties and excellencies! That he hath wisely governed so many millions of animals with living souls or spirits in them, so many millions of intelligent creatures, indued with a free will of their own to chuse or refuse what they will or will not do, and hath managed this innumerable company of beings in all ages, notwithstanding all their different and clashing opinions and customs, their crossing humours, wills and passions in endless variety, and yet hath made them all subservient to his own comprehensive designs and purposes through all ages of the world, and all nations on earth! What unconceivable wisdom is that which hath effectually appointed them all to center in the accomplishment of his own eternal counsels! And with what overwhelming amazement will this scene appear, when he shall shut up the theatre of this earth, and fold up the heavens as a curtain, and this visible structure of things shall be laid in ashes? What an astonishing view must this be of the all-surveying knowledge, all-comprehending wisdom of a God, and with what holy and humble pleasure must the pious soul be filled who takes in and enjoys this scene of infinite varieties and wonders? How near doth such a hour approach to the bliss of heaven and the raptures of contemplation, which belong to the blessed inhabitants of it?”

3. I might add something of the almighty power of God in his creation and government of the world, in his kingdoms of nature and providence. “Did not the angels rejoice at the birth-day of this universe, and “those morning stars shout for joy at the first appearance of this creation? *Job. xxxviii. 7.* And what the inhabitants of heaven make their song, may not a holy soul be entertained with it, even to extasy and rapture? “I behold, says he, in divine meditation, I behold this huge structure of the universe rising out of nothing at the voice of his command; I behold the several planets in their various orders set a moving by the same word of power. With what delightful surprize do I hear him pronouncing the words, “Let there

there be light, and, lo the light appears?" *Gen. i. 3.* Let there be earth and seas; let there be clouds, and heavens; let there be sun, moon and stars, and lo the heavens, and the dry land, and the waters appear, the clouds and the stars in their various order and situation, and all the parts of the creation arise, all replenished with proper ornaments and animals according to his word. At his command nature exists in all it's regions with all it's furniture; the beasts, and birds, and fishes in all their forms arise, and at once they obey the several almighty orders he gave, and by the unknown and unconceivable force of such a word they leap out into existence in ten thousand forms.

"Again, what divine pleasure is it to hear a God beginning the work of his providence, and speaking those wonderous words of power to every plant and animal, "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," *Gen. i. 22.* and lo in a long succession of near six thousand years the earth has been covered all over with herbs and plants, with shrubs and tall trees in all their beauty and dimensions. The air hath been filled with birds and insects, the seas and rivers with fish, and the dry land with beasts and men even to this present day. When all this philosophy is changed into devotion, it must also be transformed into divine and unutterable joy.

"Nor are these things too low and mean for the contemplation of heavenly beings: For God is seen in all of them: There is not a spire of grass but the power and wisdom of a God are visible therein. And it is certain the heavenly beings must be sometimes employed in the contemplation of many of these lower wonders. The plants and beasts in desolate regions where no man inhabits, and in distant and foreign oceans and rivers, where the fishy shoals in all their variety and numbers, in all their successions and generations for near six thousand years were never seen nor known by any of the sons of men; these seem to have been created in vain, if no heavenly beings are acquainted with them, nor raise a revenue of glory to him that made them.

"This almighty power therefore which made this huge universe, which sustains the frame of it every moment, and secures it from dissolving, this power which brings forth the stars in their order, and worms and creeping things in their innumerable millions, and governs all the motions of them to the purposes of divine glory, must needs affect a contemplative soul with raptures of pleasing meditation; and in these sublime meditations, by the aids of the divine Spirit, a soul on earth may get near to heaven. And with what religious and unknown pleasure at such a season doth it shrink it's own being as it were into an atom, and lie in the dust and adore!"

4. "The all-sufficiency of the great God to form and to supply every creature with all that it can want or desire" is another perfection of the divine nature, which is better known in heaven than it ever was here on earth, and affords another scene of astonishment and sacred delight: And there may be some advances towards this pleasure found among saints below, some first fruits of this heavenly felicity and joy in the all-sufficiency of God.

"My whole self, body and mind, is from God and from him alone. All my limbs and powers of flesh and spirit were derived from him, and borrowed their first existence from their original pattern in his fruitful mind. All that I have of life or comfort, of breath or being, with all my blessings round about me, is owing to his boundless and eternal fulness; and all my long-reaching hopes and endless expectations that stretch far into futurity, and an eternal world, are growing out of this same all-sufficient fulness.

But

“ But what do I think or speak of so little a trifle as I am ? Stretch thy thoughts, O my soul, through the lengths, and breadths, and depths of his creation, O what an unconceivable fulness of being, glory and excellency is found in God the universal parent and spring of all ! What an inexhaustible ocean of being and life, of perfection and blessedness must our God be, who supplies all the infinite armies of his creatures in all his known and unknown dominions with life and motion, with breath and activity, with food and support, with satisfaction and delight ! Who maintains the vital powers and faculties of all the spirits which he hath made in all the visible and invisible worlds, in all his territories of light, and peace, and joy, and in all the regions of darkness, punishment and misery ! In him all things “ live, and move, and have their being,” *Acts* xvii. 28. “ He withdraws his breath and they die.” *Psalms* civ. 29. He hath writ down all their names in his own mind, he gives them all their natures, and without him there is nothing, there can be nothing ; all nature without him would have been a perpetual blank, an universal emptiness, an everlasting void, and with one turn of his will he could sink and dissolve all nature into its original nothing.

“ Confess, O my soul, thy own nothingness in his presence, and with astonishing pleasure and worship adore his fulness : He is thy everlasting all. Be thy dependence ever fixed upon him ; thou canst not, thou shalt not live a moment without him, without this habitual dependence, and a frequent delightful acknowledgment of it. Such a devout frame as this is heaven, and such scenes now and then passing through the soul are glimpses of the heavenly blessedness.”

### S E C T I O N III.

Though the eternity and immensity of God might perhaps in their own nature, and in the reason of things, be first mentioned, yet his majesty, his power, and his wisdom in their sovereign excellency strike the souls of creatures more immediately, therefore I have put these first. However, let us now consider the eternity of the great God and his omnipresence, and think how the spirits in heaven are affected therewith, and what kindred meditations may be derived from these perfections by the saints here on earth. I proceed therefore,

5. To the eternity of God : which though the most exalted spirit in heaven cannot comprehend, yet it is probable they have some nearer and clearer discovery of it than we can have here in this mortal state, while we dwell in flesh and blood. We have nothing in this visible world that gives us so much as an example or similitude of it. The great God who is, who was, and who is to come through all ages, he is, and was, and for ever will be the same. Let us go back as many thousand ages as we can in our thoughts, and still an eternal God was before them ; a being that had no beginning of his existence, nor will have any end of his life or duration. And as he says to *Moses*, “ My name is I AM THAT I AM,” *Exod.* iii. 14. So as there is nothing which had any hand in his being, but all the reasons of it are derived from his own self-fulness, therefore we may say of him that “ he is because he is,” and because “ he will be :” He had no spring of his first beginning, nor any cause of his continued existence, but what is within himself. We can never set ourselves in too mean a light when an eternal God is near us ; and every thing besides God can be but little in our eyes.

“ And, O my thinking powers, are ye not sweetly lost in this holy rapture, and overpowered with divine pleasure, O my soul, in such meditation as this ? Art thou

thou not delightfully surprised with the thoughts of such self-sufficiency and such an unconceivable perfection? Thy being considered as here in this life, is not so much in the sight of God as an atom in comparison of the whole earth; and even the supposed future ages of thy existence in the eternal state are unconceivably short, when compared with the glory of that being that never began his life or his duration.

“Many things here on earth concur towards my satisfaction and peace, but if I have God my friend, I have all in him that I can possibly want or desire. Let me then live no longer upon creatures when God is all.

“Let sun, moon, and stars vanish, and all this visible creation disappear and be for ever annihilated if God please, he himself is still my eternal hope and never-failing spring of all my blessedness: My expectations are continually safe in his hands, and shall never fail while I am so near him. This is “joy unspeakable, and akin to glory.”

6. Let us meditate also on the immensity of God, which I think is much better expressed by his omnipresence. God is wheresoever any creature is or can be; knowing immediately by his own presence all that belongs to them, all that they are or can be, all that they do or can do, all that concerns them, whether their sins or their virtues, their pains or their pleasures, their hopes or their fears. It implies also that he doth by his immediate power and influence support and govern all the creatures. In short, this immensity is nothing else but the infinite extent of his knowledge and his power, and it reaches to and beyond all places, as eternity reaches to and beyond all time. This the blessed above know and rejoice in, and take infinite satisfaction therein: having God as it were surrounding them on all sides, so that they cannot be where he is not, he is ever present with his all-sufficiency ready to bestow on them all they wish or desire while he continues their God, that is, for ever and ever. They are under the blessing of his eye, and the care of his hand, to guard them from every evil, and to secure their peace.

“Let thy flesh or spirit be surrounded with never so many thousand dangers or enemies, they cannot do thee the least damage without his leave, by force or by surprise, while such an almighty being is all around thee: nor hast thou reason to indulge any fear while the spring and ocean of life, activity, and blessedness thus secures thee on every side. If thou hast the evidences of his children on thee, thou possessest an eternal security of thy peace.”

7. The sovereignty and dominion of the blessed God is a further meditation and pleasure which becomes and adorns the inhabitants of the heavenly world. There he reigns upon the throne of his glory, and the greater part of the territories which are subject to him are less in their view than our scanty powers of nature or perception can now apprehend, and a proportionable degree of pleasure is found with the saints above in these contemplations.

But in our present state of mortality our souls can only look through these lattices of flesh and blood, and make a few scanty and imperfect inferences from what they always see, and hear, and feel: and yet the glorious sovereignty and dominion of the blessed God may so penetrate the soul with a divine sense of it here on earth as to raise up a heaven of wonder and joy within.

“Adore him, O my soul, who surveys and rules all things which he has made with an absolute authority, and is for ever uncontrollable. How righteous a thing is it that he should give laws to all the beings which his hand hath formed, which his breath hath spoken into life, and especially that rank which his favour hath furnished with immortality? How just that he should be obeyed by every creature without

the least reluctance or reserve, without a moment's delay, and that to all the length of their existence.

“ Submit to his government with pleasure, O my nature, and be all ye my powers of soul and body in everlasting readiness to do whatsoever he requires, and to be whatsoever he appoints. Wilt thou have me, O Lord, lie under sickness or pain, wilt thou have me languish under weakness and confinement? I am at thy foot, I am for ever at thy disposal. Wilt thou have me active and vigorous in thy service? Lord, I am ready with utmost cheerfulness. Wilt thou confine me to painful idleness and long patience? Lord here I am, do with me what seemeth good unto thee. I am ready to serve thy purposes here, or thy orders in the unknown world of spirits, when thou shalt dissolve this mortal frame: I lay down these limbs in the dust of death at thy command: I venture into the regions of angels and unbodied minds at thy summons. I will be what thou wilt, I will go when thou wilt, I will dwell where thou wilt, for thou art always with me, and I am entirely thine. I both rejoice and tremble at thy sovereignty and dominion over all. God cannot do injury to a creature who is so entirely his own property; God will not deal unkindly with a creature who is so sensible of his just dominion and supremacy, and which bows at the foot of his sovereignty with so much relish of satisfaction.”

8. Let us next take notice of the perfect purity of the nature of God, his universal holiness, the rectitude of the divine nature manifested in all his thoughts, his works, and his words, all perfectly agreeable to the eternal rules of truth and righteousness, and at the furthest distance from every thing that is false and faulty, every thing that is or can be dishonourable to so glorious a being. “ Have we never seen God in this light, in the glory of his holiness, his universal rectitude, and the everlasting harmony of all his perfections in exact correspondence with all the notions we can have of truth and reason? And has not God appeared then as a glorious and lovely being? And have we not at the same time beheld ourselves as unclean, and unholy creatures, in one part or other of our natures ever ready to jar or fall out with some of the most pure and perfect rules of honour, justice or truth? Have we not seen all our sins and iniquities in this light, with utmost abhorrence and highest hatred of them, and looked down upon ourselves with a deep and overwhelming sense of shame and displice against our depraved and corrupted natures, and abased ourselves as *Job* does in dust and ashes, and not daring to open our mouths before him? *Job* xlii. 5, 6. “ I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself in dust and ashes.” The least spot or blemish of sin grows highly offensive and painful to the eyes of a saint in this situation.

Every little warping from truth in our conversation, every degree of insincerity or fraud becomes a smarting uneasiness to the mind in the remembrance of our past follies in the present state. There is the highest abhorrence of sin among all the heavenly inhabitants, and this sight of God in the beauties of his holiness, and his perfect rectitude, is an everlasting preservative to holy souls against the admission of an impure or unholy thought: and therefore some divines have supposed, that the angels at their first creation were put into a state of trial before they were admitted to this full sight of the beauty of God in his holiness, which would have secured them from the least thought or step towards apostasy.

“ O my soul, of what happy importance it is to thee to maintain, as long as possible, this sense of the purity, rectitude and perfection of the nature of the blessed God, “ who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” with the least regard of approbation

approbation or allowance? *Hab.* i. 13. And what infinite condescension is it in such a God to find out and appoint a way of grace, whereby such shameful polluted creatures as we are should ever be admitted into his presence to make the least address to his majesty, or to hope for his favour.

Besides, in this sublime view of the holiness of God, we shall not only love God better than ever, as we see him more amiable under this view of his glorious attributes, but we shall grow more sincere and fervent in our love to all that is holy, to every saint in heaven and on earth: We shall not bear any estrangedness or alienation from those who have so much of the likeness of God in them. They will ever appear to be "the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight:" *Psalms* xvi. 2. Their supposed blemishes will vanish at the thought of their likeness to God in holiness: And especially our blessed Lord *Jesus*, the Son of God, will be most precious and all-glorious in our eyes, as he is the most perfect image of his Father's holiness. There is nothing in the blessed God, but the man *Christ Jesus* bears a proportionable resemblance to it, as far as a creature can resemble God, and he will consequently be highest in our esteem under God, the Lord and Father of all.

9. The ever-pleasing attribute of divine goodness and love is another endless and joyful theme or object of the contemplation of the heavenly world. There this perfection shines in it's brightest rays, there it displays it's most triumphant glories, and kindles a flame of everlasting joy in all the sons of blessedness.

But we in this world may have such glimpses of this goodness and love as may fill the soul with unspeakable pleasure, and begin in it the first fruits and earnest of heaven. When we survey the inexhaustible ocean of goodness which is in God, which fills and supplies all the creatures with every thing they stand in need of; when we behold all the tribes of the sons of men supported by his boundless sufficiency, his bounty and kind providence, and refreshed with a thousand comforts beyond what the mere necessities of nature require. In such a hour if we feel the least flowings of goodness in ourselves towards others, we shall humble ourselves to the dust, and cry out in holy amazement, "Lord, what is an atom to a mountain? What is a drop to a river, a sea of beneficence? What is a shadow to the eternal substance? What good thing is there in time or in eternity, which I can possibly want which is not abundantly supplied out of thy overflowing fulness? Hence arises the eternal satisfaction of all the holy and happy creation in being so near to thee, and under the everlasting assurances of thy love. I can do nothing but fall down before thee in deepest humility, and admire, adore, and everlastingly love thee, who hast assumed to thyself the name of love." 1 *John* iv. 8. "God is love."

#### S E C T I O N IV.

Thus far our joys may rise into an imitation of the joys above in the devout contemplation of divine perfections.

And not only the perfections of God considered and surveyed single in themselves, but the union and blessed harmony of many of them in the divine works and transactions of providence and of grace, especially in the gospel of *Christ*, administer further matter for contemplation and pleasure among the happy spirits in heaven: And so far as this enjoyment may be communicated to the saints here on earth, they be also said to have a foretaste of the business and pleasure of heaven. Let us take notice of this harmony in several instances.

1. In the sacred constitution of the person of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as God and man united in one personal agent: Here majesty and mercy give a glorious instance of their union, here all the grandeur and dignity of godhead condescends to join itself in union with a creature, such as man is, a spirit dwelling in flesh and blood. *1 Tim. ii. 5.* "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, even the man *Christ Jesus*." But this man is personally united to the blessed God, he is "God manifest in the flesh:" He is a man "in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily," to constitute one all-sufficient Saviour of miserable and fallen mankind: What an amazing stoop or condescension is this for the eternal godhead thus to join itself to a creature, and what a surprizing exaltation is this of the creature for the man *Christ Jesus* thus to be assumed into so near a relation to the blessed God? All the glories that result from this divine contrivance and transaction are not to be remunerated in paper, nor by the best capacity of writers here on earth: The heavenly inhabitants are much better acquainted with them.

Again, here is an example of the harmony and co-operation of unsearchable wisdom and all-commanding power in the person of the blessed *Jesus*; and what a happy design is hereby executed, namely, the reconciliation of sinful man and the holy and glorious God: and who could do this but one who was possessed of such wisdom and such power? When there was no creature in heaven or earth sufficient for this work, God was pleased to appoint such an union between a creature and the Creator, between God and man, as might answer all the unconceivable purposes concealed in his thought. If there be wanting a person fit to execute any of his infinite designs, he will not be frustrated for want of an agent, he will appoint God and man to be so nearly united as to become one agent to execute this design.

2. In the manner of our salvation, viz. by an atonement for sin. The great God did not think it proper, nor agreeable to his sublime holiness, to receive sinful man into his favour without an atonement for sin, and a satisfaction made to the governor of the world for the abuse and violation of his holy law here on earth; and therefore he appointed such a sacrifice of atonement as might be sufficient to do complete honour to the lawgiver, as well as to save and deliver the offender from death: Therefore *Jesus* was made a man capable of suffering and dying, that he might honour the majesty and the justice of the broken law of God, and that he might do it completely by the union of godhead to this man and mediator; the dignity of whose divinity diffuses itself over all that he did, and all that he suffered, so as to make his obedience completely acceptable to God instead of thousands of creatures, and fully satisfactory for the offence that was given him by them; here is a sacrifice provided equal to the guilt of sin, and therefore sufficient to take it away.

You see here what a blessed harmony there is between the justice of God doing honour to his own law, and his compassion resolved to save a ruined creature: Here is no blemish cast upon the strict justice and righteousness of God, when the offender is forgiven in such a method as may do honour to justice and mercy at once. *Rom. iii. 24, 25.* "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in *Jesus Christ*; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness," even his perfect governing justice, though he passes by and pardons the sins of a thousand criminal creatures; "to declare, I say, at this time righteousness, that he might appear to be just to his own authority and law, while he justifies the sinful man who believeth or trusteth in *Jesus* the mediator as becoming a proper sacrifice and propitiation for sin."



3. By the sanctification of our nature. There is also another remarkable harmony between the holiness of God and his mercy in this work of the salvation of sinful man. The guilt of sin is not only to be forgiven and taken away by a complete atonement and sacrifice, but the sinful nature of this ruined creature is to be changed into holiness, is to be renewed and sanctified by the blessed Spirit, and reformed into the image of God his maker: He must not only be released from punishment by forgiveness, but he must be restored to the image of God by sanctifying grace; so that he may be fit company for the rest of the favourites of God in the upper world; that he may be qualified to be admitted into this society, where perfect purity and holiness are necessary for all the inhabitants of this upper-world, and for such near attendants on the blessed God: "In that happy state nothing shall enter there that defileth," *Rev. xxi. 27.* and therefore concerning the criminals among the *Corinthians*, as vile and as offensive to the pure and holy God as they are represented, *1 Cor. vi. 9—11. viz.* "Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, drunkards, &c. but, it is said, they are washed, but they are sanctified, but they are justified in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, and by the Spirit of our God."

Now when the souls of the saints here on earth are raised to such divine contemplations, what transporting satisfaction and delight must arise from the surprising union and harmony of the attributes of the blessed God in these his transactions? And especially when the soul in the lively exercise of grace and view of it's own pardon, justification, and restored holiness, looks upon itself as one of these happy favourites of the majesty of heaven: It cries out as it were in holy amazement, "What a divine profusion is here of wisdom and power, glory and grace, to save a wretched worm from everlasting burnings, and to advance a worthless rebel to such undeserved and exalted glories!"

## S E C T I O N V.

"The wonders of divine perfections united in the success of the gospel" give an extasy of joy sometimes to holy souls. Not only do these views of the united perfections of God, as they are concerned in the contrivance of the gospel, entertain the saints above with new and pleasurable contemplations, but the wonders of divine wisdom, power, and grace, united and harmonizing in the propagation and success of this gospel, become a matter of delightful attention and survey to the saints on high.

This is imitated also in a measure by the children of God here on earth. Have you never felt such a surprising pleasure in the view of the attributes of God, his grace, wisdom, and power in making these divine designs so happily efficacious for the good of thousands of souls? "If there be joy in heaven among the angels of God at the conversion of a sinner," *Luke xv. 7, 10.* what perpetual messages of unknown satisfaction and delight did the daily and constant labours of the blessed apostle *Paul* send to the upper world? What perpetual tidings were carried to the worlds on high of such and such souls, converted unto God from gross idolatry, from the worship of dumb idols, from the vain superstition of their heroes and mediator-gods, and from the impure and bloody sacrifices of their own countrymen, whereby they intended to satisfy their gods for their own iniquities, and to reconcile themselves to these invented gods, these dæmons or devils which were deified by the folly and madness of sinful men? What new hallelujahs must it put into the mouths of the saints and angels on high, to see the true and living God worshipped by thousands

sands that had never before known him, and to see *Jesus* the mediator in all the glories of his divine offices admired and adored by those who lately had either known nothing of him, or been shameful revilers and blasphemers of his majesty?

And what an unknown delight is diffused through many of the saints of God now here on earth upon such tidings, not only from the foreign and heathen countries, but even some who have professed christianity, but under gross mistakes and miserable fogs of darkness and superstition? What an unconceivable and overwhelming pleasure has surpris'd a christian sometimes in the midst of his zealous worship of God and his Saviour, to hear of such tidings of new subjects in multitudes submitting themselves to their divine dominion?

And even in our day, whensoever we hear of the work of grace begun by the ministry of the word, awakening a drowsy and lethargic soul from its dangerous sleep on the brink of hell, rousing a negligent and slothful creature from his indolence and carelessness about the things of eternity; or again, in making a heart soft and impressible to the powers of divine grace, which was before hard as the nether millstone; and especially when multitudes of these tidings come together from distant places, as of late we have heard from *New-England*, and several of those plantations; from *Scotland* and several of her assemblies, what additional scenes of heavenly joy and pleasure have been rais'd amongst the pious souls, both those who relate and those who hear them.

## S E C T I O N VI.

“Foretastes of heaven are sometimes derived from the overflowing sense of the love God let in upon the soul.”

The spirits above who are surrounded with this blessedness and this love, and rejoice in the everlasting assurance of it, cannot but be filled with intense joy. What can be a greater foundation of complete blessedness and delight than the immediate “sensation and assurance of being beloved by the glorious, and supreme, and the all-sufficient being,” who will never suffer his favourites to want any thing he can bestow upon them to make them happy in perfection, and for ever? All creatures are under his present view and immediate command; there is not the least of them can give disturbance to any of the favourites of heaven, who dwell in the midst of their Creator’s love; nor is there any creature that can be employed towards the complete happiness of the saints on high, but is for ever under the disposal of that God who has made all things, and it shall be employed upon every just occasion for the display of his love to his saints.

Some have imagined that that “perfect satisfaction of soul which arises from a good conscience, speaking peace inwardly in the survey of its sincere desire to please God in all things, and having with uprightness of heart fulfilled its duty,” is the supreme delight of heaven: but it is my opinion God has never made the felicity of his creatures to be drawn so entirely out of themselves, or from the spring of their own bosom, as this notion seems to imply. God himself will be all in all to his creatures; and all their original springs of blessedness as well as being are in him and must be derived from him: It is therefore the overflowing sense of being beloved by a God almighty and eternal, that is the supreme fountain of joy and blessedness to every reasonable nature, and the endless security of this happiness is joy everlasting in all the regions of the blessed above.

Now

Now a taste of this kind is heavenly blessedness even on this earth, where God is pleased to bestow it on his creatures; and the glimpses of it bring such extasies into the soul as can hardly be conceived, or revealed to others, but it is best felt by them who enjoy it.

## S E C T I O N VII.

“Foretastes of heaven in the fervent emotions of soul in love to *Jesus Christ*.”

What the love and strong affections of the blessed saints above towards *Jesus Christ* their Lord and Saviour may impress of joy on their spirits, is not possible for us to learn in the present state; but there are some who have even here on earth felt such transcendent affections to *Jesus* the Son of God, even though they have never enjoyed the sight of him, yet they love him with most intense and ardent zeal; their devotion almost swallows them up and carries them away captive above all earthly things, and brings them near to the heavenly world. There is an unknown joy which arises from such intense love to an object so lovely and so deserving; such is that which is spoken concerning the saints to whom St. *Peter* wrote, 1 *Pet.* i. 8. “whom having not seen, ye love, in whom though now you see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” It is through this divine taste of love, and joy, and glory communicated by the blessed Spirit, revealing the things of *Christ* to their souls, that many of the confessors and martyrs in the primitive ages, and in later times, have not only joyfully parted with all their possessions and their comforts in this life, but have followed the call of God through prisons and deaths of a most dreadful kind, through racks, and fires, and many torments, for the sake of the love of *Jesus*; and perhaps there may be some in our day who have had so lively and strong a sensation of the love of *Christ* let in upon their souls, that they could not only be content to be absent from all their carnal delights for ever, but even from their intellectual and more spiritual entertainments, if they might be for ever placed in such a situation to *Jesus Christ*, as to feel the everlasting beams of his love let out upon them, and to rejoice in him with perpetual delight. As he is the nearest image of God the Father, they can love nothing beneath God equal to their love of him, nor delight in any thing beneath God equal to their delight in *Jesus Christ*: Indeed their love and their joy are so wrapped up in the great and blessed God as he appears in *Christ Jesus*, that they do not usually divide their affections in this matter, but love God supremely for ever, as revealing himself in his most perfect love in *Christ Jesus* unto their souls. How near this may approach to the glorified love of the saints in heaven, or what difference there is between the holy ones above and saints below in this respect, may be hard to say.

## S E C T I O N VIII.

“Foretastes of heaven in the transcendent love of the saints to each other.” I might here ask some advanced saints,

“Have you never seen or heard of a fellow-christian growing into such a near resemblance to the blessed *Jesus*, in all the virtues and graces of the Spirit, that you would willingly part with all the attainments and honours that you have already arrived at, which make you never so eminent in the world or in the church, as to be made so near a conformist to the image of the blessed *Jesus* as this fellow-christian has seemed to be?”

“Have

“Have you never seen or read of the glories and graces of the Son of God exemplified in some of the saints in so high a degree, and at the same time been so divested of self, and so mortified to a narrow self love, as to be satisfied with the lowest and the meanest supports of life, and the meanest station in the church of *Christ* here on earth, if you might but be favoured to partake of that transcendent likeness to the holy *Jesus*, as you would fain imitate and possess?”

“Have you never had a view of all the virtues and graces of the saints, derived from one eternal fountain the blessed God, and flowing through the mediation of *Jesus* his Son in so glorious a manner, that you have longed for the day when you shall be amongst them, and receive your share of this blessedness? Have you never found yourself so united to them in one heart and one soul, that you have wished them all the same blessings that you wished to yourself, and that without the least shadow of grudging or envy, if every one of them were partaker as much as you?” There is no envy among the heavenly inhabitants; nor doth *St. Paul* receive the less because *Cephas* or *Apollos* has a large share. Every vessel has in it's capacity enlarged to a proper extent by the God of nature and grace, and every vessel is completely filled, and feels itself for ever full and for ever happy: then there cannot be found the shadow of envy amongst them.

Now to sum up the view of these things in short; who is there that enjoys these blessed evidences of an interest in the inheritance on high, who is there that has any such foretastes of the felicity above, but must join with the whole creation in groaning for that great day, when all the children of God shall appear in the splendor of their adoption, and every thing in nature and grace among them shall attain the proper end for which it was at first designed? And whensoever any such christian hears some of the last words in the bible pronounced by our Lord *Jesus*, “surely I come quickly,” he must immediately join the universal eccho of the saints with unspeakable delight, “Even so come, O Lord *Jesus*.” *Rev.* xxii. 20.

## DISCOURSE XI.

Safety in the grave, and joy at the resurrection.

J O B XIV. 13, 14, 15.

*O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me! If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands.*

**B**EFORE we attempt to make any improvement of these words of *Job* for our present edification, it is necessary that we search out the true meaning of them. There are two general senses of these three verses which are given by some of the most considerable interpreters of scripture, and they are exceeding different from each other.

The first is this. "Some suppose *Job* under the extremity of his anguish to long after death here, as he does in some other parts of this book, and to desire that God would cut him off from the land of the living, and hide him in the grave, or, at least, take him away from the present stage of action, and conceal him in some retired and solitary place, dark as the grave is, till all the days which might be designed for his pain and sorrow were finished: And that God would appoint him a time for his restoration to health and happiness again in this world, and raise him to the possession of it, by calling him out of that dark and solitary place of retreat; and then *Job* would answer him, and appear with pleasure at such a call of providence."

Others give this sense of the words, "that though the pressing and overwhelming sorrows of this good man constrained him to long for death, and he entreated of God that he might be sent to the grave as a hiding-place, and thus be delivered from his present calamities, yet he had some divine glimpse of a resurrection or living again, and he hopes for the happiness of a future state when God should call him out of the grave. He knew that the blessed God would have a desire to restore the work of his own hands to life again, and *Job* would answer the call of his God into a resurrection with holy pleasure and joy."

Now there are four or five reasons which incline me to prefer this latter sense of the words, and to shew that the comforts and hope which *Job* aspires to in this place, are only to be derived from a resurrection to final happiness.

Reason I. The express words of the text are, "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!" not in a darksome place like the grave; and where the literal sense of

the words is plain and agreeable to the context, there is no need of making metaphors to explain them. There is nothing that can encourage us to suppose that *Job* had any hope of happiness in this world again, after he was gone down to the grave, and therefore he would not make so unreasonable a petition to the great God. This seems to be too foolish and too hopeless a request for us to put into the mouth of so wise and good a man.

Reason II. He seems to limit the continuance of man in the state of death to the duration of the heavens, verse 12. *Man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more*: not absolutely for ever does *Job* desire to be hidden in the grave, but till the dissolution of all these visible things, these heavens and this earth, and the great rising day for the sons of men. These words seem to have a plain aspect towards the resurrection.

And especially when he adds, "they shall not be wakened nor raised out of their sleep." The brutes when dying are never said to sleep in scripture, because they shall never rise again; but this is a frequent word used to signify the death of man both in the old testament and in the new, because he only lies down in the grave for a season, as in a bed of sleep, in order to awake and arise hereafter.

Reason III. In other places of this book *Job* gives us some eminent hints of his hope of a resurrection, especially that divine passage and prophecy, when he spake as one surrounded with a vision of glory, and filled with the light and the joy of faith. *Job*. xix. 25, 27. "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." But in many parts of this book the good man lets us know, that he had no manner of hope of any restoration to health and peace in this life. *Job* vii. 6, 7, 8. "My days — are spent without hope: — my eye shall no more see good: the eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thy eyes are upon me, and I am not. Verse 21. Now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be. *Job* xvii. 15. — Where is now my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it?" He and his hope seemed "to go down to the bars of the pit together, and to rest in the dust." And if *Job* had no hope of a restoration in this world, then his hopes must point to the resurrection of the dead.

Reason IV. If we turn these verses here, as well as that noble passage in *Job* xix. to the more evangelical sense of a resurrection, the truths which are contained in the one and the other, are all supported by the language of the new testament: and the express words of both these texts are much more naturally and easily applied to the evangelical sense without any strain and difficulty.

The expressions of *Job* in chapter the xix. "I know that my redeemer liveth," have been rescued by many wise interpreters from that poor and low sense which has been forced upon them, by those who will not allow *Job* to have any prospect beyond this life: and it has been made to appear to be a bright glimpse of divine light and joy, a ray or vision of the sun of righteousness breaking in between the dark clouds of his pressing sorrow: And that the words of my text demand the same sort of interpretation, will appear further by these short remarks, and this paraphrase upon them.

*Job* had been speaking, verses 7,—10, &c. "That there is hope of a tree when it is cut down, that it will sprout again visibly, and bring forth boughs; but when man gives up the ghost, he is no more visible upon earth: Where is he?" *Job* does  
not

not deny his future existence, but only intimates that he does not appear in the place where he was; and in the following verses he does not say, a dying man shall never rise, or shall never be awakened out of his sleep, but asserts that he rises not till the dissolution of these heavens and these visible things: And by calling death a sleep, he supposes an awaking time, though it may be distant and far off.

Then he proceeds to long for death, "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave! that thou wouldst keep me secret till thy wrath be past!" till these times and seasons of sorrow be ended, which seems to be the effect of divine wrath or anger: But then I entreat thou wouldst appoint me a set time for my tarrying in the grave, and remember me in order to raise me again. Then with a sort of surprize of faith and pleasure he adds, "if a man die shall he live again?" Shall these dry bones live? And he answers in the language of hope: "All the days of that appointed time of thine I will wait till that glorious change shall come. Thou shalt call from heaven, and I will answer thee from the dust of death." I will appear at thy call and say, "Here am I: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands," to raise me again from the dead, whom thou hast made of clay, and fashioned me into life.

From the words thus expounded we may draw these several observations, and make a short reflexion upon each of them, as we pass along.

Observation I. This world is a place wherein good men are exposed to great calamities, and they are ready to think the anger or wrath of God appears in them.

Observation II. The grave is God's known hiding-place for his people.

Observation III. God has appointed a set time in his own counsels for all his children to continue in death.

Observation IV. The lively view of a happy resurrection, and a well-grounded hope of this blessed change, is a solid and divine comfort to the saints of God, under all trials of every kind both in life and death.

Observation V. The saints of God who are resting in their beds of dust will arise joyfully at the call of their heavenly Father.

Observation VI. God takes delight in his works of nature, but much more when they are dignified and adorned by the operations of divine grace.

Observation VII. How much are we indebted to God for the revelation of the new testament, which teaches us to find out the blessings which are contained in the old, and to fetch out the glories and treasures which are concealed there?

Let us dwell a while upon each of these, and endeavour to improve them by a particular application.

Observation I. "This world is a place wherein good men are exposed to great calamities, and they are ready to think the anger or wrath of God appears in them." This mortal life, and this present state of things, as surrounded with crosses and disappointments, the loss of our dearest friends, as well as our own pains and sicknesses, have so much anguish and misery attending them, that they seem to be the seasons

seasons of divine wrath, and they grieve and pain the spirit of many a pious man, under a sense of the anger of his God. It must be confessed in general that misery is the effect of sin, for sin and sorrow came into the world together. It is granted also, that God sometimes afflicts his people in anger, and corrects them in his hot displeasure, when they have sinned against him in a remarkable manner: but this is not always the case.

The great God was not really angry with *Job* when he suffered him to fall into such complicated distresses; for it is plain, that while he delivered him up into the hands of *Satan* to be afflicted, he vindicates and honours him with a divine testimony concerning his piety. *Job*. i. 8. "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and avoideth evil." Nor was he angry with his Son *Jesus Christ*, when it "pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and he was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted," *Isaiah* liii. 4, 10. To these we may add *Paul* the best of the apostles, and the greatest of christians, who was abundant in labours and sufferings above all the rest. See a dismal catalogue of his calamities, *2 Cor.* xi. 23,—27. What variety of wretchedness, what terrible persecutions from men, what repeated strokes of distress came upon him by the providence of God, which appeared like the effects of divine wrath or anger? But they were plainly designed for more divine and blessed purposes, both with regard to God, with regard to himself, and to all the succeeding ages of the christian church.

God does not always smite his own people to punish sin and shew his anger; but these sufferings are often appointed for the trial of their christian virtues and graces, for the exercise of their humility and their patience, for the proof of their steadfastness in religion, for the honour of the grace of God in them, and for the increase of their own future weight of glory. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him, *Jam.* i. 12.—The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life, *Rev.* ii. 10. "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," *2 Cor.* iv. 17.

However, upon the whole, this world is a very painful and troublesome place to the children of God: They are subject here to many weaknesses and sins, temptations and follies; they are in danger of new defilements; they go through many threatening perils and many real sorrows, which either are the effects of the displeasure of God, or, at least, carry an appearance of divine anger in them: But there is a time when these shall be finished, and sorrow shall have it's last period: There is a time when these calamities will be overpassed, and shall return no more for ever.

Reflexion. "Why then, O my soul, why shouldst thou be so fond of dwelling in this present world? Why shouldst thou be desirous of a long continuance in it? Hast thou never found sorrows and afflictions enough among the scenes of life, to make thee weary of them? And when sorrow and sin have joined together, have they not grievously embittered this life unto thee? Wilt thou never be weaned from these sensible scenes of flesh and blood? Hast thou such a love to the darkneses, the defilements, and the uneasinesses which are found in such a prison as this is, as to make thee unwilling to depart when God shall call? Hast thou dwelt so long in this tabernacle of clay, and dost thou not groan, being burdened? Hast thou no desire to a release into that upper and better world, where sorrows, sins and temptations have no place, and where there shall never be the least appearance or suspicion of the displeasure of thy God towards thee?"

Observation



Observation II. "The grave is God's known hiding-place for his people:" It is his appointed shelter and retreat for his favourites, when he finds them over-pressed either with present dangers or calamities, or when he foresees huge calamities and dangers, like storms and billows, ready to overtake them. *Isaiab lvii. 1. The righteous is taken away from the evil to come.* God our heavenly Father beholds this evil advancing forward through all the pleasant smiles of nature, and all the peaceful circumstances that surround us. He hides his children in the grave from a thousand sins, and sorrows, and distresses of this life, which they foresaw not: And even when they are actually beset behind and before, so that there seems to be no natural way for their escape, God calls them aside into the chambers of death, in the same sort of language as he uses in another case, *Isaiab xxvi. 20. Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, bide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpassed.*

And yet perhaps it is possible that this very language of the Lord in *Isaiab* may refer to the grave, as God's hiding-place, for the verse before promises a resurrection. *Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise: Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust: For thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* And if we may suppose this last verse to have been transposed by any ancient transcribers, so as to have followed originally verse 20, or 21, it is very natural then to interpret the whole paragraph concerning death, as God's hiding-place for his people, and their rising again through the virtue of the resurrection of *Christ* as their joyful release.

Many a time God is pleased to shorten the labours, and travels, and fatigues of good men in this wilderness, and he opens a door of rest to them where he pleases; and perhaps surprises them into a state of safety and peace, "where the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling;" and holy *Job* seems to desire this favour from his maker here. *Job. iii. 17.*

Sometimes indeed, in the history of this book, he seems to break out into these desires in too rude and angry a manner of expression; and in a fit of criminal impatience he murmurs against God for upholding him in the land of the living: But at other times, as in this text, he represents his desires with more decency and submission. Every desire to die is not to be construed sinful and criminal. Nature may ask of God a relief from it's agonies and a period to it's sorrows; nor does grace utterly forbid it, if there be also a humble submission and resignation to the will of God, such as we find exemplified by our blessed Saviour, *Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as thou wilt.* *Matth. xxvi. 39, 42.*

On this second observation I desire to make these three reflexions.

Reflexion I. Though a good man knows that death was originally appointed as a curse for sin, yet his faith can trust God to turn that curse into a blessing: He can humbly ask his maker to release him from the painful bonds of life, to hasten the slow approaches of death, and to hide him in the grave from some overwhelming sorrows. This is the glory of God in his covenant of grace with the children of men, that he "turns curses into blessings," *Deut. xxiii. 5.* And the grave which was designed as a prison for sinners, is become a place of shelter to the saints, where they are hidden and secured from rising sorrows and calamities. It is God's known hiding-place for his own children from the envy and the rage of men, from all the known and unknown agonies of nature, the diseases of the flesh, and the distresses of human life, which perhaps might be over-bearing and intolerable.

"Why

“Why, O my fearful soul, why shouldst thou be afraid of dying? Why shouldst thou be frightened at the dark shadows of the grave, when thou art weary with the toils and crosses of the day? Hast thou not often desired the shadow of the evening, and longed for the bed of natural sleep, where thy fatigues and thy sorrows may be forgotten for a season? And is not the grave itself a sweet sleeping-place for the saints, wherein they lie down and forget their distresses, and feel none of the miseries of human life, and especially since it is softened and sanctified by the Son of God lying down there? Why shouldst thou be afraid to lay thy head in the dust? It is but entering into God’s hiding-place, into his chambers of rest and repose: It is but committing thy flesh, the meaner part of thy composition, to his care in the dark for a short season: He will hide thee there, and keep thee in safety from the dreadful trials which perhaps would overwhelm thy spirit. Sometimes in the course of his providence he may find it necessary, that some spreading calamity should overtake the place where thou dwellest, or some distressing stroke fall upon thy family, or thy friends, but he will hide thee under ground before it comes, and thus disappoint all thy fears, and lay every perplexing thought into rest and silence.

Reflexion II. Let it be ever remembered, that the grave is God’s hiding-place and not our own: We are to venture into it without terror when he calls us; but he does not suffer us to break into it our own way without his call. Death and life are in the hands of God, and he never gave the keys of them to mortal men to let themselves out of this world when they please, nor to enter into his hiding-place without his leave.

“Bear up then, O my soul, under all the sorrows and trials of this present state till God himself shall say, “It is finished,” *John* xix. 20. till our blessed *Jesus*, who has the keys put into his hands, shall open the door of death, and give thee an entrance into that dark and peaceful retreat. It is a safe and silent refuge from the bustle and the noise, the labours and the troubles of life; but he that forces it open with his own hands, how will he dare to appear before God in the world of spirits? What will he answer, when with a dreadful frown the great God shall demand of him, “Friend, how camest thou in hither?” *Matth.* xxii. 12. Who sent for thee, or gave thee leave to come? Such a wretch must venture upon so rash an action at the peril of the wrath of God, and his own eternal destruction.

“Our blessed *Jesus*, who has all the vast scheme of divine counsels before his eyes, by having the books of his Father’s decrees put into his hands, he knows how long it is proper for thee, O christian, to fight and labour, to wrestle and strive with sins, temptations and difficulties in the present life: He knows best in what moment to put a period to them, and to pronounce thee conqueror. Fly not from the field of battle for want of holy fortitude, though thy enemies and thy dangers be never so many, nor dare to dismiss thyself from thy appointed post, till the Lord of life pronounce the word of thy dismissal.

“Sometimes I have been ready to say within myself, Why is my life prolonged in sorrow? Why are my days lengthened out to see further wretchedness? Methinks the “grave should be ready for me, and the house appointed for all the living. *Job* xvii. 1. xxx. 23. What can I do further for God or for man here on earth, since my nature pines away with painful sickness, my nerves are unstrung, my spirits dissipated, and my best powers of acting are inebled and almost lost? Peace, peace, O thou complaining spirit; Dost thou know the counsels of the almighty, and the secret designs of thy God and thy Saviour? He has many deep and unknown purposes in continuing his children amidst heavy sorrows, which they can never penetrate

netrate or learn in this world. Silence and submission becomes thee at all times. "Father, not my will but thy will be done." *Luke xxii. 42.*

"And let it be hinted to thee, O my soul, that it is much more honourable to be weary of this life, because of the sins and temptations of it, than because of the toils and sorrows that attend it. If we must "groan in this tabernacle being burdened," *2 Cor. v. 4.* let the snares, and the dangers, and the defilements of it be the chief springs of thy groaning and the warmest motives to request a release. God loves to see his people more afraid of sin than of sorrow. If thy corruptions are so strong, and the temptations of life so unhappily surround thee, that thou art daily crying out, "Who shall deliver thee from the body of sin and death," *Rom. vii. 24.* then thou mayst more honourably send up a wish to heaven, "O that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" *Psalms lv. 6.* "O that God would hide me in the grave" from my prevailing iniquities, and from the ruffling and disquieting influence of my own follies and my daily temptations! But never be thou quite weary of doing or suffering the will of thy heavenly Father, though he should continue thee in this mortal life a length of years beyond thy desires, and should withhold thee from his secret place of retreat and rest."

A constant and joyful readiness at the call of God to depart hence, with a cheerful patience to continue here during his pleasure, is the most perfect and blessed temper that a christian can arrive at: It gives God the highest glory, and keeps the soul in the sweetest peace.

Reflexion III. This one thought, that the "grave is God's hiding-place," should compose our spirits to silence, and abate our mourning for the loss of friends, who have given sufficient evidence that they are the children of God. Their heavenly Father has seized them from the midst of their trials, dangers and difficulties, and given them a secure refuge in his own appointed place of rest and safety. *Jesus* has opened the door of the grave with his golden key, and hath let them into a chamber of repose: He has concealed them in a silent retreat, where temptation and sin cannot reach them, and where anguish and misery never come.

When I have lost therefore a dear and delightful relative or friend, or perhaps many of them in a short season are called successively down to the dust, let me say thus within myself, "It is their God and my God has done it: He saw what new temptations were ready to surround them in the circumstances of life wherein they stood: He beheld the trials and difficulties that were ready to encompass them on all sides, and his love made a way for their escape: He opened the dark retreat of death, and hid them there from a thousand perils which might have plunged them into guilt and defilement: He beheld this as the proper season to give them a release from a world of labour and toil, vanity and vexation, sin and sorrow: They are taken away from the evil to come, and I will learn to complain no more. The blessed *Jesus*, to whom they had devoted themselves, well knew what allurements of gaiety and joy might have been too prevalent over them, and he gave them a kind escape lest their souls should suffer any real detriment, lest their strict profession of piety should be foiled or dishonoured: He knew how much they were able to bear, and he would lay upon them no further burden: He saw rising difficulties approaching, and new perils coming upon them beyond their strength, and he fulfils his own promises, and glorifies his own faithfulness, by opening the door of his well-known hiding-place, and giving them a safe refuge there. He keeps them there in secret from the corruptions of a public life, and the multiplied dangers of a degenerate age, which might have divided their hearts from God and things heavenly:

heavenly: And perhaps he guards them also in that dark retreat from some long and languishing sickness, some unknown distress, some overbearing flood of misery, which was like to come upon them had they continued longer on the stage of life.

“Let this silence thy murmuring thoughts, O my soul; let this dry up thy tears which are ready to overflow on such an occasion. Dare not pronounce it a stroke of anger from the hand of God, who divided them from the tempting or distressing scenes of this world, and kindly removed them out of the way of danger. This was the wisest method of his love to guard them from many a folly and many a sorrow, which he foresaw just at the door.”

Will the wounded and complaining heart go on to groan and murmur still, “But my son was carried off in the prime of life, or my daughter in her blooming years; they stood flourishing in the vigour of their nature, and it was my delight to behold their growing appearances of virtue and goodness, and that in the midst of ease, and plenty, and prospects of happiness, so far as this world can afford it?”

But could you look through the next year to the end of it? Could you penetrate into future events, and survey the scenes of seven years to come? Could your heart assure itself of the real possession of this imaginary view of happiness and peace? Perhaps the blessed God saw the clouds gathering afar off, and at a great distance of time, and in much kindness he housed your favourite from unknown trials, dangers and sorrows. So a prudent gardener, who is acquainted with the sky, and skilful in the signs of the seasons, even in the month of *May*, foresees a heavy tempest rising in the edge of the horizon, while a vulgar eye observes nothing but sunshine; and he who knows the worth and the tenderness of some special plants in his garden, houses them in haste, lest they be exposed and demolished by the sweeping rain or hail.

You say, “These children were in the bloom of life, and in the most desirable appearance of joy and satisfaction:” “But is not that also usually the most dangerous season of life, and the hour of most powerful temptation? Was not that the time when their passions might have been too hard for them, and the deluding pleasures of life stood round them with a most perilous assault? And what if God, out of pure compassion, saw it necessary to hide them from an army of perils at once, and to carry them off the stage of life with more purity and honour? Surely when the great God has appointed it, when the blessed *Jesus* has done it, we would not rise up in opposition and say, “But I would have had them live longer here at all adventures: I wish they were alive again, let the consequence be what it will.” This is not the voice of faith or patience; this is not the language of holy submission and love to God, nor can our souls approve of such irregular storms of ungoverned affection, which oppose themselves to the divine will, and ruffle the soul with criminal disquietude.”

There are many, even of the children of God, who had left a more unblemished and a more honourable character behind them if they had died much sooner. The latter end of life hath sometimes sullied their brightness, and tarnished the glory they had acquired in a hopeful youth: Their growing years have fallen under such temptations, and been defiled and disgraced by such failings, as would have been entirely prevented had they been summoned away into God's hiding-place some years before. Our blessed *Jesus* walks among the roses and lilies in the garden of his church, and when he sees a wintry storm coming upon some tender plants of righteousness, he hides them in the earth to preserve life in them, that they may bloom with new glories when they shall be raised from that bed. The blessed God acts like a tender Father, and consults the safety and the honour of his children, when the hand of his

his mercy snatches them away before that powerful temptation comes, which he foresees would have defiled and distressed, and almost destroyed them. They are not lost, but they are gone to rest a little sooner than we are. Peace be to that bed of dust where they are hidden, by the hand of their God, from unknown dangers! Blessed be our Lord *Jesus*, who has the keys of the grave, and never opens it for his favourites but in the wisest season!

Observation III. "God has appointed a set time in his own counsels for all his children to continue in death:" Those whom he has hidden in the grave he remembers they lie there, and he will not suffer them to abide in the dust for ever. When *Job* intreats of God that he may be hidden from his sorrows in the dust of death, he requests also that God would appoint a set time for his release, and remember him. His faith seems to have had a glimpse of the blessed resurrection. Our senses and our carnal passions would cry out, where is *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and the rest of the antient worthies, who have been long sleepers in their beds of repose for many thousand years? But faith assures us, that God numbers the days and the months of the concealment under ground, he knows where their dust lies, and where to find every scattered atom against the great restoring day. They are unseen indeed and forgotten of men, but then they are under the eye and the keeping of the blessed God: He watches over their sleeping dust, and while the world has forgotten and lost even their names, they are every moment under the eye of God, for they stand written in his book of life, with the name of the lamb at the head of them.

*Jesus*, his Son, had but three days appointed him to dwell in this hiding-place, and he rose again at the appointed hour. Other good men who were gone to their grave not long before him, arose again at the resurrection of *Christ*, and made a visit to many in *Jerusalem*: Their appointed hiding-place was but for a short season; and all the children of God shall be remembered in their proper seasons in faithfulness to his Son to whom he has given them: The head is raised to the mansions of glory, and the members must not for ever lie in dust.

Reflexion. Then let all the saints of God wait with patience for the appointed time when he will call them down to death, and let them lie down in their secret beds of repose, and in a waiting frame commit their dust to his care till the resurrection. *All the days of my appointed time, says Job, I will wait till my change come.* The word appointed time is supposed to signify "warfare" in the *hebrew*: As a centinel, when he is fixed to his post by his general, he waits there till he has orders for a release. And this clause of the verse may refer either to dying or rising again, for either of them is a very great and important change, passing upon human nature, whether from life to death, or from death to life.

It is said by the prophet *Isaiab*, chapter xxviii. 16. "He that believeth shall not make haste," that is, he that trusteth in the wisdom and the promised mercy of God will not be too urgent or importunate in any of his desires: It is for want of faith that nature sometimes is in too much haste to die, as *Job* in some of his expressions appears to have been, or as *Elijab* perhaps discovered himself when he was wandering in the wilderness disconsolate and almost despairing; or as the prophet *Jeremiab* sufficiently manifested, when he cursed the day of his birth; or as *Jonab* was, that peevish prophet, when he was angry with God for not taking away his life; but the ground of it was, he was vexed because God did not destroy *Nineveh*, according to his prophecy: These are certain blemishes of the children of God left upon re-

cord in his word, to give us warning of our danger of impatience, and to guard us against their sins and follies. And since we know that God has appointed the seasons of our entrance into death, and into the state of the resurrection, we should humbly commit the disposal of ourselves to the hand of our God, who will bestow upon us the most needful blessings in the most proper season.

Do not the spirits of the just made perfect wait in patience for the great and blessed rising day which God has appointed, and for the illustrious change of their bodies from corruption and darkness to light, and life, and glory? God has promised it, and that suffices, and supports their waiting spirits, though they know not the hour. "The Father keeps that in his own hand," *Acts* i. 7. and perhaps reveals it to none but his Son *Jesus*, who is exalted to be the governor and judge of the world. There are millions of souls waiting in that separate state for the accomplishment of these last and best promises, ready to shout and rejoice when they shall see and feel that bright morning dawning upon them.

"Wait therefore, O my soul, as becomes a child of God in the wilderness among many trials, darkneses and distresses. He has stripped thee perhaps of one comfort after another, and thy friends and dear relatives in succession are called down to the dust; they are released from their conflicts, and are placed far out of the reach of every temptation; and it is not thy business to prescribe to God at what hour he shall release thee also. Whensoever he is pleased to call thee to lay down thy flesh in the dust, and to enter into God's hiding-place, meet thou the summons with holy courage, satisfaction and joy, enter into the chamber of rest till all the days of sin, sorrow and wretchedness are overpassed: Lie down there in a waiting frame, and commit thy flesh to his care and keeping, till the hour in which he has appointed thy glorious change."

Observation IV. "The lively view of a happy resurrection, and a well-grounded hope of this blessed change, is a solid and divine comfort to the saints of God, under all trials of every kind both in life and death." The faith and hope of a joyful rising-day has supported the children of God under long distresses and huge agonies of sorrow which they sustain here. It is the expectation of this desirable day that animates the soul with vigor and life to fulfil every painful and dangerous duty. It is for this we expose ourselves to the bitter reproaches and persecutions of the wicked world; it is for this that we conflict with all our adversaries on earth, and all the powers of darkness that are sent from hell to annoy us; it is this joyful expectation that bears up our spirits under every present burden and calamity of life.

What could we do in such a painful and dying world, or how could we bear with patience the long fatigues of such a wretched life, if we had no hope of rising again from the dead? Surely "we are the most miserable of all men in the days of public persecution, if we had hope only in this life," *1 Cor.* xv. 19. It is for this that we labour, and suffer, and endure whatsoever our heavenly Father is pleased to lay upon us. It is this confirms our fortitude, and makes "us stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord," *1 Cor.* xv. 58. It is this that enables us to bear the loss of our dearest friends with patience and hope, and assuages the smart of our sharpest sorrows: For since we believe that "*Jesus* died and rose again, so we rejoice in hope that they which sleep in *Jesus* shall be brought with him at his return, and shall appear in brighter and more glorious circumstances than ever our eyes were blessed with here on earth," *1 Thes.* iv. 13, 14. This teaches us to triumph over death and  
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the grave in divine language, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" *1 Cor. xv. 55.*

Reflexion. "What are thy chief burdens, O my soul? Whence are all thy sighs and thy daily groanings? What are thy distresses of flesh or spirit? Summon them all in one view, and see whether there be not power and glory enough in a resurrection to conquer and silence them all, and to put thy present sorrows to flight?"

"Dost thou dwell in a vexing and persecuting world, amongst oppressions and reproaches? But those who reproach and oppress are but mortal creatures, who shall shortly go down to the dust, and then they shall tyrannize and afflict thee no more: The great rising-day shall change the scene from oppression and reproach to dominion and glory. When "they lie down in the grave like beasts of slaughter, death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, when God shall redeem thy soul from the power of the grave." *Psal. xlix. 14, 15.* Thy God shall hide thy body from their rage in his own appointed resting-place, and he shall receive thy soul, and keep it secure in his own presence, till that blessed morning break upon this lower creation; then shalt thou "arise and shine,—for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." *Isai. lx. 1.*

"Do the calamities which thou sufferest proceed from the hand of God?" Art thou disquieted with daily pain, with sicknesses and anguish in thy flesh? Or art thou surrounded with crosses and disappointments in thy outward circumstances? Are thy spirits sunk with many loads of care and pressing perplexities? Canst thou not forget them all in the vision that faith can give thee of the great rising-day? Canst thou not say in the language of faith,—"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us?" *Rom. viii. 18.* Then the head and the heart shall ake no more, and every circumstance around thee shall be pleasing and joyful for ever.

"Or art thou tenderly affected with the loss of pious friends, who have been very dear and desirable? Perhaps thy sensibilities here are too great and painful: They are such indeed as nature is ready to indulge, but are they not more than God requires, or the gospel allows? Do not thy thoughts dwell too much on the gloom and darkness of the grave? O think of that bright hour when every saint shall rise from the dark retreats of death with more complete characters of beauty, holiness and pleasure, than ever this world could shew them in! They are not perished, but sent a little before us into God's hiding-place, where though they lie in dust and darkness, yet they are safe from the dangers and vexations of life; but they shall spring up in the happy moment into immortality, and shall join with thee in a mutual surprise at each other's divine change.

"Or dost thou feel the corruptions of thy heart working within thee, and the sins of thy nature restless in their endeavours to bring defilement upon thy soul, and guilt upon thy conscience: Go on and maintain the holy warfare against all these rising iniquities? This thy warfare shall not continue long: Thou shalt find every one of these sins buried with thee in the grave, but they shall arise to assault thee no more. The saint shall leave every sin behind him when he breaks out of the dust at the summons of *Christ*, and thou shalt find no seeds of iniquity in thy body when it is raised from the grave. Holiness to the Lord shall be inscribed upon all thy powers for ever.

"Or art thou perplexed, O my soul, at the near prospect of death and all the terrors and dismal appearances that surround it? Art thou afraid to lie down in the cold and noisome grave? Does thy nature shudder at it as a gloomy place of horror?"

These indeed are the prejudices of sense; but the language of faith will tell thee, it is only God's hiding-place where he secures his saints till all the ages of sin and sorrow are overpassed. Look forward to the glorious morning when thou shalt rise from the dust among ten thousand of thy fellows, every one in the image of the Son of God, with their "bodies formed after the likeness of his glorious body," *Phil. iii. 21.* and rejoicing together with divine satisfaction in the pleasure of this heavenly change. Try whether the meditation of these glories, and the distant prospect of this illustrious day, will not scatter all the gloom that hovers round the grave, and vanquish the fiercest appearances of the king of terrors.

"What is there, O my soul, among all the miseries thou hast felt, or all that thou fearest, that can sink thy courage, if the faith of a resurrection be but alive and wakeful?" But this leads me to the

Observation V. "The saints of God, who are resting in their beds of dust, will arise joyfully at the call of their heavenly Father." Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee, said holy *Job*. The command of God creates life, and gives power to the dead to arise and speak. "I come, O Lord, I come." When *Jesus*, the Son of God, as with the trumpet of an archangel, shall pronounce the word which he spake to *Lazarus*, "Arise, and come forth," *John xi. 43.* dust and rottenness shall hear the call from heaven, and the clods of corruption all round the earth shall arise into the form of man: The saints shall appear at once and answer to that divine call, arrayed in a glory like that of angels; an illustrious host of martyrs and confessors for the truth; an army of heroes and valiant sufferers for the name and cause of God and his Son; an innumerable multitude of faithful servants who have finished their work, and lay down at rest.

How shall *Adam*, the father of our race, together with the holy men of his day, be surprised, when they shall awake out of their long sleep of five thousand years? How shall all the saints of the intermediate ages break from their beds of darkness with intense delight? And those who lay down but yesterday in the dust shall start up at once with their early ancestors, and answer to the call of *Jesus* from one end of time to the other, and from all the ends of the earth. They shall arise together to "meet the Lord in the air, that they may be for ever with the Lord." *1 Thess. iv. 17.*

Never was any voice obeyed with more readiness and joy than the voice or trumpet of the great archangel, summoning all the children of God to awake from their long slumbers, and to leave their dusty beds behind them, with all the seeds of sin and sorrow, which are buried and lost there for ever. Never did any army on earth march with more speed and pleasure, at the sound of the trumpet, to attend their general to a new triumph, than this glorious assembly shall arise to meet their returning Lord, when this last trumpet sounds, and when he shall come the second time in the full glories of his person and his offices, as Lord and judge of the world, to bring his faithful followers into complete salvation.

Reflexion. "Whensoever, O my soul, thou feelest any reluctance to obey the summons of death, encourage thy faith, and scatter thy fears, by waiting for the call of God to a blessed resurrection. *Jesus* himself lay down in the grave at his Father's command, and he arose with joy at the appointed hour as the head of the new creation, as the first-born from the dead; and he has orders given him by the Father to summon every saint from their graves at the long appointed hour. Because *Jesus* arose and lives, they shall arise and live also. O may my flesh lie down in the dust  
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with all courage and composure, and rejoice to escape into a place of rest and silence, away from the noise and tumult, the hurry and bustle of this present life; being well assured that the next sound which shall be heard is the voice of the Son of God, "arise ye dead!" Make haste then, O blessed *Jesus*, and finish thy divine work here on earth: I lay down my head to sleep in the dust, waiting for thy call, to awake in the morning."

Observation VI. "God takes delight in his works of nature, but much more when they are dignified and adorned by the operations of divine grace." "Thou wilt have a desire, saith the good man in my text, to the work of thy own hands." Thou hast moulded me and fashioned me at first by thy power, thou hast new created me by thy Spirit, and though thou hidest me for a season in one of thy secret chambers of death, thou wilt raise me again to light and life, "and in my flesh shall I see God."

When the almighty had created this visible world, he surveyed his works on the seventh day, and pronounced them all good, and he took delight in them all before sin entered and defiled them: And when he has delivered the creatures of his power from the bondage of corruption, and has purged our souls and our bodies from sin and from every evil principle, he will again delight in the sons and daughters of *Adam* whom he has thus cleansed and refined by his sovereign grace, and has qualified and adorned them for his own presence, "He will sing and rejoice over them, and rest in his love." *Zephan. iii. 17.*

He will love to see them with his Son *Jesus* at their head, diffusing holiness and glory through all his members. *Jesus* the redeemer will love to see them round him, for he has bought them with his blood, and they are a treasure too precious to be for ever lost. He will rejoice to behold them rising at his call into a splendor like his own, and they "shall be satisfied when they awake from death into his likeness," *Psalms xvii. 15.* and appear in the image of his own glorious body, fit heirs for the inheritance of heaven, fit companions for the blessed angels of light, and prepared to dwell for ever with himself.

Reflexion. And shall not we who are the work of his hands have a desire to him that made us? To him that redeemed us? To him that has new created and moulded us into his own likeness? Do we not long to see him? Have we no desire to be with him, even though we should be absent from the body for a season? But much more should we delight to think of being present with the Lord, when our whole natures, body and soul, shall appear as the new workmanship of almighty power; our souls new created in the image of God, and our bodies new born from the dead, into a life of immortality. *2 Cor v. 8.*

VII. The last observation is of a very general nature, and spreads itself through all my text, and that is, "How much are we indebted to God for the revelation of the new testament, which teaches us to find out the blessings which are contained in the old, and to fetch out the glories and treasures which are concealed there?" The writers of the gospel have not only pointed us to the rich mines where these treasures lie, but have brought forth many of the jewels and set them before us. "It is this gospel that brings life and immortality to light by *Jesus Christ*," *2 Tim. i. 10.* It is this gospel that scatters the gloom and darkness which was spread over the face of the grave, and illuminates all the chambers of death. Who could have found out the doctrine of the resurrection contained in that word of grace given

to *Abraham*, I am thy God, if *Jesus*, the great prophet, had not taught us to explain it thus, *Matth.* xxii. 31. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

We who have the happiness to live in the days of the *Messiah*, know more than all the ancient prophets were acquainted with, and understand the word of their prophecies better than they themselves; for they "searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of *Christ*, which was in them, did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of *Christ*, and the glory which should follow," *1 Pet.* i. 11. But we read all this fairly written in the gospel. Do you think that good *David* could have explained some of his own *Psalms* into so divine a sense, or *Isaiab* given such a bright account of his own words of prophecy, as *St. Paul* has done in several places of the new testament, where he cites and unfolds them? Could those illustrious ancients have given us such "abundant consolation and hope through the scriptures, which they themselves wrote aforetime," as this apostle has done? *Rom.* xv. 4. Do you think *Job* could have read us such a lecture on his own expressions in this text, or in that bright prophecy in the xix. chapter, as the very meanest among the ministers of the gospel can do by the help of the new testament? For in point of clear discoveries of divine truths and graces, "the least in the kingdom of the *Messiah* is greater than *John* the baptist and all the prophets," and our blessed *Jesus* has told us so, *Matth.* xi. 11, 13. And by the aid and influences of his Spirit we may be taught yet further to search into these hidden mines of grace, and bring forth new treasures of glory.

Reflexion. "Awake, O my soul, and bless the Lord with all thy powers, and give thanks with holy joy for the gospel of his Son *Jesus*. It is *Jesus* by his rising from the dead has left a divine light upon the gates of the grave, and scattered much of the darkness that surrounded it. It is the gospel of *Christ* which casts a glory even upon the bed of death, and spreads a brightness upon the graves of the saints in the lively views of a great rising-day. O blessed and surprising prospect of faith! O illustrious scenes of future vision and transport! When the Son of God shall bring forth to public view all his redeemed ones, who had been long hidden in night and dust, and shall present them all to God the Father in his own image, bright, and holy, and unblemished, in the midst of all the splendors of the resurrection! O blessed and joyful voice, when he shall say with divine pleasure, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me:" *Isai.* viii. 18. *Heb.* ii. 13. We have both passed through the grave, and I have made them all conquerors of death, and vested them all with immortality according to thy divine commission! Thine they were, O Father, and thou hast given them into my hands, and behold I have brought them all safe to thy appointed mansions, and I present them before thee without spot or blemish." *John* xvii. 6.

And many a parent of a pious household in that day, when they shall see their sons and their daughters around them, all arrayed with the beams of the Son of righteousness, shall echo with holy joy to the voice of the blessed *Jesus*, "Lord, here am I and the children which thou hast given me." *Heb.* ii. 13. "I was afraid, as *Job* once might be when his friends suggested this fear; I was afraid that my children had sinned against God, and he had cast them away for their transgression:" *Job* viii. 4. But I am now convinced, when he seized them from my sight, he only took them out of the way of temptation and danger, and concealed them for a season in his safe hiding-place: I mourned in the day-time for a lost son or a lost daughter, and in the night my couch was bedewed with my tears: I was scared with midnight dreams

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on their account, and the visions of the grave terrified me because my children were there: I gave up myself to sorrow for fear of the displeasure of my God both against them and against me: But how unreasonable were these sorrows? How groundless were my fears? How gloriously am I disappointed this blessed morning? I see my dear off-spring called out of that long retreat where God had concealed them, and they arise to meet the divine call. I hear them answering with joy to the happy summons. My eyes behold them risen in the image of my God and their God; they are near me, they stand with me at the right-hand of the judge; now shall we rejoice together in the sentence of eternal blessedness from the lips of my Lord, my redeemer and their redeemer." Amen.

Among my papers I have found a speech spoken at a grave, which I transcribed almost fifty years ago, and which deserves to be saved from perishing. It was pronounced many years before at the funeral of a pious person, by a minister there present, supposed to be the reverend Mr. *Peter Sterry*; and the subject of it being suited to this discourse, I thought it not improper to preserve it here.

CHRISTIAN friends, though sin be entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; *Rom. v. 12.* yet it seems not wholly suitable to our christian hope, to stand by and see the grave with open mouth take in, and swallow down any part of a precious saint, and not bring some testimony against the devourer. And yet that our witness may be in righteousness, we must first own, acknowledge, and accept of that good and serviceableness that is in it.

“ For through the death and resurrection of our dear redeemer, death and the grave are become sweetened to us, and sanctified for us: So that as death is but a sleep, the grave through his lying down in it and rising again, is become as a bed of repose to them that are in him, and a safe and quiet hiding-place for his saints till the resurrection.

“ And in this respect we do for ourselves, and for this our dearly beloved in the Lord, accept of thee, O grave, and readily deliver up her body to thee; it is a body that hath been weakened and wearied with long affliction and anguish, we freely give it into thee; receive it, and let it have in thee a quiet rest from all its labours; for thus we read it written of thee, “ There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest.” *Job iii. 17.*

“ Besides, it is, O grave, a body that hath been sweetly embalmed by a virtuous, pious, peaceable conversation, by several inward openings and out-pourings of the Spirit of life, by much patience and meekness in strong trials and afflictions: Receive it, and let it enjoy in thee, what was once deeply impressed on her own heart, and in a due season written out with her own hand, a sabbath in the grave: For thus also we find it recorded of our Lord and her Lord, that he enjoyed the rest of his last sabbath in the grave.

“ But we know thee, O grave, to be also a devourer, and yet we can freely deliver up the body into thee. There was in it a contracted corruptibility, dishonour and weakness; take them as thy proper prey, they belong to thee, and we would not withhold them from thee: Freely swallow them up for ever, that they may appear no more.

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“ Yet know, O grave, there is in the body, considered as once united to such a soul, a divine relation to the Lord of life; and this thou must not, thou canst not dissolve or destroy. But know, and even before thee, and over thee be it spoken, that there is a season hastening wherein we shall expect it again from thee in incorruption, honour, and power.

“ We now sow into thee in dishonour, but expect it again returned from thee in glory; we now sow it into thee, in weakness, we expect it again in power; we now sow it into thee a natural body, we look for it again from thee a spiritual body.

1 Cor. xv. 42—44.

“ And when thou hast fulfilled that end for which the prince of life, who took thee captive, made thee to serve, then shalt thou who hast devoured, be thyself also swallowed up; for thus it is written of thee, “ O death, I will be thy plague, O grave, I will be thy destruction.” *Hof. xiii. 14.* And then shall we sing over thee what also is written of thee, “ O death, where is now thy sting? O grave, where is now thy victory?” 1 Cor. xv. 55. Amen.

Note, A line or two is altered in this speech, to suit it more to the understanding and the sense of the present age.

D I S-

## DISCOURSE XII.

## The nature of the punishments in hell.

MARK IX. 46.

*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

## I N T R O D U C T I O N.

**T**HES E words are a short description of hell, by the lips of the Son of God, who came down from heaven : And he who lay in the bosom of his Father, and was intimate in all the counsels of his mercy and justice, must be supposed to know what the terrors and the wrath of God are, as well as his compassion and his goodness.

It is confessed, that a discourse on this dreadful subject is not a direct ministration of grace, and the glad tidings of salvation, yet it has a great and happy tendency to the same end, even the salvation of sinful men ; for it awakens them to a more piercing sight, and to a more keen sensation of their own guilt and danger ; it possesses their spirits with a more lively sense of their misery, it fills them with a holy dread of divine punishment, and excites the powerful passion of fear to make them fly from the wrath to come, and betake themselves to the grace of God revealed in the gospel.

The blessed Saviour himself, who was the most perfect image of his Father's love, and the prime minister of his grace, publishes more of these terrors to the world, and preaches hell and damnation to sinners more than all the prophets or teachers that ever went before him ; and several of the apostles imitate their Lord in this practice : They kindle the flames of hell in their epistles, they thunder through the very hearts and consciences of men with the voice of damnation and eternal misery, to make stupid sinners feel as much of these terrors in the present prospect as is possible, in order to escape the actual sensation of them in time to come.

Such awful discourses are many times also of excellent use to keep the children of God, and the disciples of *Jesus*, in a holy and watchful frame, and to affright them from returning to sin and folly, and from the indulgence of any temptation, by setting these terrors of the Lord before their eyes. O may these words of his terror, from the lips of one of the meanest of his ministers, be attended with divine power from the convincing and sanctifying Spirit, that they may answer these happy ends and purposes, that they may excite a solemn reverence of the dreadful majesty of God in all our souls, and awaken us to repentance for every sin, and a more watchful course of holiness !

Let us then consider the expression in my text : When our Saviour mentions the word hell, he adds, " where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ;" in which description we may read the nature of this punishment, and the perpetuity of it.

FIRST, We shall consider the nature of this punishment, as it is represented by the metaphors which our Saviour uses ; and if I were to give the most natural and proper sense of this representation, I would say that our Saviour might borrow this figure of speech from these three considerations.

1. Worms and fire are the two most general ways whereby the bodies of the dead are destroyed ; for whether they are buried or not buried, worms devour those who by the custom of their country are not burned with fire : And perhaps he might refer to the words of *Isaiab* lxvi. 24. where the prophet seems to foretel the punishment of those who will not receive the gospel, when it shall be preached to all nations : They, says he, that is, the true *Israel*; the saints of God, or christians, they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." It is highly probable that this is only a metaphor referring to the punishment of the souls of obstinate unbelievers in hell, for it would be but a very small punishment indeed, if only their dead bodies were devoured by worms or fire, or rather no punishment at all besides a memorial of their sin.

2. Consider, the gnawing of worms and the burning of fire are some of the most smart and severe torments that a living man can feel in the flesh ; therefore the vengeance of God, upon the souls of obstinate sinners, is set forth by it in our Saviour's discourse ; and it was probably well known amongst the *Jews*, as appears by some of the apocryphal writings, *Judith* xvi. 17. " Woe to the nation that rises up against my kindred ; the Lord almighty will take vengeance of them in the day of judgment, putting fire and worms in their flesh, and they shall feel them and weep for ever." And *Ecclus.* vii. 16. 17. " Number not thyself among the multitude of sinners, but remember the wrath will not tarry long. Humble thy soul greatly, for the vengeance of the ungodly is fire and worms."

3. Consider, whether worms feed upon a living man or devour his dead body, still they are such as are bred in his own flesh ; but fire is brought by other hands," and applied to the flesh : Even so this metaphor of a worm happily represents the inward torments, and the teasing and vexing passions which shall arise in the souls of those unhappy creatures, who are the just objects of this punishment ; and it is called their worm, that worm that belongs to them, and is bred within them by the foul vices and diseases of their souls : But the " fire which shall never be quenched" refers rather to the pains and anguish which come from without, and that chiefly from the hand of God, the righteous avenger of sin, and from his indignation, which is compared to fire.

## S E C T I O N I.

" The worm that dieth not."

Let us begin with the first of these, viz. the " torments which are derived from the gnawing worm, those agonies and uneasy passions which will arise and work in the souls of these wretched creatures," so far as we can collect them from the word of God, from the reason of things, and the working powers of human nature.

When

When an impenitent sinner is cast into hell, we have abundant reason to suppose, that the evil temper of his soul, and the vicious principles within him, are not abated, but his natural powers, and the vices which have tainted them and mingle with them, are awakened and enraged into intense activity and exercise, under the first sensations of his dreadful punishment. Let us endeavour to conceive then what would be the ferments, the raging passions, and the vexing inward torments of a wicked man, seized by the officers of an almighty judge, borne away by the executioners of vengeance, and plunged into a pit of torture and smarting misery, while at the same time he had a most fresh and piercing conviction ever present, that he had brought all this mischief upon himself by his own guilt and folly.

I. The first particular piece of wretchedness therefore, contained in this metaphor, is the "remorse and terrible anguish of conscience which shall never be relieved." How terrible are the racks of a guilty conscience here on earth, which arise from a sense of past sins? How does *David* cry out and roar under the disquietude of his spirit? *Psalms xxxii.* 3. "While I kept silence and confessed not my iniquity, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, and my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." And again, *Psalms xxxviii.* 4. "My iniquities are gone over my head, as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." God has wisely so framed the nature and spirit of man, that a reflexion on his past behaviour should raise such keen anguish at his heart; and thousands have felt it in a dreadful degree, even while they have continued in this world, in the land of life and hope.

But when death has divided the soul from this body, and from all the means of grace, and cut off all the hopes of pardoning mercy for ever, what smart beyond all our thoughts and expressions must the sinner feel from such inward wounds of conscience? And it gives a twinging accent to every sorrow when the sinner is constrained to cry out, "It is I, it is I who have brought all this upon myself. Life and death were set before me in the world where I once dwelt, but I refused the blessings of eternal life, and the offers of saving grace. I turned my back upon the ways of holiness which led to life, and renounced the tenders of divine mercy: I chose the paths of sin, and folly, and madness, though I knew they led to everlasting misery and death. Wretch that I was, to chuse those sins and these sorrows, though I knew they were necessarily joined together! I am sent into those regions of misery which I chose for myself, against all the kind admonitions and warnings of God and *Christ*, of his gospel and his ministers of grace! O these cursed eyes of mine, that led me into the snares of guilt and folly! These cursed hands that practised iniquity with greediness! These cursed lips of mine, which dishonoured my maker! O these cursed appetites and passions, and this obstinate will, which have wrought my ruin! This cursed body and soul, that have procured their own everlasting wretchedness!" These thoughts will be like a gnawing worm within, which will prey upon the spirit for ever. The fretting smart arising from this vexatious worm must be painful in the highest extreme, when we know it is "a worm which will never die," which will for ever hang at our heart, and sting our vitals in the most tender and sensible parts of them without intermission, as well as without end.

Here on earth the stings and scourges of conscience meet with some intervals of relief, from necessary business which employs the mind, from gay company which diverts the heart, from the refreshments of nature by day, or from the sweet repose of the returning night: But in the world to come every hour shall be filled up with these cutting sorrows, for there is no season of refreshment, no diversion of mind, no

sleeping there: All things are for ever awake in that world; there are no shadows and darkness to hide us where this torment shall not find us, for it is bred and lives within. There is no couch there to lull the conscience into soft repose, and to permit the sufferer to forget his agonies. Ancient crimes shall rise up and stand for ever before the eyes of the sinner in all their glaring forms, and all their hainous aggravating circumstances: These will sit heavy upon the spirit with teasing and eternal vexation. O dreadful state of an immortal creature, which must for ever be it's own tormentor, and shall know no relief through all the ages of it's immortality! Think of this bitter anguish of soul, O sinner, to guard thee from sin in a hour of strong temptation.

II. Another spring of this torment will be the "overwhelming sense of an angry God, and utter despair of his love which is lost for ever." It was the thought of the displeasure of God, which pierced the soul of *David* with such acute pain, when he remembered his sins, *Psalms* li. 3, 4.—"My sin is ever before me: Against thee, against thee only have I sinned, and I have done this evil in thy sight:" And again he pleads with God, *Psalms* vi. 1. "O Lord, chasten me not in thy anger, nor vex me in thy fore displeasure." He could face a host of armed men without fear, but he could not face an angry God, whose loving kindness is life, and the loss of whose love is worse than death. *Psalms* lxxvii. 3. "I remembered God, said he, and was troubled, that is, lest he should be favourable no more, and shut up his tender mercies in everlasting anger. This was the terror of that good man, under a deep sense of his crimes, and of God hiding his face from him, and this even while he was in the land of the living, and was not cast out beyond all hope.

But when the grave shuts it's mouth on the sinner, and he is thrust out into utter darkness, where the light of God's countenance never shines, nor will shine, how unsupportable must such anguish be?

Here in this life perhaps a profane wretch has imagined he could live well enough without God in the world, and was content to have nothing to do with him in a way of worship or dependence here: He determined with himself, that the less he could think of God the better, and so forgot his maker days without number: But in those regions of hell, whither the sinner shall be driven, he can never forget an angry God, nor fly out of the reach of his terrors.

"I am now convinced, saith he, but too late, that happiness dwells in his presence, and rivers of pleasure flow at his right hand; but this happiness I shall never see, these streams of pleasure I shall never taste; he is gone for ever with all his love and with all his blessings, God is gone with all his graces and pardons beyond my reach: He stands afar off from my groanings. He told me of it heretofore in the ministry of his word; but, wretch that I was! I would not hearken, I would not believe: I was invited by the Son of his love to receive his gospel, and to partake of forgiving mercy; he stretched out his hands with divine compassion, and offered to receive my soul to his grace, and to wash away my defilements with his own blood; he beseeched me to repent and return to God, and assured me he would secure his Father's favour to me, and a place among the mansions of his glory: But cursed rebel that I was, to despise this salvation, and resist the offers of such love, and to renounce such divine compassion! These offers of mercy are for ever finished, I shall never see him more as surrounded with the blessings of his grace, but as the minister of his Father's justice, and the avenger of his abused mercy. There is no other Saviour, no other intercessor to procure divine favour for me, and my hopes are overwhelmed and buried in the eternal despair of his love."

III. There



III. There will be found also among the damned “ a constant enmity, and malice, and hatred against the blessed God, which can never satisfy nor ease itself by revenge.” It seems very strange indeed that a creature should design revenge against his maker; but thus it is in these dismal regions of hell: Every wicked man is by nature at enmity with God, and in a state of rebellion; and when this enmity is wrought up to malice, under a sense of his punishing hand, then arises that cursed and detestable desire in the soul of revenging itself against its maker. The fallen angels, those wicked spirits, have found this dismal temper of mind reigning in them: They hate the blessed God with intense malice, because his governing justice sees fit to punish their pride and other iniquities, and they would fain be revenged of him by destroying mankind who were made after his image: Their malice cannot reach him in the heights of his glory, but they can reach man his creature made in his likeness, and they began to take their revenge there near six thousand years ago. All the sins, and all the miseries of the sons and daughters of *Adam*, from the beginning of the world to this day, are owing to this madness of malice, this hatred of God in the hearts of evil angels, who were cast out from heaven and the regions of happiness: They began to exert this malice early, and still they are everlasting tempters of men, in order to avenge themselves upon a righteous God.

But alas, what a wretched satisfaction must the damned spirits of men propose to themselves in such a wild and extravagant attempt? The very name and mention of this iniquity seems to put our souls and our ears to pain, while we dwell in flesh and blood; but as cursed and hateful a temper as this is, it is the very spirit and temper of apostate angels; and this will be thy temper and thy spirit, O wilful and impenitent sinner, when thou shalt have obstinately sinned thyself into damnation, and canst never deliver thyself from the punishing hand of God.

“ Think, O my soul, at what a dreadful distance such creatures must be from every glimpse of peace and happiness, whose hearts are filled with such blasphemy and rage, and who would be attempting such vain and impious efforts of mingled insolence and madness. Read, O ye foolish and wilful transgressors, read the temper and conduct of devils in their spite and opposition to every thing of God, through all the books of the old testament and the new, and remember and think, that such will your temper be, when you also shall be banished from the presence of God for your wilful rebellions, as the fallen angels are, and be for ever shut out from all the blessings of his love, and all hope of his favour.”

IV. A further spring of continued torment is “ such fixed and eternal hardness of heart as will never be softened, such impenitence and obstinacy of soul which will never relent or submit.” The hardest sinner here on earth may now and then feel a relenting moment, and the most daring atheist may sometimes have a softening thought come across him, which may perhaps bring a tear into his eyes, and may form a good wish or two in his soul, and wring a groan from his heart which looks like repentance; but when we are dismissed from this body, and this state of trial and of hope, eternal hardness seizes upon the mind: The neck is like an iron sinew hardened more, if I may so express it, in the fire of hell. The will is fixed in everlasting obstinacy against God, and against the glories of his holiness. If *Moses* and the prophets, if *Christ* and his apostles, in the ministry of the word, could not soften the heart of bold transgressors, what can be expected when all the means of grace and the methods of divine compassion are vanished and gone for ever?

It is granted indeed there will be bitter repentance among the damned in hell, and inward vexation of soul and self-cursing in abundance, for having plunged themselves

elves into this misery, and having abandoned all the offers of divine mercy: But it will be only such a repentance as *Judas* the traitor felt, when he repented and hanged himself: *Matt. xxvii. 5.* This is a sort of madness of rage within them for having made themselves miserable. But there will be found no hatred of the evil of sin, as it is an offence against God, no painful and relenting sense of their iniquity, as it has dishonoured God and broken his law, no such sorrow for sin as is attended with a hearty aversion to it, and a desire to love God and obey him; but rather they will feel and nourish a growing aversion to God and his holiness.

“ Ask yourselves my young friends, Did you never feel your hearts indulging an angry and unrelenting mood, and stubborn in your wrath against a superior who had sharply reprov'd you? Or have you never felt an obstinate and unreconcilable hour in your younger years, even against a parent who had severely corrected you? Or have you not found, at some seasons, your soul rising and kindling into violent resentment and a revengeful temper against your neighbour upon some supposed affront, damage, or mischief he had done you? Call these unhappy minutes to mind, and learn what hell is: Think into what a wretched case you would be plunged, if this wrath and stubbornness, this enmity and hardness should become immortal and unchangeable, though it were but against a neighbour: But if this obstinacy and stubborn hardness of soul were bent against God himself, so that you would never relent, never sincerely repent of your crimes, nor bow, nor yield either to his majesty or his mercy, what would you think of yourselves and of your state? Would you not be wretched and horrible creatures indeed, without the least reason to hope for favour and compassion at his hands? Such is the case probably of every damned sinner. Amazing scene of complicated misery and rebellion! A guilty spirit which cannot repent! A rebellious spirit which cannot submit, even to God himself! A hardened soul that cannot bend nor yield to it's maker! Must not such a wretch be for ever the object of it's own inward torment, as well as of divine punishment? O the hopeless and dreadful state of every bold transgressor, that is gone to death without true repentance for having offended God, and ingenuous relentings of heart for sin are never found in those regions of future misery! No kindly meltings of soul toward God are ever known there.”

V. There will be also “ intense sorrow and wild impatience at the loss of present comforts, without any recompence, and without any relief.” If this world, O sinful creature, with the riches, or the honours, or the pleasures of it be all thy chosen happiness, what universal grief and vexation will overspread all the powers of thy nature, when thou shalt be torn away from them all, even from all thy happinesses by death, and have nothing come in the room of them, nothing to relieve thy piercing grief, nothing to divert or amuse this vexation, nothing to sooth or ease this eternal pain at the heart?

And yet further, when thou shalt be as the prophets speak, “ like a wild bull in a net,” struggling and tossing to and fro to free thyself on all sides, when thou shalt be racked with inward fretfulness and impatience, and “ full of the fury of the Lord that made thee, and the rebuke of that God that punishes thee,” *Ijai. li. 20.* Then shall thy heart, hard as it is in an obstinate course of sin, be ready to burst and break, not with penitence, but madness and over-swelling sorrows: And yet it must not break nor dissolve, but will remain firm and hard for ever to suffer these pangs. This is and must be an eternal heart-ache, for there are no broken hearts in hell in any sense whatsoever. There the eyes are weeping, and the hands are wringing, and the tongue almost dried with long wailings and outcries, and the teeth gnawing with  
madness

madness of thought: This is our Saviour's frequent representation of hell, "There shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" *Matth. xxii. 13.* and yet the heart ever living and ever obstinate, to supply fresh springs of these sorrows, and to feel the anguish of them all.

VI. There will be also "raging desires of ease and pleasure which shall never be satisfied, together with perpetual disappointment and endless confusion thrown upon all their schemes and their efforts of hope." It is the nature of man, while it continues in being, that it must desire happiness, and make some efforts towards it: And some divines have supposed, that men of wicked sensuality and luxury in this world, have so drenched their souls in fleshly appetite by indulging lusts, and placing their chief satisfaction and happiness therein, that they will carry this very temper of sensuality with them into the world of spirits; and it is possible their raging appetites to this sensual happiness, may be increased while there are no objects to gratify them: if this be the case, it must be intense and constant misery to feel eternal hunger with no bread to relieve it; keen desire of dainties with no luxurious dishes to please their humorous taste; eternal thirst without one drop of wine or water to allay or cool it; eternal fatigue and weariness without power to sleep, and eternal lust of pleasure without any hope of gratification.

But if we should suppose these sensualities shall die together with the body, yet this is certain, the soul will have everlasting appetites of its own, that is, the general desire of ease and happiness, and of some satisfying good: But God, who is the only true source of happiness to spirits, the only satisfying portion of souls, is forever departed and gone; and thus the natural appetite of felicity will be ever wakeful and violent in damned spirits, while every attempt or hope to satisfy it will meet with perpetual disappointment.

*Milton*, our great *english* poet, has represented this part of the misery of devils in a beautiful manner. He supposes that ever since they tempted man to sin by the forbidden tree of knowledge, they are once a year changed into the form of serpents, and brought by millions into a grove of such trees, with the same golden appearance of fruit upon them: And while with eager appetite they seize those fair appearances to allay their thirst and hunger, instead of fruit they chew nothing but bitter ashes, and reject the hateful taste with spattering noise; and still they repeat their attempts with shameful disappointment, till they are vexed, and tormented, and torn with meagre famine, and then are permitted to resume the shape of devils again. And why may we not suppose that the crimes, of which the wicked children of men have been guilty in the present life, may be punished with some such kind of pain and confusion, both of body and soul, as is here represented in this poetic emblem or parable?

VII. Another misery of damned creatures is, that "vexing envy which arises against the saints in glory, and which shall never be appeased or gratified." The blessed in heaven shall be forever blessed, and the envy of devils and of damned souls shall never hurt their felicity, nor see their joys diminished. This vile passion of those cursed spirits therefore against the blessed inhabitants of heaven, though it rage never so high, is only preying upon their own hearts, and increasing their own inward anguish.

Let us imagine how many thousand holy souls are arrived safe at paradise, who were surrounded with mean and low circumstances here upon earth, while their haughty lords, and their rich insolent neighbours, have sinned themselves into hell: And do you think those children of pride can ever bear this sight without envy?

How

How many martyrs have ascended to glory from racks, and tortures, and fires, here upon earth, while their bloody and cruel persecutors have been working out their own damnation by these inhuman acts of murder and cruelty? And will not these wretches, under their righteous sufferings and punishments in hell, envy the creatures whom they have scorned, and oppressed, and murdered here on earth, when they shall see them placed on high seats in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves cast into utter darkness?

And what does all this envy do but increase their own wretchedness? They are distracted with pride and rage to think of these high favours of the blessed God bestowed on creatures, whom they treated once with the utmost disdain: But their envy, like a viper, preys upon their own entrails, and shall never be allayed or made easy: They send a thousand curses up to the heavenly world; but the saints are forever secured in happiness under the eye of God, their heavenly Father, and the care of *Jesus*, their almighty friend.

“O what a painful plague must this envy be, when with all her invenomed whips and stings she does but scourge and torment the heart where she dwells? What an unspeakable torture must it be to feel this envy so violent and so constant, that it gives itself no ease through everlasting ages? Who is there that dwells in flesh and blood can conceive or express the horror and the twinging agonies that arise from such a hateful passion, fermenting and raging through all the powers of the soul?”

VIII. The last thing I shall mention, as part of those punishments of hell which affect the spirit, is a “perpetual expectation and dread of new and increasing punishments without end;” and it is highly probable, that this shall be the portion of multitudes. When the souls of the saints are released by death, and arrive at the blessed regions, they are not vested with all their brightest glories in a moment, nor fixed in the highest point of knowledge and happiness at their first entrance; but as their knowledge and their love increases, so their capacities are enlarged to take in new sciences and new degrees of pleasures, and it is probable that their felicity shall be ever increasing. And in the same manner, it is not unlikely, that the increasing sins, the growing wickedness, and mad rebellion of damned spirits, may bring upon them new judgments and more weighty vengeance. So it was with *Pharaoh* the *egyptian* tyrant, when he remained obstinate and rebellious against the messages of God by *Moses*, even while he and his nation lay under smarting scourges of the almighty: How did his plagues increase with his iniquities? And he may be set before us as an emblem of sinners, and their sufferings, under the wrath of God in hell, as in *Rom. ix. 17, 18.*

Or perhaps as the wicked of this world when they die, have left evil and pernicious examples behind them, or have corrupted the morals of their neighbours by their enticements, or their commands; or by their wicked influence of any kind, so their punishment may be increased in proportion to the lasting effects of their vile example, or their vicious influences. And perhaps too, there are none among all the ranks of the damned, whose souls will be filled so high with the dread and horror of increasing woes, as lewd and profane writers, profane and immoral princes, or cruel persecutors of religion. *Jeroboam*, the king, not only sinned himself grievously, but who made *Israel* to sin, as the scripture frequently expresses it with an emphasis; by setting up the idolatry of calves in the land, *1 Kings xiv, and xv, and xvi.* His ghost stood fair for such an increase of torment from age to age, as his idolatry prevailed further in the land. And all the wanton poets and the vile persecutors, whether of heathen or of christian name, whose writings, whose example,

or

or whose laws have conveyed and propagated their wickedness from age to age after their decease, will be some of these wretched expectants of new and increasing punishment.

“Have a care, O ye witty and ye mighty sinners! Have a care of setting vile temptations and bad examples before the men of your age! Have a care of spreading the contagion of your vices around you by the softness and the force of your allurements! Have a care of establishing iniquity by a law, and propagating loose and wicked opinions, or of encouraging persecution for conscience-sake! Take heed lest the cursed influence of your crimes should descend from generation to generation, among the living long after you are dead, and should call for new and sharper strokes from the punishing hand of the almighty!”

But suppose there were nothing else but the long dreadful view of the eternity of their present miseries, with an everlasting despair of ease or deliverance, this would add unspeakably to their torment: The constant sensation of what they feel now, and the dread of what they must feel, is sufficient to make their wretchedness intolerable.

If all these springs of misery which I have already mentioned are, and will be found in the souls of damned sinners, there is no need of more to make them exquisitely miserable: And yet since their bodies shall be raised from the dust, in order to be joined with their souls in punishment, as they were united in sin, why may we not suppose that the great God will create bodies for them of such an unhappy mould and contexture, as shall be another perpetual source of pain and anguish? What if their bodies shall be raised with all the seeds of disease in them, like the gout or the stone, or any other smarting malady? And what if the smart of these bodily distempers should mingle with the raging passions of the mind, as far as it is consistent with immortality and everlasting duration? Who can say, that when God “exerts his power, and makes his wrath known,” in punishing obstinate, rebellious and impenitent sinners, as *Rom. ix. 22.* he will not frame such bodies for them to dwell in, as shall be a hateful burthen, and an incessant plague to them through all ages of their duration? And perhaps these bodily pains may be also included in the metaphor of a gnawing worm bred within them, which will never die, which shall never cease to fill them with grievous anguish.

Here perhaps it may be enquired, “are there not multitudes of men in this world, who are not sinners of grosser kind, but have lived, in the main, in the practice of common social duties, and have maintained the usual forms of religion, according to the outward rules of the gospel, and the custom of their nation, but they have been negligent indeed of any sincere repentance towards God, and have been strangers to inward vital religion throughout their whole course? Shall these creatures, who seem to stand in a sort of indifferent character, who are outwardly blameless, with regard to common morality, and have exercised the common virtues of justice and benevolence towards their fellow-creatures, perhaps under the influences of education or custom, or perhaps by the effect that reason or philosophy, or their inward fears have had toward the restraint of their passions and appetites; I say, shall such sort of creatures as these be filled with those furies of rage and resentment against God, envy and malice toward their fellow-sinners, and all the vile and unfociable passions in these regions of misery which they have never found working in them here on earth, or but in a low degree? Shall all the torments and inward anguish of soul that you have been describing, fall upon this rank of sinners, whom the eye of the world could hardly distinguish from good men, and who were very far from the character of wicked? I answer,

Answer I. That however there may seem to be three sorts of persons in our esteem, viz. the good, the bad, and the indifferent, yet the word of God seems to acknowledge but two sorts, viz. "Those who fear God and serve him, and those who fear him not," *Mal. iii. 18.* Those who have acted from principles of inward religion, or the love of God, and those who had no such principle within them: And therefore the scripture reveals and declares but two sorts of states in the future world, viz. that of rewards and punishments, or that of happiness and misery: And as God, the righteous judge, is intimately acquainted with all the secret principles and workings of every heart, he alone knows who have practised virtue sincerely from pious principles, and who have had no such principles within them. He well distinguishes who they are that have complied with the rules of the dispensation under which they have lived, or who have not complied with it: And such as may have the good esteem of men may be highly offensive to God, who knows all things, and may be worthy of his final punishment; "the judge of the whole earth will do right\*." *Gen. xviii. 25.*

And since he has declared it to be his rule of judgment, that "he will reward every one according to their works," *Matth. xvi. 27.* and it shall be much more tolerable for some of those creatures than it shall be for others, by reason of their lesser crimes, or their nearer approaches to virtue and piety; so it is certain he will act in perfect justice and equity towards every criminal, and none shall be punished above their demerits, though no impenitent sinner shall go unpunished.

We do not therefore imagine that every condemned criminal shall have the same degree of inward raging passions, the same madness and fury against God and their fellow-creatures, nor the same anguish of conscience as those who have been more grossly and obstinately wicked and vicious, and have wilfully refused and renounced the well-known offers of grace and salvation: There are innumerable degrees of inward punishment and pain, according to the degrees of sin.

Answer II. It should be added too, that that world of punishment is also a world of increasing wickedness, and those that have had some natural virtues and some appearances of goodness here, may and will renounce it all in the world to come, where they find themselves punished for their impenitence and irreligion, and their criminal neglect of God and godliness: And the least and lightest of the punishments of damned souls will be terrible enough, and yet not surpass the desert of their offences. They have been all in greater or less degrees treasuring up food for this fire, which is unquenchable.

Besides, it may be added here, that in threatenings the holy scripture generally expresses them in their highest degrees and most formidable appearances, on purpose to secure men from coming near the peril and border of them.

This shall suffice to explain the first part of the metaphor in my text, that is, "The worm that dieth not."

\* It has been the opinion of some writers in elder and in later times, that the vast numbers of indifferent persons, who have neither been evidently holy or evidently wicked, shall be sent to a new state of trial in the other world; but I can find nothing of this doctrine in the bible, nor any hint of it, unless in that obscure text of *St. Peter, 1 Pet. iii. 19.* where *Christ* is said "to go and preach to the spirits" of those sinners who were drowned in the flood of *Noah*, which may be construed to another sense with truth and justice.

## SECTION II.

“ The fire which shall not be quenched. ”

I proceed now to consider,

The second part of the description of hell in the nature of it, as it is represented by our Saviour, and that is, that “ the fire is never quenched. ”

Fire signifies the medium or instrument of torture from without, which God has threatened to employ in the punishment of guilty creatures, even as the “ gnawing worm ” signifies their inward torment. Fire applied to the sensible and tender parts of the flesh, gives the sharpest pain of any thing that comes within our common notice, and it is used in scripture to signify the punishments of damned sinners, and the wrath of God in the world to come: And perhaps that text is the foundation of it, *Isai. xxx. 33.* “ *Tophet* is ordained of old,—he has made it deep and large, the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. ” This *Tophet* was a place in the valley of *Hinnom*, where children were wont to be burned in sacrifice to the idol *Moloch*; and from these *hebrew* words, hell in the new testament is called *Geenna*, because of the burning torture and terrible shrieks of dying children in this valley of *Hinnom*.

This description of hell by fire is used by our Saviour and his apostles, in their speeches and writings on this subject. Hell-fire is mentioned six times in six verses where my text lies; the last sentence of judgment passed upon sinners, as it is represented by our Saviour, is expressed in the same language, *Matth. xxv. 41.* “ Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire. ” The apostle *Paul* speaking of the return of *Christ*, *2 Thess. i. 8.* asserts, that “ he shall appear in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel: ”—And in *Rev. xiv. 10, 11.* as well as in other parts of this book, the final punishments of sinners is represented by fire and brimstone, as the instruments of their torment.

It is true indeed, spirits or beings which have no body cannot feel burning by material fire, unless they are united to some sort of material vehicles; but that God will use material fire to punish obstinate and rebellious sinners hereafter at the resurrection, is not improbable, though it is very hard to say with full assurance: Since the bodies of the wicked are to be raised again, it is not at all unlikely that their habitation shall be a place of fire, and their bodies may be made immortal to endure the smart and torture without consuming. Did not this God by his almighty power and mercy, preserve the bodies of *Sadrach, Meshech* and *Abednego* in the burning furnace of *Nebuchadnezzar*, so that the fire had no power to consume or destroy them? *Dan. iii. 21—27.* And cannot his power do the same thing under the influence of his justice well as of his mercy? May they not be maintained for ever in their existence to endure the appointed and deserved vengeance? If the blessed God has with much long-suffering borne with these vessels of wrath, under their repeated oppositions to his law and gospel, and they still go on in their vice, obstinacy and impenitence, and have fitted themselves for destruction, surely he will make his wrath and power known in their punishment, as *St. Paul* expresses it, *Rom. ix. 22.* and when the power and wrath of a God unite to punish a creature, how miserable must that creature be?

It is certain, that God has been pleased in his word frequently to make use of fire, brimstone, burning, smoke, darkness, and chains, and every thing that is painful and noisome to nature on earth, in order to represent the miseries that he has prepared

pared for sinners in hell: And we must suppose that all these metaphors, if they are but mere metaphors, carry with them a sense of most intense pain and anguish with which God will afflict the bodies, as well as the spirits of those guilty creatures, who have rebelled against his majesty, rejected his mercy, and exposed themselves to his indignation. But what particular instruments and methods of punishment, what other elements or means of torture the great God will make use of to execute his sentence in this tremendous work, is more than we can now declare, because God has not fully declared it: And I pray God none of us may be ever doomed to learn it by terrible experience. But if there be nothing but fire, the anguish will be intolerable, as one of our poets expresses it,

“In liquid burnings, or on dry, to dwell,  
Is all the sad variety of hell.”

Or what if the almighty, who has all nature, with all it's powers, at his command, should employ other material instruments for the execution of his deserved wrath? What if he should chuse the alternate extremes of fire and frost, as some have imagined, to torment those impenitent criminals? Or what if the creatures which they have abused to their impious and brutish purposes, should be made instruments and mediums of their punishment? Wine may be rendered a frequent means of sickness, agony and pain to the drunkard, and meat and other dainties to the glutton, and gold to the covetous wretches who made gold their god, that they may all remember their crimes in their sufferings. The wisdom of God will execute the sentence of his justice in the most honourable manner.

And after all, if we call away our thoughts from fire, and every material instrument of pain, which the great God may employ in punishing obstinate rebels, and survey only those acute and dreadful impressions of horror and anguish, which a just and holy God may make on sinful spirits in an immediate manner in hell, this would overwhelm our souls with unsupportable agonies: “Who knows the power of thy anger? For according to thy fear so is thy wrath,” says *Moses*, *Psalms* xc. 11. Our fears do not rise above those evils which the wrath of God will inflict. Who knows what are those arrows of the almighty, of which *Job* speaks, “the poison whereof drank up his spirits, and those terrors of God which set themselves in array against him?” *Job*. vi. 4. Who knows what our Saviour felt in the hour of his agony and atonement for our sins, which made him sweat drops of blood? And what sort of terrible impressions God himself may make of his own wrath and vengeance, on the heart of such criminals as wilfully reject his salvation, is beyond our thoughts to conceive, or our language to express.

Thus much shall suffice concerning the metaphor of fire, and the hand of God himself in kindling this fire for the execution of his sentence against impenitents. But since I have entered so far into this subject, I cannot think it proper entirely to finish it, without giving notice of some different and dreadful additions to their torment which will arise from evil angels, and from their companions in sin and misery among the children of men: For in the agonies of our Saviour, men and devils joined together to afflict him, when it “pleased the Father to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for our sins.” *Isaiab* liii. 9.

I. “Evil angels, wicked and unclean spirits, with all their furious dispositions and active powers, will increase the misery of the damned.” They paved the way to hell for man by the first temptation of our parents in paradise, and they have been  
ever



ever since busy in tempting the children of men to sin, and they will be hereafter as busy in giving them torment. When these wicked spirits, O sinner, who have taken thee as a willing captive by their baits and devices in this world, when they have led thee down through the paths of vice to the regions of sorrow, they will begin then to insult thee with hateful reproaches, and to triumph over thee with insolence and scorn. When they have deceived thee on earth, to thy own perdition, they will make thee the object of their bitter ridicule and mockery in hell.

O could we turn aside the vail of the invisible world, and behold the bottomless pit open before you, what bitter groans of ghosts would you hear, not only oppressed and agonizing under the wrath of a righteous God, but also under the insults of cruel devils? As "there is joy among the angels of heaven when a sinner repents," *Luke* xv. 10. or when a soul arrives safely at those blessed mansions; so when a rebellious and obstinate criminal is sent down to hell, you would hear the triumphs of those malicious spirits over him, with the voice of insulting pride and hellish joy: And while they domineer over you, and tear you as roaring lions, who seek and tear their prey, you will curse yourselves a thousand times for hearkening to their deceitful allurements. You will vent your rage against yourselves at the same time that they scoff at you as eternal fools, who have lost a God, and a heaven, and immortal happiness, by your own madness and folly in hearkening to their temptations.

II. "The mutual upbraidings of fellow-sinners and fellow-sufferers among the children of men, will aggravate your wretchedness day and night without end." Those who drew each other into foul iniquities, shall fill the ears of each other with loud and sharp reproaches for their mutual influence on both their ruin, and shall charge their damnation, and all their heavy sorrows, as a heavy load on each other's souls. Some of those who have been joined in the nearest ties of kindred and friendship, while they dwelt in flesh and blood, shall be the terrible instruments of their keenest remorse and vexation, and tease their spirits with endless upbraidings.

Here the sons of pride, that most hateful iniquity, shall be overwhelmed with huge mortification and disdain: The mighty sinner shall be insulted by the meanest of the croud, and princes shall be bearded and affronted by those gay slaves of the court, whom they once employed in flattering and adoring them. They were once vain enough to believe, they were something more than mortal; but now they are spurned by those very flatterers with a foot of contempt, and their eternal pride still swelling, gives their own hearts new stings and twinges at every resentment. None but a proud and haughty creature here in this world, who has sometimes met with scorn and insult from his inferiors, can speak feelingly of the exquisite sensibility of these torments of soul in hell.

But besides this, there are many sinners who lived in malice, and who died with their hearts full of revenge against their fellow-sinners; and when they shall meet them in those deplorable regions, how natural is it to suppose they will endeavour to execute this revenge upon them without end and without mercy? For it may be easily supposed that malice, revenge and cruelty, which are the proper character of devils, shall not be abated among the children of men, when they are grown so near akin in their tempers to those evil spirits, and are now for ever mingled amongst them.

And yet further, who knows what the damned in hell shall endure from the endless brawls and bitter quarrels among themselves? What new contentions will arise perpetually in such a country, where it is perhaps the practice and custom of the place, and the nature of the inhabitants, for the most part, to make every one of their fellows as uneasy and as miserable as they can? O what mad and furious pride, and malice,

malice, and every hellish passion, will be raging almost in every bosom against all those who are near them, and this in a dark prison where all are intensely tormented, and where there is no such thing as compassion or sincere love, nothing to sooth each other's sorrows, but every thing that may add to the smart and anguish!

“O that the present survey of these horrors of soul, these complicated distresses and miseries from within us and without us, from every quarter of heaven and hell, from the gnawing worm within us, and from the fire of the wrath of God, and the mutual insults, railings and injuries of men and devils, might all lie with it's due weight upon our spirits now, while we are in the land of hope; that every one of us may be awakened to a timely concern about our highest interest, and hasten to make our escape as *Lot* did from *Sodom*, lest the sentence of death be pronounced upon us while we delay, and the fiery deluge overtake us.” But here I would tarry a little to answer a repeated

Objection, viz. The terror of this outward punishment from the hand of God, which is described by avenging fire, is so severe and intolerable, that it awakens some lesser criminals to raise the same cavil against this unquenchable fire, or God's punishing hand, as was raised before against the never-dying worm, or the inward anguish of soul arising from it's own conscience.

It is possible some lesser sinner, who has had more appearances of piety or religion here on earth, may rise and say, “you have set the punishments of sin in a most horrible and tremendous light, from this metaphor of fire, as well as from the deathless worm: But surely this cannot be the case, nor these the sufferings which God will inflict on every wretched creature in hell. Are not the punishments there proportioned to the offences? What if these sharpest and deepest tortures and horrors should be the portion of the vilest criminals, the most impious rebels against God, the profane and obstinate abusers of grace, the scoffers at *Christ* and his gospel, and the cruel persecutors of all the saints, yet will every soul who had not quite religion and holiness enough to reach heaven, be thus terribly tormented in hell? Does not *Christ* himself tell us, and did you not allow before, that it shall be more tolerable for some sinners than for others? And will there be no easier abodes, no milder regions, no kinder and more favourable appointments for such as have had many good wishes and hopes, many friendly exercises of virtue towards men, and some workings of imperfect piety toward God? To this I answer, as before,

It is certain that every one shall be judged according to their works, by an unerring rule of equity, and shall be punished according to the aggravation of their iniquities. But dost thou know, O sinner, how great is that punishment which the least transgression against the law of God deserves? One single sin, which thou wilt not part with, will create unsufferable misery. And though there may be other criminals there of much more heinous and aggravated guilt, profaneness, and rebellion than thine is, yet if thy soul be filled with all that torment which one sin may create and deserve, there will be hell enough around thee to make thy distress too terrible for thee to bear.

Besides, let it be remembered, that whatsoever tendencies toward piety, or appearances of goodness, might be found with thee in this world, all these will vanish and be lost, when once thy day of grace is finished, and all the means of grace and salvation are ended for ever. If thou hast refused the proposals of mercy, and continued in thy sins without repentance, and hast never accepted the salvation of *Christ* while it was offered, all the good “that thou seemedst to have shall be taken from thee, *Matth.* xxv. 29. or rather thy heart itself will grow more hard, thy will more obstinate against God,

God, and every evil passion will rise and prevail, and make thee perhaps as very a devil as thy companions in guilt and misery. It is for those who would not part with their beloved sins, which were as dear as right hands, or as right eyes, that the never-dying worm and the unquenchable fire are prepared, as the context itself informs us in this place.

And as the worm of conscience, even for lesser sins, will gnaw thy heart with intense anguish, so the vengeance of divine fire will torment thee with exquisite pain, though thy pain and thy anguish shall not be equal to what greater criminals endure. But it is wise and kind in the blessed God to denounce the terrors and sanctions of his law in their utmost severity, to guard his law the better against every transgression, and to frighten and secure his creatures from sin and punishment.

“Trifle not therefore, O sinner, with the means of mercy, and venture not upon little sins, in hope of little misery, nor dare to continue in an impenitent state without God, without *Christ* and his salvation, upon a foolish presumption that thy sins are but small, and thy punishment shall be less than others: For the least of those sorrows will be found greater than any mortal creature can bear, and therefore thou shalt be made immortal to suffer them.”

It is granted, there are many mansions in hell, as well as in heaven, but as the lowest mansion in heaven is happiness, so the easiest place in hell is misery. There is another

Objection arises here, which it is necessary to give some answer to; viz. If the punishments of hell are so intense and terrible, between the worm of conscience, the fire of God's anger, and the malice of evil spirits, surely it will work up human nature into extasy and madness; it will take away all the regular exercise of our natural powers; it will render us perhaps mere passive miserable beings, of keen sensations without reasoning. This is certain, that such and so various tortures would have that influence upon our natures at present, and why should it not hereafter? And will the blessed God continue to punish creatures when their reason is lost? What can such punishments avail?

I answer, surely God will not continue to punish madmen; therefore none of these torments shall extinguish our reason, or destroy our intellectual powers; for it is as creatures of reason and free-will that sinners are thus punished, and therefore these powers must remain in their proper exercise; besides, the very operations of these powers in self-condemnation, and self-upbraiding, are part of their punishment. But whether God will so fortify the natures of the damned, which probably shall not be made of flesh and blood, and enable them to bear such intense pain without distraction, or whether the highest extremes of their torment shall only be inflicted at some certain periods or intervals, so that they shall soon return to their reasoning powers again, with bitter remembrance of what passed, this matter is hard to determine; and because it is unwritten and unrevealed, I am silent. But it still remains that punishment shall be so intense and severe, as becomes a God of holiness and justice to inflict on rebellious and obstinate creatures.

## SECTION

## S E C T I O N III.

*Reflexions on the nature of these punishments.*

It is time now that we should proceed to form some special reflexions on the nature of the punishments of hell, such as they have been described in the foregoing discourse. The first is this,

Reflexion I. "What dreadful and unknown evil is contained in the nature of sin which grows up into such misery, which breeds this stinging worm in the conscience, which prepares the creature for such fiery torments, and which provokes a God to inflict them? The vessels of wrath have prepared themselves for it, as the apostle intimates, by their own sins, *Rom. ix. 22.* "they are fitted for destruction:" Nor does all the intense and infinite anguish of this punishment exceed the desert of our sins. The great God in a way of bounty, may often bestow upon us vastly beyond what our little services can ever pretend to have deserved, but he never punishes beyond our deserts.

"What a dangerous and pernicious mistake is it in the children of men to sport with sin, as with a harmless thing? It is much safer sporting with a poisonous serpent, or with burning firebrands. The serpent has many gay and pleasing colours on it's skin, and appears a very charming creature, which tempts children and fools to play with it: And the same ignorance inclines them sometimes to sport with fire, because of it's shining brightness: And till they are burned with the fire, or bit by the serpent, they will not forsake their foolish choice, nor be convinced of their danger: Such is the case and temper of sinful mortals: Their senses indulge the pleasing flatteries of sin, and are fond of it's tempting amusements, till they feel the smart of the fire raging in their bosoms, and the adder stings them to death. Thus the wise man describes the flatteries of wine in the view of the drunkard, *Prov. xxiii. 31, 32.* But the same wise man pronounces every one a fool that makes a mock at sin, or trifles with so formidable a mischief, *Prov. xiv. 9.*

"How vain are the gay fancies of sinful men in the hour of temptation, and how shocking and dreadful will be their disappointment? They think the descriptions of sin, which are blown up and kindled into such terror by the lips of the preacher, are but as mock-fire which never burns; but the great day of vengeance which makes haste towards them, will terribly and eternally convince them of the fatal mischief of it by the various plagues that shall seize upon them. The living worm shall gnaw their consciences, and the fire of God will torment their spirits, and spread a raging anguish through their whole natures; and every twinging accent of their pain shall teach them, but with a terrible and hopeless conviction, what unspeakable evil is contained in sin. They will then find what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, who has a right, and power, and will to punish, *Heb. x. 31.*

"O that each of us might arrive at this holy wisdom, to learn the dreadful evil of sin from this bible, this book of the divine law and grace, and not provoke the blessed God to teach us so necessary a lesson by the rod of his vengeance! O that we could look upon every unlawful action, and particularly every sin against conscience, as the seed of that worm which will gnaw our souls in hell with intense pain, as part of that fuel which is kindling into a flame to torment our consciences for ever, and that under the powerful influences of these representations of sin we might fly to the utmost distance from it with horror, and make our safe escape."

Reflexion II.

Reflexion II. If the punishments of hell, appointed by the blessed God, carry so much terror in them, "how much mistaken are the sinful children of men in the ideas which they form of the great and blessed God?" This representation of the vengeance of the Lord in hell may be of use to refute such mistaken opinions.

Some have framed a God for themselves; not such as dwells in the heavens, not such as he has described himself in his word, but their vain imagination has raised up an idol made of mere goodness and mercy, without holiness and justice: It is their own self-love which forms this idle and foolish image of the God that made them, because they do not like to think of falling under the terror of his power. They venture to affront him to his face, they dare him to vengeance; and as the writer of the book of *Job* expresses it, "they stretch out their hands against God, they strengthen themselves against the almighty, they run upon him with insolence, and venture upon the thick bosses of his buckler," *Job* xv. 25, 26. There are multitudes in our day that are arrived at such a dreadful height of impiety, as to call upon him for the damnation of themselves, as well as of their friends, in sport and merriment: They will not believe that the blessed God will ever be found so severe and formidable as preachers describe him: And "because judgment is not speedily executed against the men of iniquity, therefore the sons of men have their hearts set in them to do mischief." *Eccles.* viii. 11. "Madness is in their hearts," chapter ix. 3. Because God delays his indignation they will not believe he has any belonging to him, notwithstanding all the terrible words by which he is represented by the prophets, the apostles, and the Son of God himself: And while they rush boldly on those crimes which God has severely forbidden, they are ready to think God is just such a one as themselves, regardless of virtue and government, *Psalms* l. 21. And because they make nothing of sin, they imagine God will make nothing of it.

O that the sons of men would once learn to know God better, for "there are many who have not the true knowledge of God, I speak it to their shame, when they fancy he is all made up of gentleness and forbearance, without holiness and justice!" *1 Cor.* xv. 34. Alas! Sirs, these attributes are as necessary in a God as grace and compassion: He is and he must be a wise, a righteous governor of the world; and his wisdom requires that impenitent sinners should be punished, to secure the honour of his law, and to guard his gospel from contempt\*. These awful perfections of the blessed God are as necessary to vindicate his authority and his government from insult and rebellion, as his goodness is needful to encourage sinful creatures to repent and return to their duty. The word of God expressly tells us, he is a God of "holiness and consuming fire," *Heb.* xii. 29. but there is many a sinner that will never learn this lesson till the torments of hell teach it him by dismal experience. They have trifled with his majesty, and mocked at his threatenings all their life, till at the moment of death he awakes like a lion, and tears their spirits with everlasting anguish.

I might take notice also in this place, that there is another mistaken notion of God, into which some persons have unhappily fallen, as "though God were the cause and author of sin," and have spoken unadvisedly with their lips, in such lan-

\* A governor made up of mere goodness and mercy could be no governor at all; for it is absurd to call that a government, where every subject may do what iniquity and mischief he pleases with impunity. The laws of such a government would cease to be laws, and become mere rules and directions for living, which every one might observe or not, just according to his inclination. To say that it became the wisdom of God to threaten offenders, but that his goodness will interpose in the end and hinder the punishment; is to say, that God is not wise, for if he were he would certainly have taken care not to let those men into the secret. *Bishop Hori's sermons*, page 315.

guage as borders too near upon blasphemy. But it is evident, that a God, who will punish the sins of men with such intense pain and torment, can never be so inconsistent with himself as to be the author or cause of those sins. It is granted, that his universal providence has a concern in every thing that is transacted among men; but since he has informed us in what a dreadful manner he will execute his vengeance against sinners in the world to come, it is insolence and indignity against the blessed God to represent him as introducing sin into our world. "Let God be true, though every man be a liar;" *Rom. iii. 4.* let God be pure, and righteous, and holy, though every man be found guilty and criminal: "otherwise, how shall God judge the world?" verse 6. How can he inflict such torments on rebellious creatures, if he constrain or influence them to practise this rebellion? All opinions therefore, that allow of such an inference, as though "God were the author of sin," must be pronounced false and pernicious to men, as well as injurious to the justice of God; for these notions throw a vile imputation on the blessed God, and charge him with hainous insincerity, to forbid the commission of sin by all these terrors, and yet suppose him to influence men to the practice of them.

Reflexion III. "How reasonable is it for us to believe, that such a hell, as I have described, is prepared for impenitent sinners, since there are so many appearances of the beginnings of it here on earth," so many indications, and signs, and forerunners of such misery and torment inflicted on sinful men: Survey the remarkable executions of God's judgments on the world in several ages and nations; look back to our first parents, who were thrust out of paradise, the garden of pleasure, and banished from the gates of it for ever, upon the account of the first sin, and the entrance of it was guarded by a flaming sword to forbid their return. Behold the flood of watry vengeance in the days of *Noah* breaking up from the vast caverns of the earth, and pouring down from the windows of heaven to punish sin: "Deep calls unto deep" *Psal. xlii. 7.* in the tremendous noise of these water-spouts, which spread death and desolation over the face of the whole earth, because all flesh had sinned against God their creator. Turn your eyes to *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, and the cities of the plain, suffering the vengeance of heaven with lightening and devouring fire bursting from the clouds to punish the unnatural crimes of that country. *Gen. xix. 24, 25.* See the fiery flying serpents, as the messengers of divine anger, to punish the rebellion of the *Israelites* in the wilderness: Mark what multitudes in the camp of *Israel* received their mortal sting, and were given up to destruction and death. *Numb. xxi. 6.* Cast your eyes abroad over the nations, and what records have we of all former ages, which do not manifest the vengeance of God pursuing the iniquities of men, by wars, and famines, and pestilences, and every thing that is bitter and dreadful to human nature. See *Jerusalem*, the city of God, all in flames, and the whole land of *Judea* laid desolate with deepest distress, diffused and reigning among all the inhabitants of it: Above a million of them were actually slaughtered and consumed by famine and sword, as a sacrifice to the anger of God, for their long provocations, and the cruel barbarous murder of his Son *Jesus*. And when you have taken all these surveys, then tell me if such terrors of the Lord do not give us sufficient warning what unknown agonies and destructions may be expected by obstinate and impenitent sinners from the hand of God, when the utmost limits of his patience restrain his wrath no longer, but his wisdom gives a loose to all his fiery indignation.

To inforce this yet upon your hearts, think again of all the pains and torments of flesh and spirit, which arise from the distempers of body, and from the anguish of soul, even in this present state of trial, this land of hope, this season of divine long-suffering.

suffering. Go to the hospitals, where the gout and stone, and rheumatism, and a thousand maladies torture the nerves and the joints of men with intolerable smart; and infer thence what God will inflict both on the flesh and spirit, or the soul and body of sinners, in the day of his complete vengeance, when his offers of mercy and the years of his grace are come to their last period. Go and survey the fields of battle and slaughter, where thousands of the dead and the dying are mingled in confused heaps, and groan out their souls in long anguish and extreme torture, with bruises and wounds, and all the smarting effects of the instruments of war. Now if all these things come under the conduct of divine providence in a sinful world, which is yet in a way of hope, what may those resolved and obstinate rebels expect, when all the doors of hope are shut up for ever, and providence has nothing to do on earth or in hell, but to execute the vengeance of a God.

Shall we take one step yet further, and think of the inward pangs of conscience, which some awakened criminals have felt in this life on the account of sin, when the arrows of God have been shot into their souls, and the poison thereof lies drinking up their spirits? Think what dreadful ferments of passion and rage, and hatred of God have been found in the hearts of some sinful creatures, when they have grown mad with revenge against God, and against themselves, and envy against all their fellow-mortals, who are not in the same circumstances; think yet again how terribly their misery must be aggravated, when the torture of everlasting despair attends all the rest of the pains and sorrows they suffer; and then say, if the description of a future hell in the word of God may not be true and real. What anguish beyond all the power of present thought and language, may seize all the powers of wilful and impious rebels against the authority and the mercy of God, when all the stores of his vengeance that have been treasuring up for many years, shall be poured out upon them without any mitigation or mixture of mercy.

Reflexion IV. "It is matter of surprise, and great astonishment, that thousands and ten thousands of the sinful children of men, from day to day, and from year to year, are walking on the borders of all this misery, and yet are so thoughtless and unconcerned about it." They carry peaceful and easy minds in the midst of this dreadful danger, and while they have all the symptoms of the children of wrath upon them, they live without fear, and make no effort toward their escape. Wretched creatures indeed! Who have a mortal disease upon them that will breed this gnawing worm of conscience, that will grow up into all this anguish and distress, and yet are senseless of their own peril, unacquainted with their own state of soul, and are daily treading their earthly rounds of business and of pleasure with a merry heart. All the heavy artillery of divine vengeance is ready to be discharged upon them as soon as the door of death opens and lets them into the invisible world; and yet they walk on fearless and joyful, and have no guard or defence from all this misery, besides their own vain presumption. Stupid creatures, to lie down at night, and awake in the morning within an inch of hell, and yet secure and fearless! They live without God in the world, and that even in this land of light and hope, where he offers to visit them with all his graces; and yet they are hastening hourly to the eternal world, where they must meet and behold him in all his terrors.

Will nothing awaken you, O ye obstinate transgressors against God, ye obstinate rejecters of his grace and gospel? Will nothing warn you to flee from the wrath to come? But just thus it was in the days of *Noah*; the sinners of that generation would not hearken to that preacher of righteousness; and even when they saw the

clouds of heaven grow big and black over their heads, and the rain began to be poured down from the skies, little did they imagine that it would have drowned the earth, till they were overwhelmed with the rising destruction. And so shall it be in the days of the son of man, when all the warnings of the preachers have been despised, and the threatened vengeance of the book of God derided, when they have set up for bold and witty scoffers, and impudently demanded, "Where is the promise of his coming?" *2 Pet. iii. 4.* Then shall the great and terrible day of the Lord come, and pour out upon them the full measure of wrath and indignation.

"Is it not time, my friends, to bethink yourselves, whether this be your case? is it not time for every one of us to examine our souls? Am I exposed to this danger? Am I every moment on the brink of this misery, and yet content to continue so one night or one day longer? Can I ever hope to escape the fury of a God, while I thus abuse his patience? Or can I have any expectation of living with him as my God hereafter, if I never seek after him here? The face of God, as a stranger in the world to come, carries infinite terrors in it, and yet we are content to be strangers to him, and to live without his acquaintance. "The wrath of God abides upon every man who is unregenerate in this life, and who has not trusted in the name of the Son of God," *John iii. 36.* yet they are thoughtless of it, for they feel it not; but the moment when they shall awake into the world of spirits, that wrath will be felt with sudden and dreadful anguish, as a most insupportable burden, and will crush all the powers of the soul into torment."

Reflexion V. "It deserves, and it demands our highest gratitude to the great God, our humblest acknowledgments and our most exalted praises to his majesty and his mercy, that we, who have long ago deserved this misery, are not yet plunged into the midst of it:" That we have not been entirely cut off from the land of hope, and sent down to this destruction. Blessed be the name and the grace of God for ever and ever.

"While there are thousands who have been sent down to the place of punishment, whence there is no redemption, before they had continued so long in sin as many of us have done, what a peculiar instance is it of divine long-suffering and goodness, that we are not actually put under the sting of this living worm, under this fiery vengeance from the hand of God? What was there in us that should secure us from this destruction, while we continued in our state of guilt, rebellion and impenitence? Have we not seen many sinners on our right-hand, and on our left, cut off in their sins, and to all appearance they seem to be sent down to the place of sorrows? What is it but the special mercy and distinguishing favour of God that has dealt thus kindly with us, and spared and saved us, week after week, and month after month, while we continued in our iniquities, and has given us space for repentance and hope? What shall we render to the Lord for all his patience and long-suffering, even to this day? How often have we incurred the penalty of the law of God, and the fiery sentence of condemnation by our repeated iniquities, both against the authority and the grace of God? And yet we are alive in his presence, and are hearing the words of hope and salvation. O let us look back and shudder at the thoughts of that dreadful precipice, on the edge of which we have so long wandered. Let us fly for escape to the refuge that is set before us, and give a thousand glories to the divine mercy that we are not plunged into this perdition.

Reflexion VI. Let us learn from this description of hell, and our imminent danger of it, "the infinite value and worth of the gospel of *Christ*:" This gospel, which



which calls us aloud to fly from the wrath to come, and points out to us the only effectual way to escape it. What can all the riches of the *Indies* do to relieve us under the guilt and distress into which sin had brought us? What can the favour of princes, and the flattering honours of the world do to rescue us from this danger? What can the highest gust of sensuality, and the most exquisite delights of flesh and blood do to secure us against this over-whelming misery? It is only the gospel of the blessed *Jesus* is our refuge, and our safety from the tremendous destruction.

“What are the heights, and depths, and lengths of human science, with all the boasted acquisitions of the brightest genius of mankind? Learning and science can measure the globe, can sound the depths of the sea, can compass the heavens, can mete out the distances of the sun and moon, and mark out the path of every twinkling star for many ages past, or ages to come; but they cannot acquaint us with the way of salvation from this long, this endless distress. What are all the sublime reasonings of philosophers upon the abstruse and most difficult subjects? What is the whole circle of sciences which human wit and thought can trace out and comprehend? Can they deliver us from the guilt of one sin? Can they free us from one of the terrors of the almighty? Can they assuage the torment of a wounded spirit, or guard us from the impression, of divine indignation? Alas, they are all but trifles, in comparison of this blessed gospel, which saves us from eternal anguish and death.

“It is the gospel that teaches us the holy skill to prevent this worm of conscience from gnawing the soul, and instructs us how to kill it in the seed and first springs of it, to mortify the corruptions of the heart, to resist the temptations of *Satan*, and where to wash away the guilt of sin. It is this blessed gospel that clearly discovers to us how we may guard against the fire of divine wrath, or rather how to secure our souls from becoming the fuel of it. It is this book that teaches us to sprinkle the blood of *Christ* on a guilty conscience by faith, that is, by receiving him as sincere penitents, and thereby defends us from the angel of death and destruction. This is that experimental philosophy of the saints in heaven, whereby they have been released from the bonds of their sins, have been rescued from the curie of the law, and been secured from the gnawing worm and the devouring fire.

“A serious meditation of hell in it's exquisite pain and sorrow, will inance our value of the salvation of *Christ*, and will exalt our esteem and honour of the love of God, who has delivered us from eternal death. If we will but appoint our thoughts to dwell a little on the terrors and vengeance from which the blessed *Jesus* has rescued us by his glorious undertaking, if we will stretch the powers of our souls, and survey the lengths, and the breadths, and the depths of this distress and misery which we have deserved, this will discover to us the heights, and the depths, and the lengths of his love, who submitted himself to the curses of the law of God, “and was made a curse for us, that he might redeem us to the possession of an eternal blessing,” *Gal. iii. 23.* This will shew us what exceeding riches of the grace of God, have been laid out upon us for our salvation. This will spread before us the unmeasurable love of *Jesus*, which has brought him down from the bosom of his Father into such agonies as he sustained in the garden, and on the cross, that he might rescue us from the wrath to come. O what immense and endless debts of gratitude and love are due from every ransomed sinner, who has been released from the bonds of his guilt, and from all this wretchedness, by the love of God the Father, and the grace of his Son *Jesus Christ*, to whom be glory and honour, and most exalted praise, for ever and ever!” Amen.

## DISCOURSE XIII.

The eternal duration of the punishments in hell.

M A R K IX. 46.

*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

S E C T I O N I.

*Arguments to prove the perpetuity of hell.*

**W**HEN the great and blessed God had a mind to make known his wisdom, his power, and his goodness amongst creatures, he built this world as a theatre, in which those perfections of his nature might be displayed amidst the various works of his hands : He spread it round with the blessings of life and pleasure, he over-hung it with a canopy of skies and stars, and placed the glorious bodies of the sun and moon there to appear in their alternate seasons ; and even amidst the ruins which sin has brought into this world, yet still every eye may behold the traces of an almighty, an all-wise, and a bountiful God.

When the same divine and sovereign being designed to exalt and diffuse the wonders of his grace among the best of his creatures, he built a heaven for them, and furnished it with unknown varieties of beauty and blessing : And we would hope in our appointed season to be raised to this upper world, and there to behold the riches of divine magnificence and mercy, and to be sharers thereof among the rest of the happy inhabitants.

But since sin and wickedness has entered into his creation of men and angels, he saw it necessary also to display the terrors of his justice, and to make his wrath and indignation known amongst rebellious creatures, that he might maintain a just awe and reverence for his own authority, and a constant hatred of sin through all his dominions. For this purpose he has built a hell, a dreadful building indeed, in some dismal region of his vast empire, where he has amassed together all that is grievous and formidable to sensible beings, and wicked spirits carry their own inward hell thither with them, a hell of sin and misery ; and though he has sent his own Son to acquaint us with the distresses and agonies of that doleful world, and to warn us of the danger of falling into it ; yet if any of us should be so unhappy as to continue in an obstinate state of impenitence and disobedience to God, we shall be made to confess, by dreadful experience, that not one half hath been told us.

Therefore

Therefore hath God set before us these terrors in his word, that we might fly from this wrath to come, and avoid these sufferings: And therefore do his ministers, by his commission, proceed to publish this vengeance and indignation of the Lord, that sinners might be awakened to lay hold on the hope that is set before them, and might be affrighted from plunging themselves into this pit of anguish, whence there is no redemption.

We have taken a short survey of these miseries, in the kind and nature of them, in some former discourses; and we are now come to the last thing contained in our Saviour's description of hell, and that is the perpetuity of it: The misery is everlasting in both the parts of it, for "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The arguments which shall be employed to prove it are such as these.

Argument I. The express words of *Christ* and his apostles pronounce the punishments eternal; and surely these words are given to us to be the foundation of our faith and practice, and the rules of our hope and fear. My text seems to carry plain and unanswerable evidence in it. "The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And it is many times repeated in this chapter, and that with a special accent on the eternal duration of it, to make that circumstance of it more observed, and to aggravate the terror. Such an awful repetition from the lips of the Son of God should make the sound of the vengeance dwell longer on the ear, and the threatening sink deeper into the soul.

Let us next observe the final sentence which *Christ*, as judge pronounces against impenitent sinners among the sons of men, as well as against fallen spirits, in *Matth.* xxv. 41. It is this, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:" And as soon as the sentence is pronounced, it is immediately executed, as our Saviour foretels, in verse 46. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." What he pronounces as judge, he foretels also as a prophet, that it shall be put in execution.

The express word of God, in describing the punishment of sinners by the pen of his two apostles *Paul* and *John*, declares the same thing, *2 Tliess.* i. 9. "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." And the book of the *Revelation* gives us assurance, that these miseries shall have no end, *Rev.* xiv. 10, 11. "The antichristian idolaters, who worship the beast, shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone—in the presence of the lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." *Jude*, the apostle, bears his testimony in the same manner, verse 6. "the damned spirits, who kept not their first station, are said to be cast down into hell, and bound in chains of everlasting darkness." Now suppose a man plunged into a pit of thick darkness, by the command of God, and bound there with everlasting chains; what hope can he ever have of deliverance?

And if *Christ*, and his apostles, who were taught by him and by his blessed Spirit, assert this punishment shall be eternal, who shall dare to contradict them? Who is there so rash and confident as to say, "This torment shall not be everlasting, this worm one day shall die, and this fire shall be quenched?" Does it not approach to the crime of contradicting the almighty, and the true God?

Argument II. There is a sort of infinite evil in sin, arising from the consideration of the person against whom it is committed, that is, the great and blessed God; for every

every crime, according to the law of nature, and the common sense of mankind, takes it's aggravation from the dignity of the person offended, as well as from the hainousness of the act; so reproaches or assaults against a king, or a father, are much more criminal and hainous than the same assaults or reproaches cast on an equal or an inferior; but all sin being an offence against God, an infinite object, and a violation of his law, is a dishonour of infinite majesty, an affront to the divine authority, and therefore it's aggravations arise in that proportion to a sort of infinity, and require an equal punishment. But because the nature of a creature cannot suffer infinite punishment in the intenseness of the pain, therefore he must bear it to an infinite duration, that is, to all everlasting.

When divine justice pronounces a sentence against the sinner equal to the demerit of sin, it must be infinite, that is, eternal; and the sinner shall never "be released from the prison and the punishment till he has paid the utmost farthing," *Matth. ix. 15.* and till he has made satisfaction to God equal to his demands, and the demerit of the offence.

I know this argument is treated with much contempt and derision among those of the moderns, who would diminish the evil of sin, and shorten the punishment of it: But it is much easier to ridicule it than to answer it: A jest is no refutation. And after my survey of it, I think, without prejudice or partiality, the force of it seems to me unanswerable as to the desert of sin; and I am not ashamed to employ it in the support of this truth.

It is but a very feeble opposition can be made to it by those who say, that "if sin be counted an infinite evil, and must have infinite punishment, then all sins are equal, and will require equal punishment," for there are no different degrees of infinity, or in things which are infinite.

But our Saviour has taught us, that there are certainly various degrees of punishment as well as of sin: He assures us, that "it shall be more tolerable for the inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, in the day of judgment, than it shall be for *Capernaum* and *Bethsaida*," where he had preached and wrought his wonders, *Luke x. 12—15.* and the reason is plain, viz. because the sins of *Sodom* were less than their's.

And it is very easy to answer this pretence or objection about the equality of all sins, for sins may have different degrees of guilt and aggravation as to the act, where the object is the same, whether this object be finite or infinite; as the murder of a father or a king is a much greater crime than a reproach or slander cast on the same persons. So the wilful hatred of God and blasphemy against him, with continued malice and public violent opposition to his name, or law, or gospel, are far greater sins than a single neglect of his daily worship for fear of persecution, or a distrustful his providence, though both have the same infinite being, that is, God, for their object; and in this sense, there is a sort of infinity in each of the crimes.

And accordingly punishments may be proportioned to every crime, for they may differ greatly in the degree of severity and torture, though they may be all equal or eternal in the duration. *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, *Capernaum* and *Bethsaida*, may all suffer infinite or everlasting sorrow, and yet the degrees of their pain may be exceeding different all the while. They may have the same infinity of duration, though very different as to the intenseness or degree of the pain.

Argument III. If the iniquities committed in this life were not punished with torment which is everlasting, yet the damned in hell are ever sinning against God, and therefore they provoke the vengeance of God to continue his punishing hand upon them

them for ever. The law of God in all its demands of duty, its prohibitions of sin, as well as in its sanctions of punishment, continues for ever in force in heaven, and earth, and hell, and we see not how it can be abrogated where it arises from the very nature of God and a creature: And "curst is he that continues not in all things which the law requires," *Gal.* iii. 10. Every new sin demands a new curse and a new punishment, and there is no reason which forbids a righteous governor to cease punishing, while the rebellious creature will not cease to offend, and especially while he maintains an everlasting enmity and rebellion against the law of God his creator.

If there were any humble meltings of repentance in the guilty soul, if there were any sincere mournings in the sinful creature for having offended his maker, if there were any softness of heart relenting under a sense of the evil of sin, and returning to obedience and duty, even this would not oblige a righteous and wise governor to forgive the criminal; repentance is no compensation for a wilful offence; nor is it thought unrighteous or unwise for a prince to punish even a penitent offender with death.

But let us propose the case in utmost favour to a sinner against the blessed God, let us imagine that divine wisdom and divine mercy perhaps might be supposed to contrive and to offer some proposals to justice in a way of compassion, and might enquire whether the sentence of punishment could not be reversed, or the terror of it relieved, or some new state of trial proposed. Let it be added in favour of the criminal, that we do not find through all the book of God the actual practice of true repentance beginning among men, but it has been always followed with proportionable degrees of compassion from God: But on the other side, when there is nothing found in the heart of a sinner but obstinacy, and malice, and revenge, cursing and blasphemy against the almighty, without the least moving or melting into a genuine penitence or holy sorrow, without any meek submission to the majesty and justice of God, or humble imploring his mercy, what reasonable hope can such wretches have, that their chains of darkness should be broken, and the prisoners released from the vengeance? When they shall curse his justice, because it punishes their crimes, when they shall curse his mercy, because it did not save their souls, and curse and blaspheme the blood of the blessed *Jesus*, because it has not washed away their sins, what possible excuse can be made for such creatures? Or what possible expectation can there be for such criminals, but an everlasting continuance of the fiery indignation?

Here it will be replied, but why should we suppose, and much more, why should we affirm, the damned will never repent? Are they not free in the other world from this flesh and blood, wherein there are so many unruly passions and appetites?—Are they not far remote from all the temptations of flesh and sense, of intemperance, ambition, and covetousness? Have they not understanding to see divine truths more clearly than in this world? Have they not reason to distinguish good and evil, and free-will to chuse that which is good? Will they not hate all sin, since they have been so long taught the mischief of sin by their sufferings? And is there any thing fitter than their agonies and torture by fire, to make men know and feel the dreadful evil of sinning against God, and awaken them to repentance?

To this I answer, let us judge a little concerning the sinners in hell, by the practice of sinners on earth. How many wretched creatures are there who have been long imprisoned, and perhaps punished for crimes against the state, and yet persist in their rebellious temper, and are never convinced they were in the wrong, so far as to change their treason into sincere submission, repentance and obedience? Was not *Pharaoh*, king of *Egypt*, an instance of the stubbornness and impenitence of

human nature, when in opposition to ten dreadful plagues he would still pursue the flying *Israelites*, and destroy a people beloved of God? Is not hardness and enmity against the governor often increased by the severe punishments that criminals lie under? Have these punishments any sufficient power to soften their hearts into true repentance?

What though they do not live in the midst of sensual temptations, yet who knows how far their spirits, having been immersed in flesh and blood, may carry with them inward raging appetites to those sinful sensualities and defiling pleasures, of which they are for ever deprived?

Let me ask again, have the devils ever repented in almost six thousand years? Are they not the same enemies to God, and his glory, and his image through all ages? And though the damned spirits of men are absent from this world, and their evil companions on earth, yet are they not in the fittest company to teach them pride, and rage, resentment and malice, and the most unfit to teach them humility, repentance, and obedience to God? And when they have perversely sinned away all the means of grace in this life, is it reasonable to imagine, that God will powerfully soften their hearts by his sovereign grace, since he has never given the least hint or instance of it in all the discoveries made in the bible? And has it not been often one way of God's punishing sinners here in this world, by letting them go on in their iniquity and madness to the end? And why may not the wisdom and justice of God see it fit to treat sinners, who have been incorrigible in this life, by the same method in the world to come?

**Argument IV.** The natural effects and consequences of sin living in the soul, are misery and torment so long as the soul lives, that is, for ever. Sin, though it be a moral evil, as it is committed against God, yet it is such an enemy to the nature of man, that where it has established it's habit and temper in the soul, it naturally prepares constant anguish of conscience and certain misery. A wicked spirit all over averse to God and goodness, gone from this world and all the soothing or busy amusements of it, intense in it's desires of happiness, and yet a stranger to all that can make it truly happy, and at the same time shut out by God's righteous judgment, from all the means and hopes of grace, must needs be miserable, and has prepared a state of endless misery for itself, because it's nature and duration are immortal. An unholy creature who loves not God, and cannot delight in things holy and heavenly, but derives it's chief joy from sinful pleasures, can never taste of felicity, can never relish the satisfactions that come from the knowledge and love, and the enjoyment of God; and when it is torn away, and banished from all the sensible amusements of this life, it must and will be a wretched creature in the world of spirits, and that by the very course of nature: And God cannot be obliged to change the established course of nature to relieve this misery which the sinner had wilfully brought on himself; nor can God make him happy without giving him a new temper of holiness, which he is not obliged to do by any perfection of his nature, or any promise of grace.

If the souls of men are immortal, such will their passions be, their desires, their fears and their sorrows. Now their natural desires of happiness, as I have said, will be intense and strong, when God, the spring of all happiness, who hath been renounced and abandoned by them, hath now for ever forsaken them, and separated himself from them. What can there remain for them but everlasting darkness and despair, without a dawn of hope through all the ages of eternity? Their guilty consciences,  
with

with the views of God's unchangeable holiness, will for ever fill them with new fears and terrors, what shall be the next punishment they are to suffer. Such is the state of devils at this time, who expect a more dreadful punishment at the great day, as several places of scripture make evident. Their being immersed in the guilt of sin, and under the constant and tyrannical dominion of it, will overwhelm them with present grief, with cutting sorrows and horror unspeakable, which will sink into the center of their souls, and make them an eternal terror and plague to themselves.

Again, let us consider their immortality of soul will be spent in thinking: And what comfortable or hopeful object is there in heaven, earth, or hell, on which they can fix or employ their thoughts for one moment, to give a short release from their extreme misery? So that they are left in endless successions of most painful thoughts and passions from the very nature of things.

Again, suppose this body of mine were by nature immortal, and was designed by my creator in it's constitution to live for ever; and suppose by my own folly and madness, my own wilful indulgence of appetite and passion, I had brought some dreadful distemper into my flesh which was found to be incurable, whether it be the gout or the stone, or some more terrible malady of the nervous kind, must not this gout, by necessity of nature, become an immortal gout? Must not these distempers be immortal distempers, and create eternal pain? And is the God of nature bound to work a miracle to cure and heal these diseases which I have wilfully brought upon myself by my own iniquities, and that after many warnings? Is it unrighteous in God to let me languish on amidst my agonies and groans as long as my nature continues in being, that is, to immortality? And especially when there are valuable ends in divine providence, and God's government of the world to be subserved, by suffering such wilful, rebellious, and impenitent creatures to become sacrifices to their own iniquity and his justice, and perpetual monuments to other worlds of their own madness and his holiness. Such is the case of a sinful spirit, and therefore a God of justice may pronounce upon it, and execute the eternal misery.

## S E C T I O N II.

*The strongest and most plausible objections against the perpetuity of hell answered.*

I think these reasons, which have been given, are sufficient to justify the ministers of the gospel in representing the punishments of hell as everlasting: But man, sinful man does not love to hear of this dreadful perpetuity of hell: They would fain find some period to these sorrows, they search on every side if there be no way for escape from this prison, no door of mercy, no cranny of hope left among the reasons of things, or among the attributes, or the transactions of the blessed God: And they are ever proposing some methods to cut short this eternity, which scripture ascribes to the punishment of impenitent sinners. I shall endeavour therefore here to give a fair and plain answer to the strongest objections against this doctrine which I ever yet have met with.

Objection I. The first objection is raised from a criticism on the words of scripture. The *greek* and *hebrew* words, say they, which we translate eternal and everlasting, where the torments of hell are mentioned, are not always used for proper and complete eternity, they sometimes signify only a long duration: So God gave *Abraham* and his seed the land of *Canaan* for an everlasting possession, *Gen.* xvii. 8. but now the *Turks* possess it. Several of the statutes of the *levitical law* were said to be everlasting, *Lev.* xvi. 34. But they are all abolished in the gospel. The sons of *Aaron*

had an everlasting priesthood conferred upon them, *Exod. xl. 15.* But this office is cancelled by the kingdom of the *Messiah*, and finished for ever.

Besides, let it be remembered, say the objectors, that the *hebrew* word *אֵלֶּיךָ* *Olam*, and the *greek* *Αἰών* and *Αἰώνες* signify only the various ages or periods of time which belong to the duration of creatures, or to some constitutions of God concerning his creatures: And they should be translated an age, or ages, more properly than any thing else: And the adjective *Αἰώνιος*, when applied to creatures, can relate only to these ages; but these expressions were never designed to enter into God's own eternity, either before the existence of this world, or after the consummation of it: Upon which reason it is highly improper and absurd to assert, that the duration or punishment of creatures in hell shall be properly eternal and equal to the duration of the blessed God himself. Now since every thing in God's transactions towards his creatures is sometimes limited by these *Αἰώνες* or ages, which are periods of time that shall be finished, why may not the damnation and the sorrows of hell be also finished and cancelled at a certain length of years, though the common words, which we translate eternal and everlasting, be ascribed to them in scripture?

Answer I. These are the same words both in *greek* and *hebrew*, by which God expresses his own eternity, which is absolute and complete without end. He is the everlasting God, *Gen. xxi. 33.* The eternal God, and his everlasting arms, *Deut. xxxiii. 27.* *Rom. i. 20.* and *xvi. 26.* and several other places. These are the words also by which the scripture expresses the duration of the felicities of heaven, and the eternal life and happiness of the saints, *Dan. xii. 2.* *Rom. vi. 23.* *John iii. 15.—18.* Now, why should we not suppose the same words to signify the same duration, when the old or new testament speaks of everlasting burnings as the vengeance of God against the wicked, *Isaiab xxxiii. 14.* or everlasting shame and contempt? *Dan. xii. 2.* And especially where the joys of the saints, and the misery of sinners, are set in opposition to one another in the same text, as in *Dan. xii. 2.* and *Matth. xxv. 46.* "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal?" And yet further, when we find this doctrine sufficiently confirmed by many other places of scripture which set forth the eternity of these torments? I grant, that the eternity of God himself, before this world began, or after it's consummation, has something in it so immense and so incomprehensible, that in my most mature thoughts I do not chuse to enter into those infinite abysses; nor do I think we ought usually, when we speak concerning creatures, to affirm positively, that their existence shall be equal to that of the blessed God, especially with regard to the duration of their punishment: perhaps this sort of language may carry in it something beyond what we are called to discourse about, at least in this mortal state, and therefore such comparisons are more safely omitted.

But I would remark here still, that these *Αἰώνες* or ages both of reward and punishment, which are pronounced concerning saints or sinners, do but begin in their perfection at the end of this world; and thence it follows, that they must enter far into the eternity of God's existence yet to come: And the saints will be made happy, and the sinners will be punished for long ages after the end of this world, and all the *Αἰώνες* or ages of it.

And though God, by his Spirit, has not been pleased to make this comparison expressly, nor assert our duration commensurate with his own, yet he is pleased to express the duration of the punishment of sinners in the same common language and phrases, whereby he expresses his own duration, and the happiness of the saints; and hereby he encourages us to express these punishments by the same common words

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in our language too, rather than venture to cut them short by a *greek* or *hebrew* criticism, without any divine warrant or necessity\*.

Now are there any sinners so void of understanding, of so daring and desperate a mind, as to venture their eternal all upon such a poor criticism of words? Even upon supposition these terms in the *greek* and *hebrew* might signify any long duration short of eternity; yet there is a terrible hazard in confining them to this sense, since they do denote a proper eternity, when they describe the duration of the blessed God; and I think we may add also, the duration of the happiness of the saints.

Besides, let it be remembered, that the other expressions of scripture, which denote and pronounce the perpetuity or eternity of these punishments, are not liable to the same criticism or ambiguity of a word. "Their fire shall be unquenchable, or is not quenched, their worm dieth not. They have no rest day nor night, they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," *Rev.* xiv. 10, 11. and xx. 10. These expressions seem to carry with them a more certain signification of the perpetual continuance of the punishment. Now can the tempter and the deceiver of souls have so unhappy an influence over you, as to persuade you to venture onward in the paths of sin, to put off religion and delay your repentance, and neglect the means of salvation, in hopes that hereafter this weak criticism, upon some of the threatenings, may take place before the judge of the whole earth, and thus excuse or save you? Is not such a sorry refuge and presumption a dangerous and a dismal sign upon impenitent sinners, that sin and *Satan* have darkened your understanding, and confounded your judgment, as well as hardened your hearts, in order to your everlasting destruction?

Answer II. Suppose the punishments of hell continue only for a long time, and not for an endless immortality, yet this time would certainly be found exceeding long for sinners to bear the torment even according to their own criticisms. Let us consider this matter under some particulars. The *jewish* dispensation, which is sometimes called everlasting, lasted near about fifteen hundred years, from *Moses* to *Christ*; and are ye content to languish and groan under torments and miseries, for fifteen hundred years, merely to satisfy your vicious appetites of pleasure for a few days, or a few years of this mortal life? Again,

The rebellious sinners, who were destroyed at the flood, and their spirits, which were sent into the prison of *hades* or hell, were certainly confined there four and twenty hundred years: And if they were released then, as some imagine, by the preaching of *Christ* to them, it is a long and dreadful time to continue under the vengeance of God; and is it worth while for any man to continue in sin on earth, and to venture this length of punishment in hell?

What I build this computation upon, are some expressions of *St. Peter*, 1 *Peter* iii. 19, 20. where *Christ* is said "to preach unto the spirits in prison, which some time were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of *Noah*;" some have supposed, that this text informs us of *Christ's* descent into hell after his death, and then preaching to those rebels who were drowned in the flood, near two thousand four hundred years before, in order to awaken them to repentance and salvation: Whereas others think this text may be better expounded concerning the

\* The word *αἰδιον*, perpetual, is applied to the chains of devils, *Jude*, verse 6. as well as to God, *Rom.* i. 20. and however the word *αιων* and *αιωνες* may be used for ages or periods in this world, yet *αιωνες των αιωνων*, or ages of ages, is never applied in all the new testament to any thing but God or *Christ*, or the blessedness of saints, or the punishment of sinners; and therefore we may well conclude, that all these four run into an eternity beyond all the supposed periods of this world, and far beyond all our conceptions.

the Spirit of *Christ* given to *Noah*, which made him a preacher of righteousness, when he foretold and threatened a flood of waters, and called men to repentance.

But if it should be granted, that those rebellious spirits among the dead did all repent, and were delivered by this preaching of *Christ*, would you chuse to indulge the delights of sin for a short season, and twenty-four hundred years of torment for it?

Yet further, the devils have lain under punishment near six thousand years, viz. four thousand before *Christ* came, and almost two thousand years since, which may be thus computed from what *St. Jude* says of them. "The angels who kept not their first station, they were cast into chains of darkness" probably before the creation of this our world, for they were fallen, and tempted *Adam* to sin as soon as this world was made: And they had been confined in these chains from that time about four thousand years before *Christ* came, and are waiting still for yet sharper punishment at the judgment of the great day, *Jude*, verse 6. And it is evident that they are conscious of this terror and this future increase of punishment, for they expostulated with our Saviour, *Mattb.* viii. 29. "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" Now it is near two thousand years since *Christ* came, and from the time of their sinning, unto this day, it is almost six thousand years: And when the great day of judgment comes, their fiercer punishment is but then to begin: And are not the devil and his angels sentenced and confined to dwell together with the wicked children of *Adam*, when they shall be consigned at that dreadful day to the same everlasting fire and torment, which was prepared for those evil spirits? And who knows when their torment will end? Now what folly and hardness of heart, or rather what madness is it for men to continue in their sins, to delay their return to God, and abandon the grace of the gospel under this foolish flattery and wild presumption, that above six thousand years hence perhaps a certain day may come when the worm of conscience will die, and the fire of hell will be quenched? Such presumption is madness and distraction rather than reasoning.

Objection II. The second objection is derived from the justice and equity of God: Surely may some person say, the justice of God will proportion the punishment to the offence; but since our sins are but the actions of mortal and short-lived creatures, and are committed in a few years of time, why should the punishment be immortal, and the anguish be lengthened out to eternity? Can a righteous God pronounce such a severe and unjust sentence, and execute it in it's full dimensions?

Answer. It is not the length of time which wicked men spent in committing their sins, nor the nature of the persons who have sinned, that determines the measure of punishment, but the dignity of that infinitely glorious being, against whom sin is committed, that gives such a high aggravation as to require punishment without end. How many instances are there amongst men wherein offenders against their neighbours, or against a magistrate, who spent but a few moments in the crime, yet are doomed to imprisonment for months and years? And a lower degree of trespass against a king, which is short of high-treason, is sometimes punished with confiscation of goods, and with poverty and close imprisonment for life: And by the same reason, the sins of men being committed against a God of infinite majesty, require an endless punishment, as I have proved in the second argument: And therefore divine justice pronounces or inflicts no longer penalty than the crimes of men deserve, according to their aggravations. If any sinners tarry then till they have paid the utmost farthing to divine justice, I grant God will release them, but he has given us no hope before.

Objection

Objection III. The third objection is drawn from the sovereignty and goodness of God. It is granted, say they, that the threatenings of eternal death are denounced against sinners in scripture, yet it is not necessary God should execute them to the full. When a law is made, the threatenings of it only declare what punishment the offender shall be exposed to, and shall be obliged to bear when it is inflicted; but these expressions in a law do not oblige the government to inflict that sentence with all its terrors. It is granted, that in the case of promises, truth and veracity oblige the promiser to fulfil them punctually, because the right of the thing promised passes over to that other person to whom the promise was made, and he hath such a right to require it, that it is injustice to withhold it from him; and therefore everlasting felicity must be given to the righteous: But in threatenings the case is otherwise; for though the full punishment is due to sinners, yet they will never require the execution of it; and the goodness of God will incline him to relieve the sufferer, and to release him from the severity of such punishment, where his veracity or truth does not forbid it.

To this I answer two ways:

Answer I. I will not debate this point of law now, how far a governor of sovereign and absolute authority can dispense with his own threatenings, can omit the execution of them, relax the degree of threatened punishment, or shorten the duration of it: But let it be considered, that here is only the threatening of a God, the universal governor, but the prediction of this eternal punishment, by a God who cannot lie. God's own truth and veracity are concerned in this case, since his Son *Jesus*, who is the greatest of his messengers, together with the prophets and apostles, have in the name of God often foretold, that these punishments shall be eternal: And therefore whatsoever an absolute governor might do, as to shortening the punishment threatened, in a way of mercy and relaxation; yet I cannot see how the truth and veracity of God himself, or the veracity of his Son *Jesus Christ*, who is the great prophet, or the truth of the rest of his prophets and messengers can be maintained, if this punishment be not executed according to the many express predictions of it. These all agree to tell us, by inspiration from heaven, in various forms of speech, that the torments of hell shall be everlasting; and as I hinted, the man *Jesus*, who pronounces this eternal sentence as a Lord and judge, foretels it also as a prophet, that the execution of it shall be to all everlasting.

Answer II. Obstinate and impenitent sinners have no reason to expect, that the goodness of God should release them from their miseries, since the justice and the holiness, the righteous government and authority of God in his law require and demand their due honour, as well as his goodness. Do we not see these honours of divine justice, and of God's hatred of sin, have been continually demanded and executed in the infinite and innumerable evils, sorrows, miseries, diseases and deaths, that have been spread over this world almost six thousand years because of sin? Nor does his goodness forbid or hinder it.

And let it be remembered too, that all this immense variety and long succession of plagues and terrors arose originally from the just indignation and resentment of God against one sin, even that of the first man. Who was it that burned *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* with fire from heaven? Who was it that chained fallen angels in darkness to a more terrible judgment? Was it not a God of supreme goodness? Who sent famines, and pestilences, and slaughters all over the earth in many distinct generations, whereby mankind have been made abundantly wretched and plunged into millions of distresses? And yet the goodness of God abides for ever. And while the great God

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is acting according to the glories of his nature and government in punishing rebellious creatures, his goodness will feel no soft and sensible impressions from all their groans and outcries; but if I may so express it, will be changed into just indignation without end. And the language of it to those impenitent wretches will be this, "Because I have called and ye refused, — ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof: I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer; ye shall seek me early, but ye shall not find me; for ye hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord: Ye would none of my counsels, ye despised all my rebukes; therefore shall ye eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices." *Prov. i. 24—31.* Take them, angels, "bind them hand and foot, and cast them into everlasting fire and utter darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." *Matth. xxii. 13.*

Let us cease then to murmur against the threatenings and the transactions of the great God, till we are become fitter judges of his perfections and their demands. Let us cavil no more against his conduct and government, till we can teach him how far his punishing justice shall go in the execution of his threatenings, and till we can assign to him the point and limit where his goodness shall interpose and restrain that justice.

Objection IV. The fourth objection is derived from the rectitude of the nature of God, or his common equity and mercy united, which has been represented in this manner. Suppose one of the damned spirits among mankind should address himself to the great God in such sort of language as this, "Lord, I was created by thy sovereign pleasure without my own will, I did not desire to be made, much less to be born in such a relation to *Adam*, whereby I brought a sinful nature into the world with me: But I was united by thy power and pleasure to a body which had the seeds of sin and misery in it: There were strong appetites and violent passions mingled with my flesh and blood, which I myself had no hand in procuring; they fermented in me with much vehemence, and I was tempted to many excesses: I made some resistance at first, and many times tried to subdue them, but I was overcome: At last I suffered myself to be carried away by the stream of these sinful affections and appetites which I could not possibly avoid, nor easily subdue. Is it agreeable to thy equity, O blessed God, to punish such a poor wretch with everlasting torments? And can thy mercy continue to see this my misery for ever and ever, and not help me? I entreat thee, O thou almighty author of my being, to destroy and annihilate me utterly soul and body; take away this being which I never asked nor desired; nay, which I would not have consented to accept among the sinful race of mankind, because in this track of generation and existence I stood much more likely to be miserable than to be happy."

Answer I. As for the reasonableness and equity of the conveyance and communication of the original effects of the sin of *Adam* through every generation of man, it is granted there are some difficulties attending it; but these are generally answered by the writers on that subject; and for me to divert from my present discourse, in order to debate this point here, would be too tedious.

The equity of this wise and awful constitution of God has been lately vindicated in a large treatise on the "ruin and recovery of mankind," \* especially in the second edition of that book. But it is enough for my present argument to say, that God himself will make the equity of this constitution to appear with much more evidence and

\* See volume the sixth of the works of doctor WATTS.

and conviction in the last great day, when millions of actual criminals shall stand before the judgment-seat, who owe the first spring of their sin and ruin to our common parent, and yet will fall under the righteous condemnation of the judge.

Answer II. When God decreed to give thee a being, O sinner, and designed thee in his eternal ideas to be a man, placed among a thousand blessings of nature and providence, it was then a favour of thy creator; for thou wert designed also in this original divine idea to have full sufficiency of power to become wise and happy. It was also a favour from thy creator that he took all these thy sufficiencies of power, and put them into the hand of one man, even the father of thy race, because he was as wise, and holy, and as well able as any man of his posterity could be, to preserve his station in the favour of God, and to secure thy happiness together with his own; and he had much stronger obligations to obey his maker, and more powerful motives to secure thy happiness than thou thyself, or any single man could possibly have, because he was intrusted with the felicity of so many millions of his own dear offspring as well as his own. Now though *Adam*, thy first father, being thus furnished with sufficiencies of power, and with the strongest obligations to preserve himself and thee, has actually sinned and ruined himself and his off-spring; this is indeed an unhappy truth; but the great God is not to blame, who has not only acted wisely but kindly towards his creatures in this constitution, because, so far as we can judge, it was much more probable that *Adam* would have maintained his innocence and his happiness, together with that of his off-spring. Again,

When the race of man was ruined, and God saw that every man would come into the world under unhappy circumstances of guilt and corruption of nature, he provided a covenant of grace, and brought thee into some knowledge of it: And this had been effectual to have recovered and saved thee from the ruins of the fall if thou hadst exerted all thy force, employed all thy natural powers of understanding and will for this purpose, and used all thy diligence to follow the methods of his grace, and hadst sought earnestly for divine aids: For there is no man among the damned is able to say, "I have done every thing that was in my power to do:" No man shall be condemned for what was utterly impossible for him to avoid: It is confessed indeed thou art laid under some hardships and difficulties by the sin of thy first father; yet it is thy own actual and personal crimes for which thou art here condemned at this judgment, wherein "every one shall be judged and rewarded according to his works: 2 Cor. v. 10. It is for many wilful offences against the law of God, and for sinning against the offers of divine grace; it is for obstinacy against thy own conscience, and all the outward and inward monitions of thy duty, that thou art fallen under this sentence, and because thou didst not labour and strive against sin, and resist it even to the end of thy state of life and trial. Thou hast had many an inward reproof for sin, many a secret or public call to virtue, and perhaps loud and fair warnings of thy danger; but thou hast turned a deaf ear to them all, and it is thy own folly, obstinacy, and iniquity, that have brought thee into this misery, and thou must eat the fruit of thy own works.

If there should be any person found indeed among *Jews*, gentiles or christians, who justly complain, "I have not had a fair and full state of trial, and yet I am condemned," I think we may grant that the righteous God will release such from their misery, after they have worn out a proper number of years in punishment proportionable to their past crimes; and that there shall be a fair, and full, and proper state of trial appointed to them before they shall be utterly and unretrievably miserable: But if no such person be found there, if there be no such just complaint to be made a-

mong the millions of the damned, then they may be still continued in their prison and punishment without any imputation upon divine justice and equity.

Answer III. Whensoever any such criminal in hell shall be found making such a sincere and mournful address to the righteous and merciful judge of all, if at the same time he is truly humble and penitent for his past sins, and is grieved at his heart for having offended his maker, and melts into sincere repentance, I cannot think that a God of perfect equity and rich mercy will continue such a creature under his vengeance; but rather, that the perfections of God will contrive a way for escape, though God has not given us here any revelation of such special grace as this.

But on the other hand, whatever melting and moving speeches may be made by sinners here on earth, in compassion to the sinners who are gone before them to hell; yet if no such person be ever found in hell, truly and humbly repenting of his sins, nor have we any reason to think there ever will, why should a righteous God be obliged to cease punishing a rebel who only is vexed and raging under his own chains, and who continues in the spirit of obstinacy and rebellion against God, and will not repent of it?

Objection the fifth is derived from the "mercy and compassion of a God, compared with the mercy and compassion of man." Surely the compassion of the ever-blessed God, who has described himself rich in mercy, abundant in goodness, and whose very name is love, 1 *John* iv. 8. must have transcendent tenderness and pity towards his creatures, the work of his hands, above all the compassions that any one fellow-creature can express towards another. Now the very thought and name of eternal punishments, or endless torment, is such as seems to shock the nature of a good-natured man; and though he was never so much injured, yet he would never have a thought of wishing his enemy any kind of eternal punishment for it, much less of condemning him to everlasting misery, and supporting him in being on purpose to suffer it; and therefore we cannot suppose that God will do it.

This objection is further strengthened by an expression of our Saviour himself, who says, *Mark* xviii. 19. "There is none good, save one, that is God:" As much as to say, there is none equal or comparable in goodness to God himself: And it is further supported still by the common notions which good men have of God; those expressions in the apocryphal writings confirm it, 4 *Esd.* v. 33. "Then said the Lord unto me, thou art sore troubled in mind for *Israel*: Lovest thou that people more than he that made them?" And in the same book, chapter viii. 47. "Thou comest far short, that thou shouldst be able to love my creature more than I." Now, since no good man could wish such a curse or mischief to his worst and most wicked enemy, as a torment without end, surely we cannot conceive the great God will ever be so severe as to inflict it.

Answer I. It is readily allowed, that God has more goodness than any creature, but God has also more wisdom and knowledge, which concur with his goodness in all his actions, and he forms a much juster judgment concerning the evil and demerits of sin and rebellion against himself, than it is possible for any creature to form: And I think I may boldly assert, none can know the complete evil of sin, or its full desert, but that same glorious being against whom sin is committed, who knows well the dignity of his own nature and his own law, and what unspeakable injury is done thereto by the sins of men. Now his goodness in all his transactions must be regulated and limited by this infinite wisdom; and if a man does not see and consent to the just demerits of sin against his maker, it is because he has less wisdom and knowledge than the great God has, and his tenderness and compassion may run into  
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very great excesses, and may be in some instances a sign of his weakness and folly, as well as of his goodness and pity, as I shall shew under the next answer.

At present let us represent the case in a common instance. When criminals go to execution from month to month, or from year to year, in this great city; and especially if some of them have a handsome and agreeable appearance, and if they are wringing their hands with outcries, and vexing their own hearts, and are stung by their own consciences for their having brought this misery upon themselves, you will find several of the spectators of so tender a make as to grieve for the execution of such criminals, and to wish in their hearts it was in their power to save them. And yet further, if there are numbers of these wicked creatures that are sent at once to the punishment of the sword or the gallows, there may be many of these spectators grieving for them, and pitying them, and perhaps exclaiming against the severity of the law, and the cruelty of the judge, for condemning such malefactors to death.

But do all these weepers and complainers judge justly of the case? Do they consider how pernicious and ruinous a thing it would be to a government to let such traitors go unpunished? Do they know, that it is a piece of clemency and goodness to the innocent to punish the wicked? Or that it is a piece of necessary honour due to the laws, to make those who insolently break them sustain the penalty that the law has appointed? Do they remember that the few good qualities, or supposed talents, or fine appearances which these offenders are possessed of, should out-weigh the demands of the law and justice, the peace of the nation or kingdom, and the restraint of others from the same crimes?

Answer II. The goodness of God, the eternal spirit, is a much superior thing to the tenderness and compassion of man dwelling in flesh and blood. Man grows compassionate by a sort of sympathy or sensation of the miseries which his fellow-creatures endure; and though this is exceeding useful for many purposes of human life, and therefore God planted it in our natures; yet it has so much mixture of animal nature with it, that it frequently degenerates into weakness, fondness, and folly. And indeed, if every tender creature must be gratified in this weakness, and form the rules of government, there would never a malefactor fall under execution, but the vilest criminals would be spared, though the government were ruined.

On the other hand, the goodness or mercy of God is a sedate willingness or design to do good to creatures, and particularly to the miserable, but always according to the directions of wisdom and holiness. As God cannot have such anger, resentment, or cruelty in his nature, as mankind may fall into when they are punishing offenders, so properly speaking, he has no such sort of passionate tenderness and sympathy in sparing them: Though the words of greatest affection are sometimes used by the sacred writers to figure out the mercies of God to man; yet God both punishes and spares according to the calm and righteous exercises of his wisdom, and not under the influence of such passions as we feel.

Since therefore the exercise of such sort of passions amongst men oftentimes appears to be the weakness of nature, joined with their ignorance of the rules of equity, is it reasonable that the great and all-wise God should make such creatures his patterns in the limitation of the exercises of his justice? Or that he should be as weak as they are, and as much moved to swerve from the rules of his own righteous government by such a sort of tenderness as ignorant, weak and foolish man may sometimes express towards criminals in their deserved misery?

It is readily granted, that a wise and a good man may and ought to be sorry and grieved, that any of his fellow-creatures should be so vicious as to bring themselves under so severe a penalty by their own wilful crimes; but still in their calmest and wisest thoughts they acknowledge the wisdom and equity of the government, in inflicting such penalties upon those who heinously offend, and they acquiesce in the sentence and the execution.

• Our blessed Lord *Jesus* himself, who was the wisest and the best of creatures, looked upon the city of *Jerusalem* with an eye of compassion, and wept over it, *Luke* xiii. 34. "O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not? Therefore behold your house is left unto you desolate." Let it be observed here, that our Saviour had the bowels, and compassions, and tenderness of the best of men; but he still maintains the vindictive exercise of the government of God. "Your desolation must and shall come upon you, nor will I forbid or withhold it." And I am sure the human nature of our blessed Saviour was formed nearest to the image of God beyond any creature besides; and as I have hinted before, it is he who is the supreme messenger of his Father's love, that has pronounced these eternal punishments upon impenitent sinners in many parts of his ministry.

Answer III. How far will these objectors permit the justice of God to go in the punishment of impenitent sinners? If eternal punishment must neither be threatened nor inflicted, lest divine goodness be injured, then all mankind, even the worst and vilest of criminals, must certainly be one day delivered from their miseries; and thus the great God, who is infinitely offended, is bound to finish his wrath one day, and return in mercy to the offenders, whether they return to him by repentance or no. What! may the criminal rebel creature with impudence and spite affront the creator infinitely, and must not the creator have a right to demand equal vengeance? No, he must not, according to these writers: For if the essential goodness of God do certainly forbid eternal punishments, these absurdities, as gross as they appear, will be the necessary consequents of it: And though the creature be not restrained from sinning, yet the blessed God will be utterly restrained from punishing: And is this a doctrine fit to be believed by christians, or to be taught by those who have no commission for it from their bible? Or indeed, will the light of nature and reason ever justify and support this sort of pleading?

Objection the sixth is drawn from the wisdom of God in his government of the world. Surely, will the sinner say, it was for some valuable end that God at first pronounced punishment to attend the sins of his creatures, for "he does not afflict willingly, nor delight to grieve the children of men:" *Lam.* iii. 23. His design must be therefore one of these two things; either to correct and reform the sinners whom he punishes, and reduce them to their duty, in order to partake of his mercy; or else it must be to maintain a public monument and demonstration of his justice, and to support the authority of his law, and honour of his government, that he might deter other creatures from sinning against him: But when this world is come to it's period, and his governing providence over it is finished, and all the means of grace are ended, the first end, viz. correction and reformation ceases: There is no more hope of reforming such sinners as these. And what further need can there be of the secondary design of punishment, viz. the demonstration of his justice in so terrible a manner to restrain others from sinning, when the state of our trial is ended, and all mankind are sent either to heaven or hell?

Answer I.



Answer I. I might here reply, by way of concession, that if there were no other intelligent creatures to be witnesses of these eternal demonstrations of God's holiness, his justice, and his hatred of sin; and if God himself was the only being who knew of these eternal punishments, I acknowledge I cannot see sufficient reason for this endless duration of them; I cannot give any probable account why creatures, who are never to be corrected and reformed, should be tormented for ever in secret; God perfectly knows his holiness and justice without such monuments of it; and since he has asserted this punishment, I think there must be some creatures to receive a moral influence from the knowledge of it.

Answer II. When there is a representation made of the punishment of the worshippers of the beast in *Rev. xiv. 10, 11.* that "they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture, and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever, it is in the presence of the holy angels as well as in the presence of the lamb." Angels and other innocent beings may improve such a sight to valuable purposes.

Objection the seventh, when we remember that *Jesus Christ* himself hath assured us that but few shall be saved, and that the broad way is full of sinners running down to destruction and death; if we suppose these punishments to be endless, some will be ready to say, What! shall the greatest part of God's creatures be made miserable for ever and ever? Is this consistent with the wisdom and goodness of the blessed God, to form such an immense multitude of souls dwelling in bodies, to make them for ever miserable? What will a God of goodness have to prove his goodness to his creatures, if far the greatest part of them are left in everlasting sorrows?

Answer. The far greatest part of the creation of God may be holy and happy still: For this world of our's, even all mankind, is a very small portion of God's immense dominions; and when the transactions of our earth, and God's present government of it shall be finished, he has a thousand other dominions among the planets and stars, which has been proved by the reason of men to a great degree of probability; and these he governs by righteous laws; and though he has not revealed much of them to us in this life, yet he has discovered something of this kind in his own word: He has acquainted us with his wise and righteous government over fallen angels, and what was their sin, viz. their pride and ambition, and what was their punishment for their first rebellion, *Jude* verse 6. and this is done by the wisdom and mercy of God to affright men from sinning, while we behold how those fallen spirits are exposed and set forth as terrible examples for our warning. And why may not the everlasting punishment of sinners among the children of men be made a standing monument of God's justice, to deter many other worlds from offending him? Other worlds, I say, of unknown creatures, which perhaps may inhabit the planetary globes rolling round the same sun as our earth does; and their state of trial perhaps is not yet begun, or it may be half run out, and yet shall not be finished for some thousands of years?

Or perhaps there are other worlds of spirits, and invisible, incorporeal, intelligent creatures in a state of trial, may persevere in glorious innocence and complete happiness, to the eternal praise of their maker's goodness, and may yet be kept in their constant duty and obedience, by having always in their view the eternal punishment of wicked men. See this subject treated of at large in a book called, "The strength and weakness of human reason," second edition, page 288. †

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† See the works of *Dr. Watts*, volume the second, pages 300—314.

The counsels of God are far above our reach, and his dominions and governments are unknown to us. What if the great God will have creatures in some of his territories, who in themselves are weak and ready to fall, and may be deterred from sin and apostasy by such standing manifestations of his hatred of it, and his righteous vengeance against it? And since others have been monuments of warning to us, what if he please to make this world of our's, when he has taken the few righteous out of it to heaven; I say, what if he please to make the rest an everlasting spectacle of his justice and holiness to a hundred or a thousand other worlds, which may be utterly unknown to us? And he may, for this end, reveal his transactions with mankind to those worlds, though he has not revealed much of their affairs to us.

If I were to mention any other objection worthy of notice, I know of none but this, viz. "some learned men suppose it to have been the opinion of the primitive fathers," that souls departing from this world were sent into *Hades*, or the state of the dead, where the righteous rested in a state of peace and hope till the resurrection should bring them to heaven: And the most wicked amongst mankind went also to *Hades*, or this state of the dead, under a long and fearful expectation of the final punishments of hell: But that great multitudes who were of an indifferent character, and who were not so bad but they might be reclaimed, had another sort of trial in *Hades*, whither, they say, our Lord *Jesus Christ* at his death descended and preached the gospel to them, and many of them were recovered, and shall be hereafter raised to eternal life. The chief scripture whence they borrow this is *1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.* of which we have spoken before; and that at the great day of judgment the incorrigible sinners should be sent with the devils into the punishment of fire, which, though it may last for a shorter or longer time, yet should destroy both their bodies and their souls for ever. To this I answer,

Answer I. If this had been the doctrine of many ancient christians, yet unless they could bring plainer proofs of it from the word of God than one difficult and obscure text of *St. Peter*, there is no great reason for us to receive from them such traditions. The word of God is our only test of truth, and our instructor in matters of the invisible world.

Answer II. Though there might be a few of the early writers who seemed to incline to some of these opinions; yet this sense is drawn out from most of them by learned men with much difficulty, uncertainty and conjecture: And there are many others of them who make the punishments of hell as durable as the writers of later ages: Nor do they mention or allow of any such sort of purgatory for souls of an indifferent character as this objection pretends. Those who will look into their writings will find abundant evidence, that most of them talk of eternal punishment by fire in the very words and language of the new testament, and in direct opposition to this doctrine of temporal punishments in hell. I shall cite but two writers, one of which is the very earliest of the fathers, an acquaintance of *St. Paul*, and that is *Clemens the roman*, who in the eighth section of his second epistle says thus;

"Let us therefore repent whilst we are yet upon the earth: For we are as clay in the hand of the artificer. For as the potter, if he make a vessel, and it be distorted in his hands, or broken, again forms it a-new; but if he hath gone so far as to throw it into the furnace of fire, he can no more bring any remedy to it: So we, whilst we are in this world, should repent with our whole heart for whatsoever evil we have done in the flesh, while we have yet the time of repentance, that we may be saved by the Lord. For after we shall have departed out of this world, we shall no longer

longer be able either to confess our sins, or repent in the other." The *english* reader may find this in archbishop *Wake's* translation of the most primitive fathers.

*Justin Martyr*, who is also one of the most early writers, in the eighth section of his "first apology," tell us, "that *Plato* teaches that *Rhadamanthus* and *Minos* punished the unrighteous who came before them; and that we christians say the same thing will be done, but it is by *Christ*; when their bodies are joined with their souls, and they shall be punished with eternal punishment, and not for the period of a thousand years only, as *Plato* said." This same writer also, in very many places of his works, talks of eternal punishment, and of punishment for an endless age, and eternal fire, with eternal sensation or pain.

*Irenaeus* also after him, as well as *Ignatius* and *Polycarp* before him, speak of this fire which is not to be quenched, and of death and punishment, not temporal, but eternal. So that it is really an imposition upon unlearned readers to pretend, that the doctrine which denies the eternity of the punishments of hell, was the common sense of the primitive fathers, though it is granted that *Origen* and some others might be of this opinion.

To conclude; since the word has expressly assured us, that these punishments of sinful men shall be eternal, it is not for us to hearken to any other doctrines, and neglect what God has said, nor is it fit for us to dispute the wisdom and justice of divine conduct, nor to impeach his goodness. "Let God be true, though every man be a liar;" *Rom.* iii. 4. let God be wise though every man be a fool; let God be just and righteous in all his ways, though man vainly murmur against him, and raise these noisy and feeble remonstrances against his judgments. "The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure" *Rom.* iii. 4. in the eternal manifestations of his justice as well as his grace. If there be any supposed inconsistency or cloud of difficulty remaining on his conduct, he will clear it up to the satisfaction of every rational mind one day, and will bring the conscience of every condemned sinner to acknowledge the equity of his proceedings: The whole creation shall then justify the final sentence of judgment on all the sons of men.

I cannot finish this awful argument better than the apostle finishes the same sort of subject in the ninth and eleventh chapters to the *Romans*. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, hath endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath who have fitted themselves for destruction? And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory? chapter ix. 20, 22, 23. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge, the justice and goodness of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever." chapter xi. 33, 36. Amen.

## S E C T I O N III.

### *Reflexions on the eternity of punishment in hell.*

As we have before drawn various inferences from the nature of those punishments that are prepared for sinners in the world to come, so there are other inferences and terrible reflexions which may be derived from the duration or perpetuity of the torments of hell.

#### Reflexion I.

Reflexion I. "What unspeakable anguish and torture doth this one circumstance add to every pain and sorrow of damned creatures, that it is everlasting and has no end?" What unknown twinges in the conscience doth this thought give to the gnawing of the cruel worm, viz. that it is a worm that never dies? What unconceivable force and sting of torment does this add to the fire of God's indignation in hell, that it is a "fire which shall never be quenched?" When one year of torment and sorrow is ended, or one thousand years are come to their period, the case of sinners is still much the same, the vengeance remains still as heavy as ever, and seems as far off from its end. This dreadful price, which the justice of God demands for the reparation of our offences against his law and his authority, is a price which creatures can never pay, for it is infinite; and therefore when a finite creature begins to make payment thereof with his own sufferings, these sufferings must be everlasting.

It is evident, that one wilful sin is sufficient to sink creatures under the indignation of a God for six thousand years: I call the angels who sinned for witnesses to this truth: They were formed in holiness and in glory before the creation of this lower world, and probably they sinned and fell before this creation too; and they are yet imprisoned and confined under perpetual chains of darkness, as the word of God tell us, and reserved to everlasting punishment at the judgment of the great day. And if thou, O sinner, among the sons of men, if thou diest in an unregenerate, unholy and unpardoned state, the sins of thy whole life are charged upon thee, and thou art "daily treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," *Rom. ii. 5.* and "thou shalt not escape from this prison till thou hast paid the utmost farthing." *Matth. v. 26.*

If one sin deserves all this misery which has been described, what a dreadful reckoning will the sins of thy whole life come to, when every command of God which thou hast broken shall appear and demand reparation for its injured honour? Remember, O sinner, obstinate and rebellious, remember thou hast to do with a great and dreadful God, who has all thy "iniquities ever before his eyes," *Isai. lvi. 5.* "Behold they are written before me, and I will recompense, saith the Lord, their iniquity into their bosom." He is a God that will never forget any of thy crimes. *Amos viii. 7.* "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of *Jacob*, surely I will never forget any of their works. Though thou hast lost and forgot them, he will bring them again into thy conscience with a terrible remembrance; and when God comes forth in a way of vengeance, "every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompence of reward. *Heb. ii. 2.* Vengeance belongeth unto me saith the Lord," chapter x. 30. "He that spared not his own Son, when he laid on him the iniquity of us all," *Rom. viii. 25.* will never spare thee who art the personal and criminal transgressor. Eternal recompences are due to the demands of justice, and he will punish till full payment is made, equal to the evil of sin, that is, to all everlasting.

Reflexion II. "What infinite and eternal concerns hang upon the short and slender thread of human life?" An eternal heaven or an eternal hell depend on our good or ill behaviour in this short and mortal state. While life remains the sinner's hope remains; he abides on the stage of action, and this is the state of trial for eternity: But as soon as the thread of life is broken, immediately ensues endless joy or endless sorrow.

What a poor fleeting vapour, what a thin and frail bubble is this feeble and uncertain thing which we call life? And yet what matters of immense importance depend upon it? This present life is a prize put into our hands, for it is the only time given us to obtain deliverance and escape from eternal death: Life in this view, as mere a  
bubble

bubble and vapour as it is, carries in it something of infinite and everlasting moment: But alas, how wretchedly does foolish and sinful mankind trifle and squander it away amidst a thousand vanities and impertinencies, or faunter it out in sloth and laziness, with an utter disregard of the important eternity that depends upon it? What multitudes are there that waste the golden hours of grace, and the seasons of hope, in procuring to themselves, by their own wilful iniquities, a length of damnation and everlasting despair?

While we dwell here in the midst of the means of mercy and salvation, there is hope that our sinful souls may be healed of that disease which is breeding the ever-gnawing worm within us. We may prevent the fuel of divine wrath from kindling into a flame which cannot be quenched: But when once the clock of life has gone through it's appointed spaces, and the last hour strikes, whether it be three or five, whether at twelve at noon or at midnight, all hope is for ever gone; we are plunged into the regions of death, despondency and darkness, and nothing remains but the actual torture of the worm of conscience to seize on us, and the fire of divine anger actually breaks out, which shall burn to the lowest hell.

O could we but behold ourselves in the glass of wisdom, while we are yet standing upon the slippery edge of this burning precipice, and playing with painted bubbles there, or in warm pursuit of a flying shining feather along the brink of this burning torrent, what fools and madmen should we appear to be even in our own eyes! And yet we go on to practise this folly, this madness, day after day, in spite of all the warnings of God and man, till at last our foot slips in some dreadful moment, and we vanish out of the sight of our companions, and are lost for ever.

Reflexion III. If the miseries of hell are eternal "how unreasonable a thing is it ever to suffer the loss of any possessions or joys which are temporal and perishing, to come into competition with them?" Surely there is nothing that belongs to time that should tempt us to run the risque of the sorrows of eternity, nor allure us to commit one sin against God, which is the fatal spring of such sorrows! Stand still, O sinner, and hearken to the voice of wisdom. Do the pleasures of sense, or the gaieties of sight, or the wealth or grandeurs of this life allure thee to make thy way boldly through any means toward the possession of them, think with thyself, is it by offending this great and dreadful God? And wilt thou dare to take one step towards these dangerous and deceitful vanities, and risque thy immortal welfare in the pursuit? What a foolish bargain wilt thou make to gain the whole world of short-lived perishing trifles, and to lose thy soul in endless perdition? *Mark viii. 36.* Dare any of us venture an eternal state of torment to gain the flattering and delusive joy of a short hour, or a winter's day?

What are all the gratifications of flesh and sense? What are all the swelling titles of honour amongst men? What are all the treasures of this perishing world? How short is their duration, and how short is thy possession of them? All earthly felicities perish in the using, and are no sooner enjoyed but are quickly lost again, or expire in the enjoyment: But if the ruin of a soul, and a lost heaven, be the price of them, how mad is the purchase, and how wretched is the purchaser?

Reflexion IV. "How patiently should we bear all the labours and fatigues, the pains and miseries of this mortal life, when we have any hope of our deliverance from the pains and sorrows of immortality?" As for our maladies and sorrows here on earth, blessed be God they are not eternal: There are some intervals to relieve, and there is some period to finish them. When we ask a friend who is sick and in pain, "how fare you? I am in pain now, says he, but I hope I shall be easy anon:

I am sick to-day, but I trust I shall be in health to-morrow." This is a sweet mitigation of the present uneasiness, and gives relief to the patient. But how dreadful and piercing would these accents be, if we should hear our friend make this answer to us, "I am all over in extreme pain and anguish, and I shall never, never be eased of it: I lie under exquisite torment of the flesh, and horror in my soul, and I shall for ever feel this horror and this torment." Such is the case of the damned sinners in hell, and therefore their agonies are intolerable.

But if you have any comfortable prospect of the pardon of sin, and a well-grounded hope of eternal salvation through the blood of *Christ*, and by the rules and promises of the gospel, all the temporal toils and plagues that can possibly stand between us and heaven should be despised and disregarded by us, and we should learn to triumph over them with the victorious songs of thankfulness and praise. Blessed be the name of our God, "though he has smitten us sorely, yet he has not given us over to everlasting death."

Let our thoughts ascend to the heavenly regions, and let us ask those who are arrived thither out of the land of temptation and conflict, out of these tabernacles of sin and sorrow; let us ask them, what gave them so divine a courage and so firm a patience in the midst of all their trials? With one voice they will all make answer, it was the view of our deliverance from an eternal hell, and the hopes of obtaining salvation by *Christ Jesus* with eternal glory; it is this that supported us under every burden, and bore us on with a spirit of faith and victory through every hardship on earth. It was for this we laboured, and suffered, and counted not life, nor any of the blessings of it dear to us, nor any of the sorrows of it intolerable, that we might escape the everlasting sorrows of a future state, and enjoy the blessings of life eternal. And, O may every one of us "be the followers of those who through this faith and patience have obtained the promised felicity," *Heb. vi. 13.* May we also make our way, by the same motives, through the floods and the fires of affliction and distress, to reach this everlasting heaven, and to escape everlasting burnings!

In order to confirm our patience, and to animate our zeal, let us survey the blessed example of *St. Paul*, who was reproached, who was buffeted, who was persecuted with stones, and whips; and scourges, and bore a thousand indignities, who was assaulted with endless strokes of injury and violence, and yet rejoiced in the midst of all his sufferings in the view of his eternal hope. The spirit of faith in the midst of all his sufferings taught him to sing this divine song, "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," *2 Cor. iv. 17.* "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed," *Rom. viii. 18.* Nor are they worthy to be compared with that exceeding and eternal weight of vengeance, from which we are delivered by faith and patient obedience to the gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

Reflexion V. "If the miseries of hell are eternal, we can never have our deliverance from them made too secure." If the danger of any mischief, to which we might be exposed, were but slight, and the duration of it short, there might be possibly some excuse for our delay to escape it: But when it is total and irrevocable ruin to which we are liable every moment while we continue in a state of sin, we should fly with all the wings of our souls, and never be at ease or quiet till we are got without the reach of danger, and settled in a place of safety, or on the rock of our salvation,

O could

O could we but perceive a thousandth part of the horror that is contained in an eternal hell, an eternal banishment from the face and favour of God, and the eternal impressions of his anger, we should never give ourselves rest one moment, till we had returned to God by a sincere repentance, and were reconciled to him that made us; till we fled for refuge to the blood of *Jesus*, and to his sanctifying grace, which is the only hope that is set before us. We should never give ourselves leave to lie down, or awake in quiet, while we were destitute of a saving interest in the salvation of *Christ*, and had attained to some clear evidence of it, and a well-grounded hope.

Have we not sometimes felt the worm of conscience begin to gnaw within us, and to prey upon our spirits after the commission of some sin? And shall we not apply ourselves with all holy speed to the divine physician who can kill this gnawing worm within us, and can heal those sinful maladies that are breeding it? Have we not sometimes felt the threatenings of the wrath of God in his law, like a fire in our bones? With what infinite desire then, and what restless vehemence should we fly to the blood of *Jesus* our great sacrifice, which alone can quench the fiery indignation of God, and prevent it from growing up to an everlasting flame?

Had we upon our spirits such a sense of the terrors of the Lord in hell, as his threatenings represent, we should never be satisfied with such cold doubtful hopes of our deliverance from them, as thousands of nominal christians are contented with; but we should make every needful and critical enquiry, whether our repentance were sincere, whether our faith in *Christ* were unfeigned, whether our hopes had a solid foundation in the divine promise: We should search every power of our souls, and examine our hearts through every corner, whether sin be mortified there, whether the christian virtues are formed within us, and the divine image is begun to be stamped upon our minds: We should be restless and impatient in our inward searches, whether we are made new creatures, whether we are born of God and become his children, and are secured by his gospel from this everlasting vengeance. The degree and the infinite duration of this misery should appoint the proportion of our zeal and solicitude to escape it.

A man who sees or feels his own house on fire under him, does not continue upon his bed of sloth, or sit amusing himself among the ornaments of his chamber, till the flames have broke through and seized him: But with huge outcries he seeks for help, and flies in haste for his life wheresoever he finds a way. Such should be the language, and such the activity of sinful creatures, to escape the wrath to come; and such will be the outcries of sinners when they are thoroughly awakened: This language of every place, and of every hour will then be awakened, "What shall I do to be saved? Whither shall I fly for refuge?" O blessed *Jesus*, receive me into thy protection, and be thou my deliverer.

Give me leave to repeat this sort of expostulation with lingering and delaying sinners, or with drowsy and formal christians. If you would let yourselves often in the blaze of these everlasting burnings, you would never satisfy yourselves with such cold faint wishes, such lazy endeavours, such languid efforts of faith and repentance to escape this fiery indignation that shall never be quenched: Nor would you content yourselves with dark and doubtful evidences of your interest in the love of God, and the grace of our Lord *Jesus*; but you would be day and night busy with your own hearts in the most intimate and careful search after converting grace and living christianity: You would never be at rest till you felt the new nature working with power and bright evidence within you, that you might be able to say, "We

know there is no condemnation belongs to us, but that we are passed from death unto life."

Let us proceed upon this subject, turning the discourse from ourselves to our friends, and say, with what fervour of love, with what holy zeal and compassion should we labour to save our friends and all that are dear to us from this eternal destruction? What words of fiery terror shall we chuse to awaken those who slumber on the edge of endless burnings? What language of kind and tender passion shall we chuse to reach their hearts? What phrases of melting pity to hasten their escape from this precipice of burning ruin, or to pluck them as brands out of the fire before it becomes unquenchable? "Knowing these terrors of the Lord," with what vehemence of zeal should we try to persuade men, our fellow mortals, that they would not venture into the midst of these miseries, and beseech them in the name of *Christ* to be reconciled to God? This was the practice, and these the motives of the great apostle, as he describes them at the latter end of the fifth chapter in his second epistle to the *Corinthians*, verses 11—21.

O with what force of ardent and active compassion should ministers preach both the curses of the law, and the grace of the blessed gospel, to perishing sinners, and make haste to rescue their souls from this everlasting vengeance? With what warm and solicitous zeal should they lay hold of those poor thoughtless wretches who are madly indulging their lusts and follies, and thereby preparing themselves to become fit fuel for this eternal fire? They are forming themselves by their iniquities to become vessels of this everlasting indignation: Let us seize them by some kind and constraining words of love, some outcries of compassion and fear, lest they rush into those flames which will never be quenched: Perhaps when they are summoned away from us by the stroke of death, they may leave us in most uncomfortable sorrows for our neglect, while they are suffering the long endless punishment due to their own iniquities.

Reflexion VI. "How unreasonable a thing is it for us ministers, who are charged and intrusted with the whole counsel of God for the salvation of men, to avoid the mention of these his eternal terrors in our sermons, and in our addresses to mortal creatures;" creatures who are daily preparing themselves for them by their sins, and are ready to plunge into the midst of them! Has not our blessed Saviour made frequent mention of them in his gospel, and set them in their dreadful array before his hearers? Has he not expressed them in their strongest terms, and spread them in their most frightful colours, and set them in their full and everlasting extent, before the sinners which attended his ministry? And did he ever give any hint that they should be understood in a milder sense? Have not the apostles followed their Lord in the same dreadful display of the sharp and ever-during punishments of hell? And have they taught us to qualify these terrors by gentler interpretations of them? And have not such kind of discourses been abundantly blessed in the providence of God, both in ancient and later ages, to awaken and save multitudes of the souls of men?

How many holy and happy spirits are now rejoicing before God, and before the throne of his love, and encompassed with all the joys of immortality, who owe the beginnings of their repentance, and the first turn of their souls towards faith and salvation to such words of terror as these? How many of the saints on high have been first awakened from their deadly sleep in sin by the ministrations of this eternal vengeance of God? How many have been frightened out of their indolence at first by the discovery of these everlasting horrors of conscience and agonies of soul? The dread



dread of the worm that never dies has affrighted their consciences from a course of sin: The fiery indignation which shall never be quenched has flashed in their bosoms from the lips of the preacher, and has set them all over trembling, and filled all their inward powers with dismay and anguish: Their tongue has broke into loud and earnest enquiries, "Who shall deliver me from this eternal death? How shall I escape this everlasting wrath to come?" And the Spirit of God by degrees has led them to *Jesus*, and his atoning blood, his gospel, his righteousness and his converting grace, as the only way of deliverance and salvation.

How unreasonable a thing is it for ministers in their preaching to soften these terrors of the Lord, to cut short these endless horrors and anguish, and to mitigate the miseries of hell and damnation, since even all that length and eternity in which *Christ* and his apostles preached these terrors, have not been sufficient to reclaim mankind from their iniquities; but multitudes of them, in the face of all these threatenings, still persist in the broad way to destruction and death?

Can we possibly do any honour to the ministry of our blessed Lord, or is there any real service done to the souls of men by our fond and vain reasonings to shorten these sorrows, and put a period to these threatened torments? Will the blessed *Jesus*, when he sits on the throne of judgement, give us thanks for running counter to the language of his own ministry, and for daring to contradict his denounced vengeance?

By the various expressions and representations of this matter in scripture, in such solemn and dreadful language, must I not suppose that the blessed God, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*, designed and intended that mankind should believe the pains and punishments of hell will be eternal? Can I then be censured for endeavouring to establish and promote the awful doctrine which both God the Father and his Son intended should be believed, and by which they designed to guard both the law and the gospel? A doctrine which was left on record to deter sinners from the paths of sin and destruction, and to awaken the souls and consciences of men to repentance? On the other hand, can those teachers be approved of God or good men, whose evident design is to lead the world to disbelieve this solemn and terrible warning of the great God?

Let us proceed in these enquiries, and address ourselves to those wicked and miserable creatures, who are actually suffering this divine vengeance. Let us ask them, how they approve of this sort of preaching which withholds from the eyes and ears, and consciences of men, the most dreadful circumstance of these horrors? Will any of the damned wretches of hell thank us for hiding so dreadful a part of these miseries from them? Will they bless us for lessening the threatened curses and indignation of a God? "No, says the condemned wretch, those preachers are worthy of my curses and not my thanks, who abated these terrors of the Lord, and shortened his threatened punishment; for they persuaded me to hope there would be an end of my misery, and thereby tempted me to venture upon those sins which I should have renounced with abomination, had I believed the words of God, and these everlasting torments. O cursed and cruel preachers, who by softening and curtailing the sentence of eternal misery, gave a sort of licence to my wickedness, and broke one of the strongest bars that restrained me from sinning! 'Tis by this sort of flattery they paved my way down to hell, and have brought me into this prison, this eternal anguish whence there is no release\*."

Say

\* Some of the ancients have called those preachers, who shorten the pains of hell, the merciful or compassionate doctors: And doctor *Thomas Burnet* calls those merciless or uncompassionate, who preach the

Say, ye who preach that the gates of hell shall one day be opened to let out the prisoners, ye who tell sinners there is a time of release for them, say, do ye expect to fright them out of their sins by lessening their fear of God and his wrath to come? Do ye hope to bring obstinate and impenitent rebels to a more speedy remorse for sin, and to begin a life of holiness, by persuading them that these terrors of God shall have an end? Can ye imagine that such vain tidings, such soothing flattery will ever melt them to repentance and love, when all the grace of the gospel mingled with the blood and tears of the son of God will not do it? Would not this manner of preaching rather encourage them to run on still in their rebellions, and make them more regardless of their highest interest? Would it not tempt them to give a loose to their vilest inclinations, and all the flagrant and abominable enormities of their own heart, when they shall be told that these punishments, which the bible calls everlasting, shall one day come to an end?

Besides, I believe it has been observed in every age, that the fears of this worm which never dies, and this eternal fire which shall never be quenched, have been made abundantly useful in the providence of God to lay a powerful restraint on the unruly vices of some sinners, who have never been awakened and drawn into saving penitence, or reclaimed to a life of sincere holiness. And if the restraint of this terror were taken away, how much more would all iniquity abound among those who have no inward principle of goodness?

Let us proceed then to preach the same terror which the blessed *Jesus* thought not unworthy of his ministry; and may the providence and the grace of God give success to our labours, both for the restraining the extravagant vices of the wicked, for the saving conversion of many sinners, and for a guard and restraint to the young and wavering christians\*.

Notwithstanding all the express language of scripture on our side of the question, and all our arguments drawn from it yet there are some of the reasoners and the disputers of this world, who will still suppose that it is more for the honour of God, and for the glory of our blessed Saviour, for ministers to dwell always upon the promises of the new covenant, and the riches of the grace of *Christ*, and the overflowing measures of the love of God, in order to save sinful men. "Surely, say they

the eternity of it: But I think it will appear one day, that those are truly the compassionate writers and teachers, who most effectually affright and prevent men from sin and damnation; and those who have given wicked men hope of their release from hell, will be in danger of being charged with smoothing their way to this misery, by softening the terrors of it.

\* The late doctor *Thomas Burnet*, in his latin treatise of the "state of the dead, and those who rise again," opposes the doctrine of the eternity of future punishments, and shews who of the ancient fathers seems to be of the same opinion with him: But he tells us, that these ancient fathers, when they treated of this subject, often gave the same advice to others, which he himself gives in these words. "Whatsoever you determine within yourself, and in your own breast, concerning these punishments, whether they are eternal or no, yet you ought to use the common doctrine and the common language when you preach or speak to the people, especially those of the lower rank, who are ready to run headlong into vice, and are to be restrained from evil only by the fear of punishment: And even among good christians, there are infants to be nourished with milk; nor is their diet to be rashly changed, lest through intemperance they fall into diseases."

And he adds in the margin, "Whoever shall translate these sentiments into our mother tongue, I shall think it was done with an evil design and to bad purpose." So that if this were a true doctrine, yet the learned author agrees, that neither the holy writers of the bible, nor the fathers, think it proper that the bulk of the people should know it. But if it should not be translated, I would ask, why did the author write it and leave it to be published? Did he suppose all men and boys, who understood latin, to be sufficiently guarded against the abuse of such an opinion?

they, preachers have tried long enough what the words of terror will do; let us now allure sinful men to be reconciled to God by a ministry of universal love and grace; and let us see whether the boundless compassions of a God, in putting a final period to the miseries of his guilty creatures after a certain number of years, will not draw sinners with a sweeter violence to the love and obedience of their maker, than all this doctrine of severity and terror." In the first place I answer,

Answer I. That surely *Jesus* himself, who is the prime minister of his Father's kingdom, and the divinest messenger of his love, knew better than we do how to pay the highest honour to his heavenly Father, and to display his own grace. Surely he was well acquainted with the best way to begin with sinners in order to their reconciliation to God, and knew also the most effectual avenues to the consciences of sinful creatures, incomparably beyond what any of us can pretend to. Had he not as tender a sense of the honour of his Father's mercy, as warm a zeal for the glory of his own grace and gospel, and as wise and melting a compassion for the souls of men as the best of us can boast of? And yet he thought it proper to lay the foundation of his own, and his apostles ministrations of grace, in this language of terror, in these threatenings of eternal punishment. And in the course of his providence throughout all ages he has, in some measure, made this doctrine successful to recover souls from the snares of the devil, and to enlarge his own heavenly kingdom. But I answer further,

Answer II. It must be granted that the tempers of men are various, and it is possible that some may be of so ingenuous and refined a disposition, that the words of love and grace, without any terror, might reach their hearts, and through the influences of heaven, touch them effectually: But as for the bulk of mankind, while they continue in their sins, daily experience convinceth us, that they are best awakened by the terrors of the Lord, by a representation of the gnawing "worm which never dies, and the fire which shall not be quenched." I never knew but one person in the whole course of my ministry who acknowledged, that the first motions of religion in his own heart arose from a sense of the goodness of God, and that he was gently and sweetly led at first to this enquiry, "What shall I render to the Lord who hath dealt so bountifully with me?" *Psal.* cxvi. 12. But I think all besides, who have come within my notice, have rather been first awakened by the passion of fear to fly from the wrath to come.

If therefore we will practise according to the example of *Jesus*, the greatest and the wisest prophet of his church, and his holy apostles, and the best of preachers in all ages who have followed him; if we would obey the dictates of long experience, and our best observations on the methods of converting grace, I think we must proceed to denounce these eternal terrors of the Lord against the transgressors of his law and the despisers of his gospel. This seems to be the appointed and most effectual way to rouse their consciences to seek a deliverance from the curses of the law, which carry in them everlasting punishment. This appears to be the first spring of religion in sinful men, and the first motive to receive the glad tidings of salvation which are displayed in the new testament. This spurs on their passions to escape the vengeance of God, by flying to his gospel, where there is rich and abundant grace to encourage the hope of rebellious creatures in their returns to God by *Jesus Christ*, the Saviour. To *Jesus*, who is the awful messenger of his Father's terrors, and the prime minister of his love, be glory and honour to everlasting ages." Amen.

P O S T S C R I P T.

P O S T S C R I P T.

**W**HEREAS it hath pleased God for these two years past to cut me off from the delightful work of my study, and for the greatest part of the time to withhold me from all publick service in my station by several weaknesses of nature; and whereas I had many writings lying by me which were quite finished and corrected for the press, my friends might naturally expect that those pieces which were most nearly, or quite finished and revised, would first appear in the world, because it is much easier to correct three sheets in a week from the press, than it is in as many months to revise or to finish any imperfect manuscript.

I think proper therefore here to acquaint them, that as fast as the providence of God shall restore my health and strength, I shall endeavour to hasten the finishing of such as are yet imperfect: Some of which perhaps the public may more earnestly expect.

*Stoke-Newington,*  
Feb. 21. 1744-5.

S E R M O N S

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# S E R M O N S

On some of the

## PRINCIPAL HEADS

OF THE

### Christian Religion.

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## S E R M O N I.

The knowledge of God by the light of nature, together with the uses of it, and it's defects.

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ACTS XIV. 15, 16, 17.

—*The living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*

**W**HEN the apostle *Paul* gave authority to his ministrations at *Lystra*, by working a miraculous cure on a man who was born a cripple, the inhabitants imagined that he and *Barnabas* were gods, and were immediately preparing a sacrifice for them; but to divert this madness and superstition of paying divine worship to creatures, the apostles, with holy jealousy and indignation, ran into the midst of them and preached to them the living and the true God. “We, say they, are utterly unworthy of these divine honours; for we are men of such flesh and blood as yourselves, and are liable to the like infirmities; we preach to you, that ye should turn from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven and earth, &c.”

From which words we may raise these three distinct observations.

I. "God may be known by the light of nature." Surely he that made mankind, and doth them so much good, hath given them some hints and notices of himself; "He hath not left himself without witness,"

II. "The knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature, hath it's various uses;" of which this is one, that it is a witness for God and his goodness among men.

III. "Yet this knowledge of God, by the light of nature, hath great defects and imperfections in it. Notwithstanding all this knowledge, which is within the reach of men, yet all the nations of mankind besides the *jews*, continued to walk in their own ways, their ways of idolatry, of wild superstition and various wickedness. It is said indeed, that God suffered them to walk thus; not that he ever permitted them to do it as a governor; but as a creator and a sovereign, he neither restrained them from it by his almighty power, nor by such special revelations of grace, as he made to the jewish nation; and their own natural knowledge did not secure them from it.

Let us begin with the first observation, viz. I. "God may be known by the light of nature" When I use the word God, I mean here the same thing which the lowest rank of mankind would understand by it, that is, the being which made all things; or, in more learned language, the first cause of all. And when I say, God may be known by the light of nature, I mean that the senses and the reasoning powers which belong to the nature of man, are able to give him so much light in seeking after God, as to find out something of him thereby, or to gain some knowledge of him. By our senses, we are acquainted with his works, and by his works our reason may be led to trace out that more excellent being who made them. This is asserted beyond all dispute. *Rom. i. 19, 20.* "That which may be known of God is manifest in them, that is, in men, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are, or may be clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead."

Now if we inquire more particularly, what it is that we can learn of God by the light of nature, I answer in the following particulars.

1. We may come to the knowledge of his existence, or that there is such a glorious being who made all things.

This is evident and certain, that nothing could make itself. It is impossible, that any thing which once had no being, should ever give being to itself; or that once upon a time it should of itself burst out of nothing, and begin to be. Since therefore there is a world with millions of beings in it, which are born and die, it is certain there is some being, who had no beginning, but had life in himself from all eternity, and who gives life and being to all other things. This is the being whom we call God.

Of all the visible beings that we are acquainted with, man is the highest and most noble; but he is forced to confess he is not his own maker. By sending our thoughts and enquiries a little backwards, we find that we came into being but a few years ago; and we are daily convinced, that we perish and die in long succession. Our parents, or our ancestors, were no more able to make themselves than we are; for most of them are dead, and the rest are going the way of all flesh:  
they

they cannot preserve our lives, nor their own; and therefore it is plain, that though we borrowed life from them at first, yet they are not the original and self-sufficient authors of life and being to themselves, or to us; they are but instruments in the hands of some superior first cause, some original and eternal maker of us all.

Or if some atheist should say, we must run up from son to father, and from father to grandfather, in endless generations, without a beginning, and without any first cause; I answer, that is impossible: for if ten thousand generations cannot subsist of themselves without dependence on something before them, neither can infinite or endless generations subsist of themselves without dependence. Suppose a chain of ten thousand links hung down from the sky, and could not support itself unless some mighty power upheld the first link; then it is certain, a chain of ten thousand times ten thousand links, or an endless chain, could never support itself. As the chain grows longer and heavier, the addition of new links can never make the chain more independent, or better support itself.

There must be therefore some first bird, some first beast, some first man, from whom all these succeeding generations begun; and since they are all dead, and could not preserve themselves out of their own original sufficiency, it is certain they could not make themselves; they all must depend therefore on some mighty being, who has ever lived, and will ever live, and who is the first cause and maker of all things besides himself. Further arguments for the being of a God will appear under the next particular.

2. We learn by the light of nature what God is, viz. that he is a spirit, perfect in wisdom and perfect in power, who knows all things, and can do all things, or who is alwise and almighty.

The amazing works of God in the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, their regular and unerring motions for so many thousand years, the progress of the hours, the changes of day and night, winter and summer, which depend on these motions and revolutions, they all abundantly discover that the maker of them was wise, and skilful beyond all our conceptions. If we observe the operations of a clock or watch, which doth but imitate the motions of these heavenly bodies, and point out to us the day and the hour, and distinct seasons; we say, it is impossible this curious engine could be made without great wisdom and skill in some artificer who contrived it; and can we be so foolish as to imagine, that this vast and glorious engine of the heavens, with all it's bright furniture, which makes times and seasons, day and night, could ever come into being by chance, or be made without wisdom or contrivance.

The wonderful production of plants, herbs, trees, and flowers, the astonishing operations of living creatures, and their several parts and powers fitted for the proper ends and designs of their life, discover to us the deep wisdom and knowledge of the being that made them. When we observe the strange and surprizing actions of some animals, of dogs or foxes, of hen and chickens, of bees and emmets, we can scarce withhold ourselves from ascribing knowledge and reason to them; and is it possible that the being, which made these active animals should not have understanding and reason, and that far superior to all his creatures? Should Mr. Boyle, or Sir Isaac Newton descend from heaven, and begin a complete lecture on this subject, it would last for years, for ages, even to the end of time; and every instructive moment would acquaint us with some new glories of the creator.

Let us consider but our own natures, our parts and powers; what wonders are contained in every sense? In the eye, what millions of objects are painted continually on one spot of that little ball, and transferred inward to the brain in all their distinct

colours and shapes, and are beheld without confusion there? What varieties of sounds and voices, language and harmony, are taken in and distinguished by the ear in it's winding caverns? How very various are the tastes and smells that we partake of by the palate and the nostrils? How happily contrived is our sense of feeling, not confined to one part, but diffused throughout the whole body, and to give speedy notice of every thing within us, or without us, that may hurt our frame? What a wonderful instrument is the tongue, to convey our thoughts in ten thousand sounds to our fellow-creatures? And what an excellent being is the principle of thought within us, even our souls or spirits, which can not only take in and converse about all the millions of objects, which our senses give us notice of; but millions more of numbers and quantities and intellectual ideas which our senses cannot reach? Now can all these be formed without infinite wisdom and skill? I might demand of the sons of atheism, in the language of the *Psalmist*, *Psal.* xciv. 9, 10. "He that planted the ear, shall not he hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that gives knowledge to man, shall he not know?" He that made spirits, hath not he all the powers of a spirit in him, in a most transcendent manner and degree?

And as the wonders of contrivance in the works of God declare his depth of wisdom, so the difficulty of creating them out of nothing argues his almighty power. "When we survey the heavens the work of his hands, the moon and the stars which he hath created;" *Psal.* viii. 3. what a glorious and powerful being must that be, which formed these vast bodies at first, and which upholds their stupendous frame? What an almighty voice was necessary to call this whole universe, these heavens and earth, and seas, with all the hosts of them, out of nothing into being, and constrain them to obey the call? Man can only change the shapes and qualities of things: He can make a clock indeed, an elegant engine to measure time; but he must have brass and iron given him, for he cannot create these materials, though he give them a new form: But God's huge and astonishing engine of the heavens, whereby hours and days, seasons and ages are made and measured out, were all formed by him without any materials: He made all the materials himself, and gave all the wheels of nature and time their very being, as well as their shapes and their motions, and they continue to observe his orders. A creator must be almighty, he must be God. Again,

Let us think within ourselves, what a powerful being must that be, who can make a soul, a spirit, a thinking being to exist, so nearly like himself, with such a faculty of understanding, as to be capable of taking in so many millions of ideas, and forming the figures of the skies and the seas, and the thousands of plants and animals, which are found upon this earth, each in their proper proportion? An understanding capable of knowing the works of God, and of knowing God himself? How powerful is the divine will, which could make a creature with a free will, to determine it's own choice, a will which can move all this frame of flesh and blood, and by these limbs can give motion to ten thousand other bodies round about us? What a glorious power must that be, who could create such an image of himself as a human spirit is, and which bears such a near resemblance of his own perfections, both in his understanding and his will, in his knowledge and his power. We are his image, we are his offspring. Thus sung *Aratus* the heathen poet, in *Acts* xvii. 28, 29, and spoke like a christian.

And thus it appears beyond all controversy, that the light of nature finds there is a God, and that this God is an alwise and almighty spirit. If we were in doubt  
about



about his existence or being, these reasonings would assure us of it; and if we seek after his nature and his perfections, these his works discover them.

3. Another thing which we learn by the light of nature, is his supreme and absolute dominion over all things, that God is the sovereign Lord and possessor of heaven and earth, so *Gen. xiv. 19*; and consequently that he hath a right to dispose of all things as he pleases; *Rom. ix. 20*. "Who therefore shall say unto him, what dost thou? Shall the thing formed say to him that hath formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Shall the vessel say to the potter, why didst thou mould me in such a form? Why was I disposed of in such a station; and why was I appointed for such a purpose? And the force of this argument grows yet much stronger, when we consider, that the great God not only gives his creatures their form and manner of being, but he created the very substance as well as the qualities of every thing, and gave them their whole nature and all the being they have.

4. The light of nature teaches us, that though God is the absolute and natural Lord of all things that he has made; yet "he is pleased to deal with his rational creatures in a way of moral government, that he rules them by a law, and will some time or other reward them in equity according to their works." The conscience which he hath formed in man, may discover to him so much of the natural law and will of his God, as a righteous governor of the world, if it be properly and wisely employed. *Rom. ii. 14. 15*. "The gentiles which have not the written law which the *jews* enjoyed, yet they do by nature the things contained in the law, that is, they are inwardly excited to do them; these having not the law, are a law to themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing them."

This law written in their hearts, and which they may find out by a diligent use of their reason, not only teaches them that adoration and worship, prayer and praise, are duties which they owe to God; but it instructs them also to distinguish between vice and virtue, good and evil, as it relates to their neighbours and themselves. It shews them the difference between sobriety and intemperance, between kindness and malice, between honesty and knavery, truth and falsehood; and it teaches them also to expect some vengeance to fall upon transgressors. So *Acts xxviii. 4*. "Surely this man is a murderer, said the barbarous inhabitants of *Melita* concerning *St. Paul*, when a viper fastened on his hand; and though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance doth not suffer him to live."

Reason and conscience might teach mankind, that since God has given them an understanding and freedom of will to chuse or refuse good or evil, he will certainly call them to account for their behaviour, and will take some opportunity to judge, reward and punish according to their conduct in the present state. In their own consciences there is a kind of tribunal erected before-hand, their conscience excusing or accusing them, as a sort of warning, an emblem and fore-runner of divine judgment.

5. The light of nature teaches us further, that God is an universal benefactor to mankind, even above and beyond their deserts, and notwithstanding all their provocations. The words of my text declare, that though they "walked in their own idolatrous ways, yet God left them not without witness of his goodness, giving them—fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness." Their own consciences tell them they have sinned, and forfeited all favours from heaven; but their very senses assure them, that God does not presently insist upon the forfeiture, nor seize away their blessings; but that he waits long, and heaps the instances of his  
goodness

goodness upon them, even upon the evil and the unthankful in the midst of all their iniquities and unthankfulness.

Thus have I shewn particularly what it is the light of nature teaches us concerning God.

II. The second general head of discourse leads us to enquire, what are the various uses of this knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature. I answer in general, it is to bear witness for God in the world. But we must enter into particulars.

1. This knowledge of God, as our maker and governor, by the light of nature, is useful, “not only to shew men their duty, but to convince them of sin against the law of God, and to lay all mankind under a sense of guilt and self-condemnation.” The apostle *Paul* begins with this doctrine in the first chapters of his epistle to the *Romans*, where his great design is to shew mankind the guilt and wretchedness of their state; for after he had introduced this natural knowledge of God in the nineteenth verse of the first chapter, he proceeds to convince the heathen world, and particularly the philosophers, of their heinous iniquities against God and man, and leaves them in the middle of the ii. and iii. chapters, under the condemnation of their own consciences and the law of God: “all have sinned and come short of that glory of God,” which they should have originally obtained by perfect righteousness.

2. This knowledge of God by the light of nature, “as it is designed to awaken men to the practice of their duty; so it has had some influence on mankind, at least by the fear of punishment, to keep, preserve, and restrain part of them from the extremest degrees of wickedness.” This natural conscience is the candle of the Lord, which he has set up in the heart of man; and though it shines but dimly, yet it has sometimes kept them from being so vile and abominable, and from running into such excess of outrage and madness, as otherwise they would have done. There have been some outward virtues practised among the *Greeks* and the *Romans*, who had a little knowledge of a superior divine power; there was some temperance, some truth, some honour, justice and goodness, now and then appearing among the multitudes of their vices: there was a secret horror within, and a foreboding of some divine vengeance, that withheld them now and then from the practice of villany, especially in the extravagant degrees of it. This natural knowledge of God amongst the heathen nations, has been found there like a small quantity of salt, to preserve some part of mankind in those countries from being utterly over-run with corruption and putrefaction; and has answered some valuable purposes in the government of God among men. Where there has been nothing of this knowledge, mankind have almost lost their superior rank among the creatures, and degenerated into a brutal nature.

3. This natural knowledge of God and his goodness, “gives some encouragement to guilty creatures to repent of their sins, and to return to God by a general hope of acceptance, though they had no promise of pardoning grace. And this was the very principle upon which some of the better sort of the gentiles set themselves to practise virtue, to worship God and endeavour to become like him\*.”

4. This

\* I do not say that natural religion can give sinful men a full and satisfying assurance of pardon upon their repentance; for the deepest degrees of penitence cannot oblige a prince to forgive the criminal; but still the overflowing goodness of God, his patience and long-suffering, notwithstanding their sins, may evidently

4. This natural knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature, serves to vindicate the conduct of God, as a righteous governor in his severe dealings with obstinate and wilful sinners, both here and hereafter. This will leave them without excuse in the great day, when God shall judge the secrets of all hearts, Their own consciences will accuse them, and bear witness against them. *Rom. i. 20. 21. and ii. 15.* "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance on such sinners? God forbid; for how then shall he judge the world?" *Rom. iii. 5, 6.* As there have been many instances of a righteous providence, in the present life, whereby the great God has already revealed his wrath from heaven against the unrighteousness and ungodliness of the heathen world, *Rom. i. 18.* So in the world to come, not one condemned sinner shall be able to say, God is unjust: Every mouth shall be stopped, and the heavens and the earth proclaim his righteousness, when he shall appear in his Son *Jesus* at the last day, as the judge of all mankind.

5. This knowledge of God by natural light prepares the way for preaching and receiving the gospel of his grace; and that he doth many ways, viz.

Unless men are first acquainted that there is a God, who can make known his mind and will to men, what ground is there for preaching any discoveries of his mind and will amongst them? Unless the heathens are taught that he is a God of all knowledge, and cannot be deceived himself; and that he is kind and good, true and faithful, and will not deceive his creatures, how can they be persuaded to believe what he reveals? Unless they are instructed by the light of reason, that he is an almighty God and the Lord of nature, how can any miracle give testimony to the truth of what he reveals? For it is as the sovereign Lord of nature, that he sets the seal of a miracle to his divine truths; a miracle which is above the power of nature to work.

Again, when sinners, by the light and law of nature in their own consciences are laid under conviction of sin and guilt, and they are in fear of the wrath of God, they become more ready to receive the gospel of pardon and salvation as glad tidings from heaven.

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evidently and justly excite in their hearts some hope of forgiving grace: and I think the words of my text cannot intend less than this, that "God has not left them without witness, when he gave them rain from heaven, when he satisfied their appetites with food, and filled their hearts with gladness." What was it that these benefits of their creator bore witness to? Was it not that there was goodness and mercy to be found with him, if they would return to their duty, and abandon their own ways of idolatry and vice. Surely, it can never be supposed, that the apostle here means no more than to say, that the daily instances of divine bounty in the common comforts of life, assured them, that God had some goodness in him, and blessings to bestow on their bodies; but gave them no hope of his acceptance of their souls, if they should return and repent never so sincerely. The *Ninevites* themselves, when threatened with destruction, "repented in sackcloth and ashes; for, said they, who can tell but God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Nor were they mistaken in their hope; for God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and he repented of the evil that he had threatened, *Jonah iii. 5—10.* And there is yet a more express text to this purpose, *Rom. ii. 4.* "Despiseest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" And if God leads us to repentance, by a sense of his goodness, surely he gives hope that our repentance shall not be in vain: and though, perhaps, I could not affirm it with boldness, and certainty by mere light of reason, yet I may venture to declare, upon the encouragement of these scriptures, that if there should be found any sinner in the heathen world, who shall be thus far wrought upon by a sense of the goodness of God, as to be led sincerely to repent of sin, and seek after mercy, God would find a way to make a discovery of so much of the gospel, as was necessary for him to know, rather than such a penitent sinner should be left under condemnation, or that a guilty creature should go on to eternal death in the way of repentance. *Cornelius*, the centurion, who feared God, who prayed to him daily, and wrought righteousness, according to the light of his conscience, had both an angel and an apostle sent to him that he might receive more complete instruction in the matters of his salvation. *Acts x. 1—6. and from 30—35.*

We see the great apostle *St. Paul* wisely managing his ministry to the *Atbenians*, of which we have but short hints in *Acts* xvii. 22—30. By discoursing first on natural religion, he comes at last to awaken men to repentance, and preaches *Jesus* with the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, verse 31.

And agreeably to this method of propagating the gospel among the heathen nations, we find, in fact, that where there was any thing of the knowledge of the true God, either by the light of nature, or by tradition, there the gospel was soonest received; the minds of men were better fitted and prepared for faith in *Christ*, the Son of God, by this degree of knowledge of God the Father. Those who in the book of the *Acts* are stiled the devout persons and such as feared God, they acknowledged the one living and true God, and worshipped him; and they much more readily complied with the gospel of grace, and the tidings of a Saviour, than the idolaters who had these other lessons to learn first.

Thus having shewn the various uses of this knowledge of God by the light of nature, I proceed in the third place to consider, what are the defects or imperfections of it.

1. "It is but a small portion of the things of God, which the bulk of mankind can generally be supposed to learn merely by their own reasonings." This is sufficiently evident by the history of past times and ancient nations, as well as by present observation of the heathen world. Though some of the philosophers, particularly the followers of *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, attained some considerable knowledge of the nature of God, and clearly saw his eternal power and godhead, as it is expressed *Rom. i. 20.* yet these were but very few in comparison of the rest of men: the bulk of mankind, even in the learned nations, as well as the rude and barbarous countries, did actually know but little of the true God, or of their duty towards him, or the way of obtaining future happiness.

2. The light of nature even in those things which it did teach the heathen world, is but dim and feeble, and leaves mankind under many doubts and uncertainties in matters of considerable importance. A short lesson of knowledge in the heathen schools was obtained with long toil and and difficulty; their philosophy was rather a feeling after God in the dark, than a sight of him in day light: so the apostle expresses himself, when he is talking to the *Atbenians*, who were the most learned of mankind, *Acts* xvii. 27. "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him." What feeble words are these? How doubtful a knowledge is represented by them? How wretchedly did their wise men wander astray and bewilder themselves in their dark and blundering searches after the true God? What endless contests are found amongst them, whether there was a God, and what was his nature, and what was his will, and what was their duty? Into what gross mistakes and shameful falsehoods did they plunge themselves, for want of a better guide than their own reasonings? and how generally, and almost without exception, did their philosophers comply with the idolatry of their country, and worshipped God in the form of beasts and birds, and creeping things, and changed the truth of God into a lie; or the true God into false and shameful images. *Rom. i. 23, 25.*

Sometimes appetite and passion, pride and humour spread a mist over the understanding of the heathens; sometimes the customs and traditions of their nation, the authority of their ancestors, or their philosophers, or their own vile prejudices, of various kinds, gave them a false clue, and set them a running upon a wrong scent: In other places, the tyranny of their princes, and the folly and superstitious madness

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of their priests, either led, or drove them far away from the truth. What shameful vices were authorized by some of their great men? Theft, in some places was commended as a feat of dexterity, and revenge as a point of honour; while public robberies of nations were the glory of their heroes. The murder and ravage of whole countries, were allowed for the enlargement of their dominions; and the blood of kingdoms was made an offering to the ambition of neighbour-kings. In some countries, the youth and flower of conquered nations were doomed a sacrifice to their idols; and sometimes filthy and abominable lewdness were the ceremonies of their worship. How blind was the eye of their reason, not to see this madness? And how feeble it's power, that it made no remonstrances against these lewd and bloody scenes of pretended piety?

All these instances indeed do not effectually prove, that reason could not possibly teach them better; but the experience of long ages, and of whole nations, sufficiently shew us, that their reason neither did inform them better, nor was ever likely to do it. Even the best of the philosophers could give us but a sorry system of religion compared with our bible; so that *St. Paul* roundly expresses it, *1 Cor. i. 21.* "The world by wisdom knew not God."

3. "All the knowledge of God which they arrived at, by the light of nature, had actually but little influence to reform the hearts, or the lives of mankind." I say, it had but little influence in comparison of what it might, or should have had; for this knowledge of God, which was attained by their own reason, suffered the gentile nations to walk in their own ways, as my text expresseth it, *Abs xiv. 16.* Wretched and perverse ways of idolatry and mad superstition, with regard to God; and falsehood, treachery, hatred, malice, envy, towards their fellow-creatures. See the iniquities numbered up in a large and detestable catalogue, *Rom. i. 23—32.* The histories of the heathen world confirm these dismal accounts given us by the sacred writers, and enforce the charge upon them with abundant proof. And it is no wonder at all, that this knowledge had so little influence on the generality of mankind, when so few of them ever attained it, when it was so imperfect as to the discoveries of it, and so dim and feeble in it's evidences. It came into their heads a little, but it reached not to their hearts: or if it did touch them, it was but feebly, and with very small authority, and was not enforced upon the conscience with "thus saith the Lord." A single sentence, with this preface, has vastly greater power on the hearts and consciences of men, than whole volumes of their dark uncertain reasonings.

4. This knowledge of God by the light of nature, "doth rather serve to shew men their sin and misery, than discover any effectual relief;" and in this respect, it comes infinitely short of what the revelation of the gospel of *Christ* has done. It lays them under guilt and a sentence of death in their own consciences; but it discovers not the plain and certain way of salvation and life: The hope that it gives is but feeble, and there are but few who could spell it out\*.

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\* This might be exemplified in several particulars. The light of nature of itself gives no assurance of forgiveness to the repenting sinner; for the repentance of men is no compensation to a holy God, to God as a governor of the world, for their perpetual rebellions against his laws, and the daily dishonour done to his authority. Such knowledge as the *ninevites* had, *Jonab ii. 9.* when they said, "Who can tell but the Lord may turn away from his fierce anger?" is but a feeble motive to repentance and new obedience, in comparison of such a word from God himself, as *Exod xxxiv. 6.* "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness

Thus I have finished the three general heads of my discourse. I have shewn you as fully as such a narrow space of time would permit, that there is some knowledge of God to be attained by the light of nature; that this knowledge is made subservient to some valuable purposes in the providence and government of God; but that it hath such a variety of imperfections and defects, that considered in itself, it gives but feeble influences to repentance and holiness, and very doubtful and uncomfortable ground for a sure and satisfying hope to rest upon.

I proceed to make a few reflexions on this discourse.

Reflexion I. Since the rational knowledge of God and natural religion has its proper uses, and especially to lay a foundation for our receiving the gospel of *Christ*, let it not be despised or abandoned by any of us. There may be some necessary occasions for our recourse to it in a day of temptation, when our faith of the gospel may be tried and shaken. The gospel with all its glories is built upon it as a solid foundation; and if these foundations be destroyed or despised, we may be terribly shaken, and beat off from all our hope in some evil and unhappy hour. This gives us a rational ground for our faith in God, and it is necessary in order to our faith in *Christ Jesus*, his Son. As *St. Paul* made glorious use of it in his discourse with the *athenian* infidels, so we may be called by providence to converse with atheists and unbelievers, and we should be furnished with the same doctrines and principles of argument: for so far as they are just and true, they are divine, since they proceed from God, as the God of nature, who is the author of our reasoning powers, as well as of all the revelations of grace.

Reflexion II. Since this knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature, has so many defects, let us never venture to rest in it. Dare not content yourselves with the lessons of the book of nature, which are very imperfect and obscure, in comparison of the discoveries of the book of grace. The sun in the firmament, with the moon and all the stars, can never give us that light to see God, which is derived from the sun of righteousness.

What

goodness and truth,—forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.” *Prov. xxviii. 13.* “He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy.”

The light of nature discovers no effectual atonement for sin, nor relief to a guilty conscience, by all the costly sacrifices and blood of animals; but the gospel points us to the “lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world,” and assures us that “if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all unrighteousness, *John i. 29.* and *1 John i. 7, 9.*”

The light of nature points us to no effectual mediator, or advocate in heaven; but the gospel leads us to Jesus, the righteous, as our advocate with the Father, and by pardoning grace, encourages us to love and obey a reconciled God, *1 John ii. 1, 2.*

The light of nature, and our daily experience, discover to us our weakness to subdue sin within us, to restrain our unruly appetites, to mortify our corrupt affections, to resist the daily temptations that surround us; but it points us not to the fountain of strength, even the promised aids of the holy Spirit: these are the peculiar glories and blessings of the gospel of *Christ*, which the light of nature could never reveal.

The light of nature and continual observation shew us, that we must die, but give us no clear and certain evidence of happiness after death, for such sinful creatures as we are, even in the midst of our repentances: for since our daily sins and offences are so numerous, and the best of our righteousnesses and duties are so very defective, the man of virtue and penitence might hope indeed to escape punishment; but he might well doubt of any future happiness, notwithstanding all the comfort the light of nature could give him, or all the discoveries it could make. But the gospel sets these future glories in a divine and certain light before every man, who reads or hears it. It encourages us to repentance of sin, to diligence, patience, and perseverance, in the ways of faith and holiness, by the joys unspeakable, which are set before us, and builds our hope of eternal life on the well-attested promises of a God, who cannot lie, and the Son of God who has power given him to perform them all.

What a deplorable thing is it, that multitudes in our nation, where the glory of the blessed gospel shines with such brightness, should be running back to the glimmering light of nature, and satisfy themselves with heathenism and philosophy! That they should chuse to walk in twilight as the happiest and safest way, and refuse to be conducted by the blaze of noon, as though it were a deceitful and foolish light! What an affront against the authority and mercy of the God of heaven to renounce his brightest blessings! "The God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them who believe not;" 2. Cor. iv. 4. and we have reason to fear, he is leading them blindfold to eternal darkness.

Reflexion. III. Since the nations, which have only the light of nature, are forced to feel out their way to God through such dusky glimmerings, let us bless the Lord with all our souls, that we are born in *Great-Britain*, a land of clear light, where the gospel shines in it's beauty and power, and surrounded with various evidences; a land where the book of grace lies open before us, as well as the book of nature, to teach us the knowledge of God and his salvation. Let us say within ourselves, and why was not I born a poor ignorant *african*, a wild *indian*, ignorant of God, and averse to seek after him, and without any person near me to give me one beam of light, and point out my way to happiness? Why was not I left merely to the dumb and silent lectures of the heavens, and the earth and sea, or the instruction of the trees, and plants and beasts of the earth, to teach me the knowledge of him that made me? Who am I, that I should be brought into being in the midst of sun-beams, and not in a region of thick darkness under the shadow of death? Everlasting glory be given to distinguishing grace.

O how should we value the bible as our highest treasure, which gives us such blessed discoveries of God, and his wisdom and power, and his mercy in *Christ*; which infinitely exceeds all the doubtful twilight of nature, and our own powers of reasoning. O may the blessed bible lie next our heart, and be the companion of our bosoms! It is this lays a sure foundation for our recovery from all our guilt, and ruin and wretchedness. You that have any concern for your eternal interests, love the bible, walk by the rules of it, and live upon it's promised grace; and I dare pronounce, in the name of God and his Son, that you shall be for ever happy.

Reflexion IV. Pity and pray for the heathen world, the dark corners of the earth, the benighted nations, where the sun of righteousness never rose, and where they can but feel after God through the mists of ignorance and error. Let us remember those antient times when our forefathers in this nation were led away into the same errors and gross idolatries, and exercise our compassion toward those who are still left under the same darkness. Now and then, O christians, send a pathetic sigh over the nations, lift up one compassionate groan to heaven for them, and say, "when shall the day come, O Lord, that the heathens shall become thy worshippers, and *Affyria* and *Ethiopia* thy people? When wilt thou reveal thyself to the poor *african* idolaters, and the savage tribes of *America*, that know not God? When shall the ends of the earth learn to know thee, and rejoice in *Jesus* thy Son the Saviour? When shall all nations, people and languages, begin their songs of salvation to him that sits upon the throne, and to the lamb, who has redeemed us with his own blood?" To him be dominion and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## S E R M O N II.

God's election of a people for himself among men,  
and giving them to his Son in the covenant of  
redemption.

EPHES. I. 3, 4, 5.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

**I**F we enquire who are the persons thus "blessed with all spiritual blessings, chosen to be holy, and predestinated to become the children of God," the little word "us" points plainly to the apostle *Paul* himself, who wrote this epistle, who was a *jew*, and the converted *ephefians*, to whom he wrote, who were gentiles. These were the persons thus favoured of God. It does not seem to me to be the design of this text, to tell us that God chose part of the *ephefians*, as well as other gentiles to be an outward visible church, with mere visible privileges, as the nation of the *jews* were of old, who were a type and figure of the church invisible; but that he chose some *jews* and some gentiles to be parts of his invisible church, for they are said to be blessed with spiritual blessings, with the privilege of adoption, and the real work of holiness and divine love in their hearts. All the following parts of this and the next chapter seem plainly to declare this sense.

If we ask how, or by what medium this grace was exercised, we are informed, it was all in and through *Jesus* the Son of God; they are blessed in *Jesus Christ*, they are chosen in him, and through him they are adopted, or made children and heirs. Without entering nicely into all the meanings of these words, chosen in him, I shall content myself at present in general to say, that when they were first chosen to be made holy and heirs of heaven, they were committed to the care of *Christ*, to have all this grace fulfilled in them, and these blessings conveyed to them. Having said thus much with relation to the text, I shall immediately apply myself to the two great branches of the subject appointed me, and which are both expressed in the words:

I. That God, before he made the world, chose some persons of his own free grace to become his children, or to be made holy and happy.

II. That



II. That God from the beginning appointed his Son *Jesus Christ* to be the medium of exercising all this grace, and gave his chosen people to the care of his Son, to make them partakers of these blessings.

Let us consider each of these heads more at large.

First, God chose certain persons of his own free grace, before the foundation of the world, to be made holy and happy. This I shall endeavour to prove briefly in four plain propositions.

Proposition I. "There is a manifest difference between the children of men in this world." Some of them are holy and religious, they fear God and worship him, they appear to be the children of God, for they imitate his holiness, they love and obey him, they practise virtue and goodness in this life, and are aspiring to the blessedness of heaven; while the rest go on to indulge their vicious appetites and passions, to pursue earthly things as their chief good, and are walking evidently in the road of sin to misery and destruction. I need not cite scriptures to prove this point: our daily observation abundantly confirms it.

Proposition II. This difference between men, or this distinction of the righteous from the wicked is not ascribed in scripture, originally and supremely, "to the will and power of man, as the cause of it, but to the will and power of God, and to his Spirit working in them." I do not deny that the natural powers of man, his understanding and his will concur to make this difference, but it is under the original influence and operation of God. *1 Cor.* iv. 7. "Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou hast not received?" When *St. Paul* had described the gentiles as dead in trespasses and sins, *Eph.* ii. 1. he ranks himself in the third verse among the children of wrath by nature, and as walking in the lust of the flesh and the mind, and confesses himself also to have been dead in sin, verse 4. but we are quickened, saith he, to a life of holiness, by God who is rich in mercy, verses 4, 5. In themselves they were all without strength, *Rom.* v. 6. but they are raised to a spiritual life, by the exceeding greatness of that power which raised *Christ Jesus* from the dead, *Eph.* i. 19, 20. They were in themselves carnal and sensual, nor could they make themselves spiritual and heavenly; and therefore they must be "born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. They must be born of the Spirit, *John* i. 13. and chapter iii. 5, 6. that is, they must have a mighty change pass upon their natures by the operation of the blessed Spirit. In *Eph.* ii. 8, 9. "neither faith nor good works are originally of ourselves; faith is the gift of God, and we are his workmanship created in *Christ Jesus* unto good works." Thus you see this blessed work of conversion, of changing the heart of man, is described in such language as excludes man himself from being its original author: it is regeneration or a new birth, it is a resurrection from the dead, it is a new creation; all proper expressions to shew that the work is divine, and must have God for the author of it.

Proposition III. "The distinction that is made by this work of God in the heart of men, is attributed in scripture, not to any merit in man, which God foresaw, but to the free grace of God toward his people, and his special choice or election of them, to be partakers of these blessings." So the words of my text: We are chosen to be made holy, according to the good pleasure of his will. If some among the *jews*, who were God's chosen visible church did believe in *Christ*, and receive this salvation, they were chosen of God, from among the rest of that nation, to become part of his invisible church by mere grace. When the greatest part of *Israel* rejected the *Messiah*, yet there was a remnant of *jews*, according to the election of grace, who became

became christians; and "if it is of grace, then no more of works, otherwise grace would be no more grace," *Rom.* xi. 5, 6. Works and merit are inconsistent with an election of grace. If some of the *ephesian* gentiles received the gospel, they also were chosen from among the rest that lie dead in sins, and were quickened and saved by the grace of that God, who is rich in mercy according to the great love wherewith he loved them, *Eph.* ii. 4, 5, 7, 8. And the apostle ascribes his own salvation, as well as that of other sinners, *Tit.* iii. 5. "not to works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." This is the fountain of all blessings, whether conferred on *jew*, or gentile, *Rom.* ix. 15, 16. "God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion." Time would fail me to shew how full this chapter of *St. Paul* is of the distinctions, which are made between men by divine grace, even before they had done good or evil, whether it be for a temporal or eternal inheritance, and the one as a type of the other. *St. John* concurs in the same doctrine. If we love God, the first source of it was his love towards us. *1 John* iv. 10, 19. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us; and if we love him, it is because he loved us first."

Proposition IV. "This choice of persons to sanctification and salvation by the grace of God is represented in scripture, as before the foundation of the world, or from eternity. So my text expressly declares; and indeed it must be so in the nature of things, for whatsoever the power or the mercy of God doth in time, he decreed to do it from eternity. He has no new designs. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. *Acts* xv. 18. So *2 Thess.* ii. 13. God hath from the beginning chosen, or taken, you from amongst the other gentiles, unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," and to this he called you by our gospel. There was a book of life written before the foundation of the world, *Rev.* xiii. 18. "All that dwell upon the earth, that is, all this part of the world to which the prophecy refers, shall worship the beast, or follow after *Antichrist*, except those whose names are written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb that was slain;" for that I take to be a much more proper translation of the original. In this book of life were written the names of those persons who should not yield to antichristian idolatry, and should be preserved from the general corruption that came upon the christian world.

Upon the whole it appears from the language of scripture, that those who are sanctified and saved by divine grace, were before chosen of God, to be made holy and happy.

I proceed now to the second general head of my discourse, viz. That God from the beginning appointed his Son *Jesus Christ* to be the medium of exercising all this grace, and gave his chosen people to the care of his Son, to make them partakers of this salvation. This seems to be the meaning of my text.

Are we blessed with all spiritual blessings? It is as the members of one body, in *Jesus Christ*, as our common head. Are we chosen? It is still in *Christ* the Son of God. "In all things he must have the pre-eminence: He is the head of the body, the church." *Colos.* i. 18. He was first chosen by the Father to be the glorious head of a holy and happy number of mankind, and we are chosen in him that we might become his holy and happy members. He is called the elect of God, in whom his soul delighteth, *Isai.* xlii. 1. The mighty one on whom God has laid our help, who was exalted and chosen out of the people, *Psal.* lxxxix. 19. You may observe he is represented here to be chosen, as a man from among the people

people of *Israel* to be their Lord and Saviour; but that he might be equal to this work, and mighty to save, he was "one with God, all the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him bodily," *Col.* ii. 9. He is "the word who was with God, and who was God," *John* i. 1. And in due time "this word was made flesh and dwelt among us. verse 14. Are we chosen that we might be saved? It is in and through *Christ*, who was chosen to be our Saviour.

Are we predestinated to the adoption of children? It is still in *Christ*, who is the original Son, the "brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person, and who was appointed to be heir of all things." *Heb.* i. 2, 3. And we are appointed to be conformable to his image, to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with *Christ*, and possessors of the inheritance. *Rom.* viii. 17, 29.

Is there a book of life written? It is in the lamb's book of life: The names of all the chosen sons and daughters of God were written down in this book, but his name stands first there in divine characters, as the first chosen, and the head of all the rest; for before the foundation of the world, God gave the care of all these persons to his best beloved son.

Hence it is you find our Saviour so often speaking of those who were given him by the Father, out of this world, *John* xvii. 2. "Thou hast given thy Son power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;" which the twentieth verse of this chapter teaches us to apply to all who should believe on him, through the word of the apostles, as well as to the apostles themselves. And in verse 24. "All that the Father hath given me, must be with me where I am." And *John* vi. 37. "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, that they may have life." Hence also arise those glorious expressions of *St. Paul*, 2 *Tim.* i. 9. "God hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in *Christ Jesus*, before the world began." *Tit.* i. 1, 2. *St. Paul* speaking of the faith of God's elect, he adds, "in hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie, hath promised before the world began." Here is grace given to men, before the beginning of the world; but it is given more immediately to *Christ* their head, in trust for them: Here is a promise of eternal life made before the creation; but it was made to *Christ*, for them, before they had a being. Examples of this kind are common among men, when one person is made trustee of an estate for many children, or heirs that are yet unborn, and he stands engaged to make them possessors of it in successive seasons.

I have put all these texts together, that we may observe the whole current of scripture running this way, and leading our thoughts to this great doctrine, viz. that as God hath chosen his people before the foundation of the world to holiness and salvation, so he has given them for this purpose into the hands of his Son. Nor did the Son of God refuse this glorious trust, but cheerfully undertook the work: So he is represented in the old testament, *Psal.* xl. 7. "Lo, I come, in the volume; or rather the beginning of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God." Whether this book be the secret book of life, or the public book of scripture, I will not here determine; both are true. And so it is written also, in the history of the life of *Christ*; for he speaks often with sacred pleasure, that he came to do his Father's will, and to take care of those whom the Father had given him, to keep them from perishing, and to raise them up at the last day.

Now this is what our divines generally call the covenant of redemption, even these sacred transactions between God the Father, and his Son *Jesus Christ*, before

fore the foundation of the world; and I think the scripture calls it the covenant, *Pfal.* lxxxix. 28. When the psalmist has represented *Christ*, under the character of *David*, as chosen of God from among the people, to lay our help upon him, he adds, "my covenant shall stand fast with him, saith the Lord, his seed will I make to endure for ever; and though they may sometimes fall into sin, yet I will not suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto *David*," that is, I will fulfil the promises that I have made to my Son, the true *David*, the king of *Israel*, or the head of my chosen people; for I have confirmed this covenant with him, by divine solemnities. And I am sure, the five first verses of the seventeenth of *John*, wherein our Saviour pleads with his Father, carry in them the plain language of a covenant, as every reader may observe.

The only thing which remains on this head, is briefly to run over the articles of this covenant, or the mutual engagements between God the Father, and his Son *Jesus Christ*.

First then, let us consider what it was *Christ* undertook, as the chosen Saviour of his people. The "only begotten Son of God, who lay in the bosom of his Father, and had glory with him before the world was," *John* i. 18. and xvii. 5. agreed to "come forth from the Father, and to come into this world, and to be emptied of that glory for a season," *John* xvi. 28. *Phil.* ii. 7. "to take flesh and blood upon him," *Heb.* ii. 14. "to be born of a woman," *Gal.* iv. 4. and to be "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," *Rom.* viii. 3. and in the fashion of a man, that he might be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and become a proper head for such members as we are, *Eph.* v. 30. and that he might be our brother, and kinsman, who should have a right to redeem our lost inheritance. "He who was in the form of God, consented to take upon him the form of a servant," *Phil.* ii. 7. and pass through a life of various labour, reproach, and suffering, as well as performed the duties of the moral and ceremonial law, not only that he might become a pattern to us, of patience and universal holiness, but that he might do all the will of God, and fulfil the righteousness of that law which mankind had broken. *Psal.* xl. 7, 8. He undertook also to become a preacher of righteousness and of grace, and to explain the law of God, and proclaim the gospel of salvation among men, *Psal.* xl. 9. *Isai.* lxi. 1.

And besides all this, he consented to take upon him the sins of men, that is, by way of imputation, as a sacrifice, to bear our sins in his body, on the cursed tree, to be made a sin-offering for us, and to expose himself to painful sufferings, and a bloody death on that account, that he might make a proper atonement for sin, *2 Cor.* v. 21. *1 Pet.* ii. 24. *Heb.* x. 5-12. *Rom.* iii. 25. "The good shepherd came to lay down his life for his sheep." *John* x. 15. And in *John* xiv. 16. when he was about to leave this world, he promised to intercede or pray for them. And when the Father should exalt him to the kingdom, and put all power into his hand, he engaged to call them by his word, to bestow on them repentance, and forgiveness, to send down the sanctifying Spirit upon them, and in general to rescue them from every evil; to bear them through all the difficulties and dangers of life, and to convey them safe to the possession of the appointed inheritance. It would not be possible, in this short discourse, to cite at large all the scriptures that reveal and support these truths. Whatsoever our blessed Saviour performed in the execution of his mediatorial office, we may justly suppose it was an article and agreement in that original covenant made betwixt him and his Father: And in many of  
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the instances which I have mentioned, the scripture expressly teaches us, that he performed them as the appointment of his Father.

In the next place, let us take a brief survey of the articles of this covenant on God the Father's side. Whatsoever powers, or honours, or employments he bestowed on his Son, we have reason to suppose, it was in pursuance of this original covenant of grace and salvation.

First then, we may justly conclude, that God engaged to employ him in the work of creation, as a foundation of his future kingdom among men; by him God made angels, and they shall be his ministering spirits, for the men who shall be heirs of his salvation; by him God created mankind, and he shall be Lord of them all; by him the blessed God made his own people, and he shall save them. He spread abroad the heavens, and he laid the foundations of this earth; even all the provinces of his future vast dominion, with all their inhabitants, are of his own making; for "without him was nothing made that was made." *John* i. 3. and *Colos.* i. 14, 15.

Again, we may suppose it was agreed by the Father, that he should be the king of *Israel*, which was the visible church of God, as a type of his kingdom, and the government of his invisible church; that he should fix his dwelling in a cloud of glory, "in his holy hill of *Sion*," *Psal.* ii. 6, 7. and should govern the *jewish* nation by judges, or priests, or kings, as his deputies, till he himself should appear in the flesh.

God the Father undertook also to furnish him with every thing necessary for his appearance and his ministry here upon earth, to prepare a body for him, *Heb.* x. 5. to give him the Spirit without measure, *John* iii. 34. *Isa.* xi. 2. to bear him up through all his sufferings, to accept his sacrifice and atonement for sin, to raise him up from the dead, to exalt him not only to the former glory which he had with him, before the world was, which he asks for as a matter of agreement, *John* xvii. 4, 5. but to honour him at his right hand with superior powers. He gave him the assurance of a people to obey him, or a seed to serve him; he promised the gentile nations for his inheritance, and to make him the Lord of all things in heaven and earth, that he might govern all for the good of his church. He gave him also the "promise of the holy Spirit," *Luke* xxiv. 49. that he might send him down in a variety of gifts and graces, upon his apostles at first, to begin his gospel-church on earth, and upon all his chosen people for their sanctification through all ages, to the end of the world. He appointed him of old to be the judge of men and angels; and all this authority and glory was promised him in that early covenant, partly as a proper recompence for his sufferings, and partly as a means to enable him to fulfil all the articles of his engagement to God, his Father. "Father, said he, glorify thy Son, for he hath finished the work thou gavest him to do on earth; and thou hast given him, that is, promised to give him, power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." *John* xvii. 1—4.

These things are recorded in a variety of scriptures, which it would be too large at present to rehearse. A glorious covenant! with sacred and divine engagements, which are fulfilled on both sides, with perfect honour and faithfulness! What an effectual security is derived hence, for the salvation of all that believe in Christ! What an assurance is hereby given, that none of his chosen ones shall perish! What matter of delightful meditation, of holy wonder, and devout thankfulness, may the saints of God derive from this blessed covenant, which reaches beyond the limits of this world and time, and extends from one eternity to another! In condescension to

our understandings, the holy prophets compare the firmness of this covenant to the ordinances of heaven, to the foundations of the earth, to the certain periods of the moon, and the established course of nature: But by the light of the new testament, we may venture boldly to rise higher, and say, that when these heavens shall be folded up as a curtain, when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon be deprived of her light, when the foundations of the earth shall totter, and all things in it be burned up, this covenant shall remain in it's full force, shall bring everlasting honours to God the Father, and his Son *Jesus*, and for ever establish all the children of God in holiness and joy.

There are yet four things that remain to be done, with relation to this great doctrine of the election of sinners in Christ to be made holy and happy. There are some difficulties attend the belief of it, which ought to be relieved. There are some proper uses to which this doctrine should be applied. There are some practical abuses of it, against which we must set a guard; and there are some remarks or inferences which may be formed upon the whole discourse.

First, As for the difficulties which attend it, and the many cavils and objections which are raised against it, I shall not interrupt this half-hour with controversy, so far as to take notice of any of them in the body of my discourse\*.

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\* There is one objection of the greatest importance and weight, and therefore I would say something to relieve it in the margin.

Some persons have argued thus; If God has chosen a certain number to be made holy and happy by *Jesus Christ*, the mediator, while others are left out of this choice, and go on in sin to their final destruction, will they not justly complain of God, at the last day, as having laid a bar against their salvation, by not choosing them? Will they not say, there was no mediator to undertake their cause, no pardon, no salvation provided for them; and therefore the offers of pardon and salvation, which are made to them in common with other sinners in the gospel, are mere delusive words, and have no truth in them? But far be this imputation from the God of grace and truth!

Answer I. The offers of salvation by a mediator, are made in general terms to all sinners where-soever the gospel is preached, and every one that applies himself to *Christ* in the appointed way, and is sincerely willing to receive this salvation, shall have it bestowed upon him. John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but should have everlasting life." So far was our blessed Lord appointed the common mediator of mankind, that none shall be able to complain in the day of judgment, that they perish for want of a mediator. "This is the will of God who sent him," or the grand commission with which he came into the world, not only that he should take care of those whom the Father had given him, but it runs in general, that he should receive all that come to him, and "he will by no means cast them out." See *John* vii. 37—40. None shall complain, that their sins are unpardoned for want of a sufficiency in the merit or atonement of *Christ*. And though it is confessed, that his blood and life were paid down as a price for the certain redemption and salvation of all that the Father had given him, yet the blood of him who was "God manifest in the flesh," had a sufficient value in it to procure pardon, heaven and happiness, for a whole world of sinful men: And the reason why unbelievers and impenitent sinners are condemned is, because they did not apply themselves sincerely to this mediator, they did not chuse to lay hold of this salvation, which consists in a likeness to God, as well as in his favour, in holiness as well as happiness.

Answer II. Nor shall any be able to say at that day, that they missed of the salvation of *Christ*, for want of sufficient natural powers to lay hold of it, and receive it. Sinners who hear the gospel have a natural understanding to take in the meaning of the word preached; they have also a will to accept or refuse the proposals of grace, to receive or reject this all-sufficient Saviour: But there is an aversion in them to attend to and obey the gospel, through the corruption of their nature by original sin; their minds will not learn divine things, because they shut their eyes; their wills refuse to receive the grace of the gospel, they shut it out of their hearts; they have a delight in sin, a dislike of *Christ*, and of his salvation, which consists in holiness and the love of God; they have a rooted obstinacy of will against the methods of divine mercy. "This is their condemnation, *John* iii. 19. that light came into the world, and they loved darkness rather than light;" and therefore they must die in their sins, because "they would not come unto *Christ*, that they might have life." *John* v. 40.

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I proceed therefore immediately to the second thing I proposed, which was to shew what are the proper uses of this doctrine of God's election of sinners to salvation, and giving them into the hands of his Son. This great truth is not designed to be a matter of mere speculation, and much less to be tossed and bandied about in noisy quarrels and controversies among the disciples of *Christ*, but it hath it's sacred and glorious uses; among which are such as these:

Use I. Since we are chosen to be holy, as well as happy, we may search and find out our election by our sanctification, and make it sure and evident. So the apostle *Peter* advises, 2 *Peter* i. 10. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," that is, to make your election sure by your calling, by your obedience to the heavenly call.

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I confess this aversion, this obstinacy of mind, and will against the gospel, may be called natural, or rather native, as it comes to us by nature in it's present corrupted state; and in scripture it is sometimes represented as impotence or inability to repent, to return to God, to receive *Christ*, and his grace. *John* vi. 65. "No man can come to me, except it were given him of my Father." And it is termed blindness of mind and hardness of heart, and a death in sin; not that there is really such a natural incapacity in their mind and will to receive this grace, as there is in a blind or dead carcass; but it is a moral impotency, as it is well expressed by our divines, because the aversion is so strong and so rooted in their hearts, that they will never renounce sin, and receive the salvation of *Christ*, without the powerful influences of divine grace.

And that it is a moral impotence and not properly natural, appears by the moral remedies applied to cure it, viz. commands, promises, threatenings, &c. which it would be useless and ridiculous to apply to natural impotence, that is, to make the blind see, or the dead arise.

Both the first and second answer to this objection, may be represented by a very fair similitude. Suppose God has decreed, that he will make the rising sun-beams shine so effectually on a thousand certain persons, that they shall be roused thereby to their morning work, and enjoy the pleasure of it: May we not say, the sun has beams sufficient to enlighten the whole nation, and they have all a natural power to behold and enjoy this light; though perhaps only that thousand will see the sun rising, because their sloth confines the rest to their beds, they have an aversion to the early business of the morning; and this lazy humour hangs so heavy upon them, that they cry, they cannot rise. Thus though the sun of righteousness has light and grace enough in him to save all mankind, yet their own sloth and obstinacy, and evil inclinations, exclude them from this salvation. Both these events arise without a just complaint against the God of nature, who called up the morning-sun to enlighten the nations, or against the God of grace, who sent forth the sun of righteousness, to bless the dark and sinful world.

Answer III. No condemned sinner shall have reason to say, that there was any bar or hinderance laid in the way of his salvation, by this decree of God, or by his chusing some sinners, and giving them to *Christ*, for though he provided effectual grace for those whom he chose to certain salvation, yet he only left others to their own natural state, as corrupted by the fall of *Adam*; he left them to the wilful blindness of their own minds, and the wilful hardness of their own hearts. While this original counsel of God, this decree of election provides and secures grace and glory to some, it does not in the least hinder others from receiving and obeying the gospel.

Answer IV. None shall be condemned at last, because they were not chosen in *Christ*, but because they were impenitent sinners, who in some measure have resisted the light of their own consciences, under whatsoever dispensation they have lived, whether under the law of nature, the law of *Moses*, or the gospel of *Christ*. These consciences of their's shall lay them under a dreadful and unanswerable conviction of their own guilt, shall give sentence against them, and confirm the condemning sentence of *Jesus*, the judge of all.

There are other difficulties which are started against this doctrine, which might perhaps be as easily answered, if time would allow. But if all our reasoning powers should fail us in the vindication of this sovereignty of God, in chusing particular persons to be the objects of any of his favours, whether earthly or heavenly; yet *St. Paul* teaches us to answer, *Rom.* ix. 11—24. "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? God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and that not among the *jeews* only, but also among the gentiles. Nor is there any unrighteousness with God, in any of these transactions; and the purpose of God according to election must stand." And we may remark by the way, that such a sort of answer as this makes it pretty evident, that our doctrine is the same with that of *St. Paul*: for if persons were chosen of God on the account of foreseen good works, there would have been no room for such an objection, and such an answer.

And St. Paul infers, that the *Thessalonians* were "elect of God, because the gospel came to them not in word only, but in power, and they became followers of him, and of *Christ*." 1 *Thess.* i. 4—6. Have you chosen God for your portion and happiness, as he reveals himself by *Christ Jesus* in the gospel? Then his word will assure you God has chosen you in *Christ*. Have you given up your souls to the hands of *Jesus*, the Saviour, without reserve, that you may be made holy and happy? Then you may infer with assurance, that God has given you also into the hands of *Christ* for this blessed purpose. Have you the characters of the children of God upon you, and are you made like to his first beloved Son? You may assure yourselves then, that you were predestinated to the adoption of children by *Jesus Christ*. O divine science! O blessed skill of searching into the secret of the decrees of God, and of finding that our names are written in the book of life!

Use II. Let those who by a sincere search have found the blessed marks and evidences of their election in *Christ Jesus* take the comfort of it, rejoice in it, live upon it, and walk worthy of so divine a privilege. See that you keep your evidences of grace ever clear and bright by holy watchfulness, that ye may have a strong defence in every hour of temptation. "Shall I who am chosen out of the world that I may be holy, shall I mingle myself with sinful men, and indulge iniquity? Shall I who am adopted into God's family, live like one of the children of *Satan*?" This is a sweet refuge also for us to have recourse to in every outward distress. "Shall I faint and be overwhelmed under a present sorrow, who have the holy evidences of election upon me, who am chosen and prepared of God for everlasting happiness?" Let us walk in this daily practice, in this joy of the holy Spirit, and wait for a rich and abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of our Lord and Saviour.

The third thing I proposed to mention was, the abuses of this awful doctrine. There is nothing so true, so sacred and so divine, but it may be abused through the wickedness, or the weakness of the hearts of men, and the temptations of the evil-one.

Abuse I. One abuse of this doctrine is, when we pervert it to nourish presumption, and to indulge our sloth and negligence, when we sit with folded hands like the sluggard in the neglect of duty, or allow ourselves in a course of sin, upon this pretence, "That if I am elected I shall be called, and sanctified, and saved; the grace of God will take hold of me some time or other, and bring me to faith, and holiness, and eternal life.

Answer I. Do you dare venture to argue thus foolishly in the common affairs of this life, or to act under the influence of such arguments? You believe that God has determined the time of your continuance in this world, and do you live idle, and refuse to procure food, or to partake of it, on this pretence, that God will prolong your life to his appointed hour, and that he will provide food for you, and make you eat and drink, if he design you shall live? No: You apply yourselves with diligence to obtain your daily bread, and to partake of it; you take care to make use of the appointed means to preserve natural life, notwithstanding God's decree: and why do you not practise the same with regard to your salvation, and seek after faith and holiness as the appointed means? But it is a sign you value eternal life at a very low rate, if you will venture the loss of it upon such a weak pretence, as you dare not trust to in the things of this life. That man that goes down to the  
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grave, or goes down to hell upon these principles, perishes like a fool, and deserves to perish.

Answer II. Electing grace, as it works in calling and converting us to faith and holiness, generally operates in so gentle, so imperceptible a manner, and so suitably to our natural faculties, by awakening them to seek after heaven, that we can hardly distinguish it from the operation of our own spirits, but by the blessed effects of it; and if we will never stir up ourselves and our natural powers to seek after the salvation of *Christ*, it is a dangerous sign, that we are not elected. For though divine grace be really the first agent in our salvation, yet it never doth violence to our natural powers, nor will it ever save us without our own activity and diligence in duty.

Abuse II. Another abuse of this doctrine is, when persons indulge despairing thoughts under this pretence: "If I am never so watchful, never so diligent, I cannot be saved, unless I am elected; and therefore it is in vain for me to seek after salvation: for the scripture tells me, *Rom. ix. 16.* "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Answer. But remember also, O tempted and despairing soul! that there was never any one who had a will to obey the gospel, and who did run the christian race, but that he obtained the blessed prize of salvation. It is granted indeed, that the holy Spirit is the first, but secret, agent in this important affair: Pray earnestly then for the holy Spirit, and set thyself in a course of duty, according to the appointment of *Christ* in his gospel, and thou hast many promises to support thy hope, that such prayers shall be answered. *Luke xi. 13.* "Your heavenly Father will give his holy Spirit to them who ask him." Thy first business is not to enquire after thy election, which is a secret thing, but hearken to the public call of the gospel, repent of every sin, and receive the grace that is there offered; and when thou art become a lover of God, and a believer in *Christ*, thou mayest then trace up these graces to their original spring, even to thy election in *Christ Jesus*, before the foundation of the world.

The last thing I proposed is, to make some few remarks on this subject.

Remark I. I infer, that there are some doctrines wherein the reason of man finds many difficulties, and which the folly of man would abuse to unhappy purposes, which yet are plain and express truths asserted in the word of God. Among these, we place the great doctrine of the election of sinners in *Christ* to be made holy and happy. We intreat our brethren who differ from us in this point, to be so candid as to suppose, that we feel the difficulties as well as they, and we see the awful consequences which seem to affright them from receiving it; we have had our doubts about it, and found our reasoning powers a little perplexed and unwilling to receive it, lest God should be represented as partial in his favours, and lest man should cavil against his proceedings: But we feel ourselves overpowered with evidence and conviction, when we see the doctrine so plainly and frequently asserted in scripture, that we cannot resist the light and force of it: The express words of God demand our submission and constrain our belief, and we are persuaded our brethren would believe it too, if they saw it in the same light.

We are sensible also of the abuses of this doctrine, and the sinful purposes to which it is sometimes perverted; yet since it is a truth God has seen fit to reveal, in several parts of his word, and since it has some valuable purposes and uses in the christian life, we cannot but think it proper sometimes to mention it on special occasions, as part of the counsel of God toward our salvation.

Remark II.

Remark II. However this doctrine may be opposed by the reasonings of men, and even ridiculed by a bold jest, yet if it then appear to be a divine truth, as the scriptures now seem to teach us, the blessed God will not be ashamed of it in the last great day; then shall he unfold all the scheme of his original counsels, and spread abroad his transactions toward mankind, before the face of all his intelligent creatures. *Rev. xx. 12.* "When the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened," that is, the book of divine laws, and the several dispensations of grace, as well as the book of divine records, wherein the lives and actions of men were written down, there shall also another book be opened, even the book of life: And as those former books compared together, viz. the records of the behaviour of men, whether good or evil, compared with the laws and dispensations of God, shall shew the equity of the great judge in his rewards and punishments; so the lamb's book of life, wherein the names of his people were written down as elected in *Christ*, before the world began, shall discover the blessed correspondence between the final sentence of happiness pronounced on holy believers, and the original grace of God which chose them in *Christ Jesus* unto faith and holiness, and secured this happiness for them. A glorious harmony of divine wisdom, grace, and providence!

I cannot think, that any of the cavils of wit against this doctrine will stand before the light of the great tribunal. Banter and ridicule of electing love, and of the names written in the book of life, however they may be applauded in a degenerate age, will meet with no applause before that tremendous appearance. Every mouth shall be stopped, the righteousness of God shall be cleared from every imputation, the grace of God shall be glorified in all his chosen ones in that day, and *Christ* shall be admired in all his saints. But this leads me to the third remark.

Remark III. The whole chain and current of our salvation, from the beginning to the end, arises and proceeds all the way from the free grace of God, through the mediation of his Son *Jesus Christ*. God and his Son must have the glory, and pride must be hid from man for ever. Are we chosen, are we called, are we justified and sanctified, and at last advanced to heaven? It is all by the mercy of the Father, by the mediation of the Son, by the power and the grace of God, and his Spirit, exerting themselves in all the stages of our salvation, before time began, and when time shall be no more. Grace and *Christ* run through all, and reign and triumph through the whole scheme of our happiness, from the very foundation of it: And when the top-stone of this blessed building shall be laid in heaven, the inhabitants of that world shall join all their voices, and shout together, to the honour of *Christ* and grace. And that I may conclude this awful subject with the language of sincere charity, I am persuaded there will be found many holy souls there, whose voices shall join in this triumph, and this song of glory to electing love, who had not learned this doctrine till they came to heaven, nor knew the eternal spring of their own salvation, till they were made possessors of the blessing. Amen.

## S E R M O N III.

The excellency and advantages of the christian dispensation, with the invitations and promises of the gospel.

H E B. VIII. 6.

*He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*

**T**HIS better covenant, which the apostle here commends, is the christian religion, or the dispensation of the gospel under *Jesus Christ*, the *Messiah*, and the mediator. Now, in order to shew the superior excellency of the christian dispensation, it is necessary to take a brief review of all those former dispensations of grace, which are more largely explained in the foregoing sermon.\*

The first is that of *Adam*. No sooner was man fallen from his state of innocency, and had lost all reasonable hopes of happiness, according to that constitution and covenant in paradise which our divines have generally called the covenant of works, but the goodness of God was manifested in revealing to *Adam* the covenant or constitution of grace, as it was contained in this obscure promise, the "seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent;" *Gen. iii. 15.* which, in the language of the new testament, signifies that the Saviour, in the fulness of time, should be born of a woman, and should destroy this work of the devil. *Gal. iv. 5.* *1 John iii. 8.* This first promise, doubtless was more largely explained to our first parents, which encouraged sinful mankind, by the hopes of a Saviour, and of acceptance with God, to repent of their transgressions, and return to their maker in a way of new obedience. This is that gospel which is the same in all ages, and which runs through all the bible; viz. that there is forgiveness for sinful men who return to God, and this is to be manifested through a Saviour. But in the several discoveries of this gospel to men, there were several additional duties or promises, or both, which distinguish them into what we call different dispensations.)

This constitution or covenant of grace, in it's dispensation to *Adam*, had the appointment of sacrifices superadded, which were figures of *Christ*, the true sacrifice of atonement. This covenant was also confirmed to *Noah* and his sons after the flood, with some further precepts about the distinctions of meats, and the punishment of murder, and the promise that the earth should be no more destroyed by water, of which the rain-bow was an appointed seal: This is that dispensation by which *Job* and *Melchisedec* also were saved, with many others in that early age of the world.

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\* See Sermons at *Berry-Street*, sermon xii. "the various dispensations of the gospel &c."

The same covenant was continued to *Abraham*, with some clearer promises of the *Messiah*, or Saviour. "The gospel was preached to *Abraham*," *Gal.* iii. 8. together with the addition of a promised inheritance in the land of *Canaan*, as a type of heaven, and the peculiar precept of circumcision, which was a figure of the mortification of sin. This is called the dispensation of *Abraham*.

The same gracious covenant or gospel was yet farther revealed to *Moses*, and by him to the nation of *Israel*, in the wilderness of *Sinai*. This was called the levitical or mosaical or the jewish dispensation. *Heb.* iv. 2. "The gospel was preached to them as well as unto us." And here the law and will of God were more explicitly set before them, and their encouragements to repentance, and hope in divine mercy for eternal life grew greater, by the many discoveries of grace they enjoyed, and by the dwelling of God among them upon the mercy-seat. Here also there were a multitude of emblems or signs and pledges, both of the blessings of God and the duties of man, which are usually called the jewish ceremonies.

But it must be observed, that in this dispensation of *Moses*, there were very many precepts and promises of a carnal and temporal kind superadded to the gospel of grace, which precepts and promises together with the ten commands considered apart from the gospel, made up that *Sinai*-covenant, which was really a covenant of works; it was made between God, as the political head or king of that people; and the *jews*, as his subjects; and it was by the observance of this outward covenant the *jews* were to enjoy the land of *Canaan*, and temporal blessings therein.

Let it be well considered, that this *Sinai*-covenant which is often called the law in scripture, and which in this chapter is called the first covenant, was a distinct thing from the covenant of grace, or that gospel, which secretly ran through all the dispensations, and which was included in this dispensation also; that gospel which in some clear expressions, and many types and dark hints, was "witnessed by the law and the prophets," *Rom.* iii. 21. and by which both *Abraham* and *David*, and the pious *jews*, were pardoned and saved, as *St. Paul* proves in *Rom.* iv. 10—25. The great apostle in his epistles to the *romans*, and *galatians*, and *hebrews*, is often teaching them, that this *Sinai*-covenant, this law of *Moses*, with all the ceremonies of it, could not give them life, *Gal.* iii. 21. that is, pardon of sin, and eternal salvation, when it is considered as a distinct thing from the constitution or covenant of grace, which was shadowed out by it: And it is in this sense chiefly the apostle, in the verses following my text, tells them, "the first covenant was not faultless, that is, was not sufficient to save sinful men, or make them holy and happy; and therefore he often warns them against trusting in it for salvation, and assures them, that it waxed old in his day, and was vanishing away, verses 7, and 13. and that a new covenant is now introduced, that is, the christian dispensation, or the gospel itself, in the most spiritual manifestation of it. Now as *Moses* was the mediator of this covenant of *Sinai*, and *Aaron* the priest obtained the ministry thereof, as in the foregoing chapters, so in my text the Son of God, being manifest in the flesh, is that high priest who "hath obtained a more excellent ministry than *Aaron*, and is the mediator of this covenant, which is better than that of *Moses*, and which is established upon better promises.

Here let it be observed also, that this christian dispensation of the covenant of grace, which is called the second or new covenant, is not only better than the mere outward covenant of *Sinai*, or jewish law of works, by the observance whereof the *jews* were to obtain temporal blessings; but it is better than the whole dispensation of *Moses*, even as including in it the spiritual constitution or covenant of grace; it is better than

than all the former dispensations of this covenant of grace that God ever gave to men; and that will appear in the following particulars.

I. "The christian dispensation, or the new testament, though it be a rich discovery of grace, yet it contains the fairest and fullest representation of the moral law. That law which is of eternal obligation upon all mankind, is more particularly explained here, than in any of the former dispensations." The beauties of holiness which run through this law, shine with a fairer light under the gospel of *Cbrist*. The duties of worship, obedience and submission, which we owe to God; the duties of justice, truth, and love, which we owe to our neighbour; and the duty of sobriety and temperance, which we owe to ourselves, are set forth more at large in the new testament by the apostles; *Jesus Cbrist* having begun this work, in his excellent sermon on the mount, in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of *Matthew*. Here the commands of the law of God are represented in their full extent, as they require the obedience of the heart as well as of the life, as they relate to our inward thoughts and affections as well as outward actions. As for the doctrine and duty of christian love, forbearance, and forgiveness of enemies, and a readiness to return good for evil, it is either raised to higher degrees than before, or at least it is explained in a more spiritual and sublimer sense than the *jews* were ever acquainted with, and enforced by superior motives, and through the aids of divine grace thousands of christians have lived honourably in the practice of it.

II. "In the christian dispensation, the gospel or covenant of grace is revealed more perfectly and plainly than ever before; not in obscure expressions, in types and carnal metaphors, but in it's own proper form and language, that is, as a covenant relating to things spiritual and eternal." Every covenant between God and man, in the most complete sense of the word, implies some engagements on our side, which are appointed duties, and some engagements on God's side, which are promised blessings. Now in both these respects, the covenant of grace is revealed in the new testament, in a much more plain and express manner than in former dispensations. The blessings of the covenant of grace, are regeneration or a change of heart, pardon of sin, justification, and acceptance with God, adoption into his family, whereby we are made his children, sanctification of our natures, or being renewed after the image of God, assistance to perform duties, and support under troubles, comfort in life and death, and everlasting joy in another world, in the presence of God and our blessed Saviour. These are most plainly described in the new testament. The duties of this covenant are faith or trust in a *Messiah*, who is much better known now having actually appeared in the flesh, unfeigned repentance toward God, confession of sin, converse with God in secret prayer, love to God as a Father, delight in him, joyful hope in his promised mercy, zeal for his honour, and sincere obedience arising from a principle of faith and love. All these are more expressly required in our gospel.

I grant that the chief of these things were contained also in the former dispensations, particularly the *jewish*; but many of them were there veiled under types and figures, and dark shadows; so that the *jews* were ready to take up with these shadows, instead of the substance. And besides, these spiritual promises and precepts of the gospel were then mixed with so many carnal commandments, and temporal promises of the *Sinai*-covenant, that the *jews* knew not well how to distinguish them: They were too often ready to neglect the inward and spiritual constitution or covenant of grace, that ran through all the dispensations of God, as well as the more spiritual duties of the moral law; they were ever mistaking their covenant of *Sinai*,

which consisted of so many political and ceremonial, as well as moral precepts and temporal promises, for the very covenant of grace and salvation itself: And accordingly, by an outward observance of these precepts, they hoped for the pardon of all their sins, and eternal life. This was the mistake into which they were always running, and which kept them from receiving the gospel of *Christ*.

But now the christian dispensation sets the covenant of grace and salvation before us, in it's own spiritual language, in a clear and distinct light, and without a veil; so that we plainly behold the free and rich grace of God in this covenant, how it has wrought in every age, towards the recovery of mankind from the ruins of our fall, how it proceeds from step to step in it's own glorious way, how it works to restore us to the favour of God and his image, and becomes more abundantly effectual to turn the hearts of sinful men to God, and bring them to blessedness. The vision of grace and glory in the new testament is written so plain, that he that runs may read it; the high way of repentance, faith and holiness, which leads to eternal life, is laid so open that "the stranger and wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein, as the prophet *Isaiab* hath foretold." *Isa.* xxxv. 8. And it may be observed, that when the ancient prophets speak of these evangelical duties and blessings in the clearest language, it is generally in some prediction of the christian age, and the happiness of this last dispensation.

III. "The rites and ceremonies which are superadded to the covenant of grace, in the christian dispensation of it, are much preferable to those in former times, and that in three respects; they are fewer, they are clearer, and they are much more easy."

They are much fewer than the ceremonies of the *jewish* state. What a multitude of ceremonies were they incumbered with! What a numerous train of actions and abstinences are required in the law of *Moses*! What washings and sprinklings, what numerous purifications by water and blood, what continual danger of new defilements at home and abroad, by night and by day, so that man, woman and child were forced to be upon a perpetual watch lest they should be polluted in their food, in their raiment, in their habitation, or in the common actions of life! And what innumerable ceremonies of worship belonged to the service of the tabernacle and temple! What frequent journies from one end of the land to the other, and multiplied forms of religion at the tabernacle! Whereas in the christian state there are but two ceremonies appointed, viz. that of baptism and the Lord's supper. There is no danger that the spiritual part of it should be overwhelmed, buried and lost in the multitude of rites and carnal ordinances, which was often the case under the *jewish* state. Again,

These ordinances of the new testament are much more easy, and less burdensome and expensive than those of the former dispensations. To wash with water, to break a little bread, to pour out a little wine, and to eat or drink in a small quantity, are no such yokes of bondage as those who went before us in every age have sustained. As for the mosaic rites, they were exceeding expensive and burdensome indeed, beyond all our present power of description; and even the dispensations of *Adam* and *Noah*, with their continual sacrifices, and the rite of circumcision, which was added in *Abraham's* days, had something in them much more costly, bloody, and painful than these two easy ceremonies of the new testament.

And as the ceremonies of christianity are fewer and easier, so they are much clearer in their design and manner of representation, than most of the rites annexed to the former dispensations: They have a more natural and direct tendency to explain and illustrate.

illustrate the covenant of grace, and to assist the observance of it. When the body is washed with water in baptism, it very clearly represents, that our souls must pass through the laver of regeneration, or that we must have the Spirit of God shed down upon us, to cleanse us from our defilements. The bread broken, and the wine poured out in the Lord's supper, distinctly represent the body of *Christ* broken on the cross for our sins, and his blood poured out as an atoning sacrifice; and the actions of eating and drinking do as evidently hold forth our partaking of the blessings purchased by the blood and death of the Son of God. This rite also solemnizes and confirms the covenant of grace, which God hath made with us through his Son *Jesus Christ*, by our hearty consent thereto, which is expressed by eating and drinking in his presence, and at his table.

IV. "The Son of God, who was the real mediator of the covenant of grace, through all former dispensations, has condescended to become the visible mediator of this dispensation." So saith my text, "he is the mediator of this better covenant." He began his office of mediation between God and man indeed in those early counsels and transactions with God the Father, before the world was made, which are called the covenant of redemption, and of which you have heard in a former discourse: He appeared in the old testament in the form of God; and though he was sometimes called the angel of the Lord, and the angel of his presence, yet he often appeared as God himself, as *Jehovah* dwelling in a cloud of glory, in light or flame; and as he was one with the Father, so in his visible appearances he represented God, even the Father, both to the patriarchs and to the *Jews*, in his grandeur and majesty, as well as his mercy. But in this last dispensation, he appears visibly and plainly as the one mediator between God and man, when he discovers himself as "the Son of God, and as the man *Christ Jesus*." *John* iii. 16. And so *St. Paul* more expressly speaks in *1 Tim.* ii. 5. The Lord *Jesus* in the course of his ministry, and especially at the end of it, gave some notices that he was our mediator with God, and that he came to give his life as a ransom for sinners, and to make peace with his blood: Before he died and rose again, and ascended, he gave us a pattern of his pleading with the Father, in the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of *John*; and he appears now as *St. Paul* represents him, as our mediator and intercessor in his human nature, before the throne of God. *Moses* the mediator of the *Jewish* covenant, with all his virtues and graces, with all the sacred intimacy to which God admitted him, and with all the shining honours with which God invested and surrounded him, was not comparable to the mediator of the new covenant, the Son of God himself, "the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person, who lay in the bosom of the Father before the foundation of the world, but seventeen hundred years ago, was made flesh and dwelt among us." *John* i. 14, 18.

And let it be further observed here, that every thing which we have to do with God by a mediator, is much more clearly and expressly set before us in the new testament, than in all former dispensations. Though *Jesus* was always the mediator of the covenant of grace, yet the ancients knew so little of him under this express character, that you find neither *Abraham*, nor *David*, nor *Isaiah*, nor those which were most enlightened in divine things, make much use of his name in their addresses to the Father, nor make plain mention of drawing near to God by a mediator. But if we christians call upon God, and draw near to him, we have the prevailing name of *Christ*, given us to plead at the throne; if we apply to the mercy of God, it is by *Jesus Christ*, the great reconciler; if we offer our sacrifices of praise and thank-

giving to the Father, they will be well received through *Christ*, his first beloved Son. We must do all and every thing in the christian life through *Jesus Christ*, and there we are secure of finding acceptance with God. *Colos. iii. 17.* "Whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

V. "This dispensation of the gospel is not confined to one family or to one nation, or to a few ages of men, but it spreads through all the nations of the earth, and reaches to the end of time." That of *Moses* was confined to one nation only; that of *Abraham* to one family, and chiefly limited to his son *Isaac*. The dispensations of *Adam* and *Noah* are more general indeed, and may be represented as given to all mankind; because these were the two great Fathers of all, one before the flood, and the other after it: But then each of these revelations was left to the care of one family to publish it to all mankind, who were to be their posterity. But the christian dispensation is and shall be conveyed through the world, to all the heathen nations, as well as to the *jews*, and that by a multitude of messengers, by apostles, and evangelists, prophets and teachers, endowed with the gifts and powers of the blessed Spirit, and sent forth for this purpose. And it has been preserved and conveyed even to our nation, and to our day, by the writings of the apostles, and the ministrations of the preachers of the gospel through every age, and it spreads the rich grace of God, and the salvation of *Christ*, to the very ends of the earth; nor shall any other dispensation succeed it. Other religions of God's own appointment are worn out, and vanished away, but this being once introduced, must abide for ever.

VI. I might add here some other characters of the christian dispensation, which the apostle gives it in *2 Cor. iii. 6—18.* whereby he exalts it above all the religion of the *jews*, and especially far above the *Sinai*-covenant. "That was, saith he, the ministration of the letter, a dispensation which consisted much in outward forms and figures, and types: This is the ministration of the Spirit, that is, either of the substance and the thing signified in these types, or wherein the Spirit of grace is more eminently poured out on mankind, for conversion and salvation: Either of these senses may give it this name. That was written only in tables of stone: This in fleshly tables of the heart, by the Spirit of the living God. That was a ministration of terror and condemnation and death, in outward terrible appearances of God on *Sinai*, and it kept the people under a spirit of bondage and fear: This is the ministration of righteousness and life, inasmuch as all the springs of pardon and life, hope and happiness are set open in the gospel of *Christ*. But I proceed to the

VII. and last particular. "The encouragements and persuasive helps which christianity gives us to fulfil the duties of the covenant, are much superior to those which were enjoyed under any of the former dispensations." Now these consist chiefly in examples and motives.

Do examples invite us to our duty, and by a soft and secret influence encourage and lead us on to the performance of it? Such indeed were the names of *Abraham* and *David*, each in their day a happy pattern to their several ages: But in my opinion all the praises which are due to *David*, and *Abraham*, fall far short of the labours and sufferings, the zeal and patience, the holiness and the love of that divine man, *St. Paul*, whose life is recommended as an example to the christian world: And neither *David*, nor *Abraham*, nor any of the ancient saints, who had each of them their blemishes, are to be compared with the more excellent and perfect pattern of *Jesus* the Son of God, who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners; who was without the least blemish in heart and life: He hath given us a glorious example  
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of piety, virtue and goodness, incomparably superior to all former ages; it is most inviting indeed, and yet inimitable by all that follow.

Let us next consider our various motives to duty under the new testament.

Are the motives of love and gratitude powerful principles to encourage and persuade us to every active service? Such indeed were the blessings and gifts which God bestowed on men under former dispensations. But what were all those gifts and blessings in comparison of the unspeakable gift of his own Son, to die as a sacrifice in our stead, which is one of the chief themes and glories of the christian revelation? The love of God to us, made visible in the sufferings of the Son of God for our sins, carries with it a more abundant force of persuasion to work upon our gratitude and our love, than all the discoveries of grace from the days of *Adam* till this day. How can we sin against such astonishing goodness? Against such a sublime instance of divine compassion?

Are the promises and threatenings of God another set of motives to duty? Do the awful glories and terrors of a future and eternal world work upon all the springs of our activity and diligence, by hope and fear? Yes certainly, in a high degree. But the former dispensations had but few of these eternal terrors and glories, these threatenings and promises relating to an invisible state. All beyond death and the grave had a gloom and darkness upon it in former times, except here and there a glimpse of light that was shot in between the clouds. A few bright sentences collected from *David*, *Isaiab*, and *Daniel*, were some of the chief discoveries that we know of in those ancient ages; but in the new testament the gates of the other world are thrown open; a heaven of happiness, and a hell of misery are discovered there, and set before us in a divine light. The blessedness of departed saints, who see the face of God, and the agonies and outcries of the sinner, who lifts up his eyes in the place of torment, are revealed to us and described in the speeches of *Christ*, and the writings of his apostles. The awful and glorious scene of the day of judgment is spread out at large in the christian dispensation, together with the decision of the eternal states of the righteous and the wicked according to their works, when everlasting joy, or everlasting sorrow shall be the portion of every son and daughter of *Adam*. If hope and fear have any power in mankind, to awaken them to an abhorrence of sin, and the practice of holiness, surely these motives of the new testament, which have so transcendent an influence on our hope and fear, are of the most effectual and constraining kind.

But this leads me to the second part of my text, which corresponds with the appointed theme of my discourse; and that is, "The excellency of the promises of the new covenant," as *St. Paul* tells us, this new covenant is established, appointed or constituted, upon a set of better promises.

The promises of the new testament will appear to be much superior to those of the old, if we consider what was hinted before, that they contain in them such blessings as were scarce known under the former dispensations, or at least were so expressed, that it was hard to read them: But in the gospel these future scenes of solemn glory are set before our eyes in the clearest language: We hear the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; we see the dead arising out from their graves, a glorious army of saints and martyrs springing at once out of the dust, and their bodies all bright and active, vigorous and immortal. We behold *Jesus* the Saviour and the judge upon the throne, and his faithful followers at his right hand, invested with public honours. We hear the happy sentence, pronounced upon them, "Come

ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom." We behold them, as it were, reigning with *Christ*, upon his throne, and ascending with their Lord, to dwell for ever in his presence.

Again, the apostle has taught us to look upon all the promises, as sealed to believers by the blood of the Son of God, and secured to christians by the resurrection and exaltation of their mediator; for the Father hath put all power into his hand, and he has taken possession of the heavenly inheritance in our name; "Because I live, ye shall live also." *John* xiv. 19.

Yet farther, the new testament confirms all the best promises of the old, and claims them for itself; for they were eminently made with a design for the days of the *Messiah*, as many of them expressly inform us. New hearts and new spirits, taking away iniquity, and remembering sins no more, writing the law in the heart, and the dwelling of God amongst them, and their assurance of not departing from God, are such promises as the prophets *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel* more directly pronounced on the subjects of the kingdom of the *Messiah*. And there is a new light cast upon them in the gospel, which teaches plain christians to make use of them, and apply them to their own consolation and joy. "They were all written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." *Rom.* xv.

4. Thus we christians become much richer in divine promises, than all the ancients, having a common interest in all the most valuable ones of the old testament, as well as a peculiar property in those of the new. What an invaluable and everlasting treasure are "these exceeding great and precious promises which God has given us in *Christ Jesus*? It is by these we are made partakers of the divine nature, that is, the image of God, and by these we are enabled to escape the corruption that is come into this degenerate world through lust," *2 Peter* i. 4. It is by these we are quickened when we are slothful, we are supported when we are sinking, we are encouraged to run the race of duty, and to combat with every opposition. It is from these that christians derive courage in their dying moments, and they triumph over death itself, the last enemy, when a promise sets the prize of eternal life and the crown of glory just before them. "Be thou faithful to the death, and I will give thee a crown of life." *Revel.* ii. 10.

And how are all the invitations of grace in the old testament animated by the Son of God come in the flesh? How many new ones are superadded? And how much is their force of persuasion increased, when the power and success of them has appeared in such wonderful instances as the new testament sets before our eyes? How are the worst of sinners encouraged to lay hold of a promise of mercy, and to rest upon it, when our blessed Saviour received publicans and other notorious criminals, when *Levi* and *Zaccheus* were so favoured by him, when *Mary Magdalen* found pardon for the guilt of a public and shameless life, when *Paul* the persecutor and blasphemer obtained mercy, and was made a favourite and an apostle, and when he assures us that his conversion was designed to this blessed purpose, as a pattern of abounding grace? *1 Tim.* i. 16.

How powerfully are humble and despairing christians supported, and backsliders encouraged to return to God in a way of dutiful obedience, when *Peter*, who fell in the hour of temptation and denied his Lord, was recovered to repentance by a compassionate look of *Christ*, and not only received to forgiveness, but advanced to the first rank of office in the kingdom of *Christ*, and did glorious service for him? But it is time to put an end to this discourse, and it shall be concluded with a few inferences.

Inference I.

Inference I. "Though every part of our bible be sacred and divine, yet the latter part of it is much more valuable to us than the former:" The new testament far exceeds the old, because it reveals to us this better covenant, and makes us possessors of these better promises. The books of *Moses* and the prophets, and the psalms of *David*, contain admirable discoveries of the majesty and mercy of God, but where the beams of *Jesus* the sun of righteousness shine, there is not only a more glorious light to direct our steps, and to enliven our spirits, but there is a new lustre shed abroad over the psalms and the ancient prophets, and the typical ceremonies and promises of *Moses*. So that in *Great Britain* and in our age, we understand those ancient divine writings much better than the *Israelites* in the land of *Canaan* could understand them, even better than *Moses* and the prophets understood what they themselves were inspired to write. *John* the baptist was greater than all the prophets, because he could point to *Jesus* the *Messiah*, "behold the lamb of God!" *John* i. 29, 36. And since the death and resurrection of *Christ*, and pouring down of the Spirit, the least minister, or perhaps the least member in the kingdom of *Christ*, knows much more of the *Messiah* and his kingdom than *John* did; and than all the former ages, and the writers that lived in them, *Matt.* xi. 11.

Inference II. "What abundant thanks and praises are due to the blessed God, who brought us forth into the world under this last and best dispensation, who hath trained us up in the christian doctrine, and not made us *jews*?" We are not called to that troublesome, and expensive kind of worship, which consists in the killing and burning of bulls and goats, and the choicest lambs of the flock. The bleeding flesh of animals, and fire and smoke make no part of our religious solemnities. *Jesus* the lamb of God is already offered as an all-sufficient sacrifice; there is no need of another atonement: He has by one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified. *Heb.* x. 14. We are not obliged to travel three times a year to distant parts of the nation where we dwell, in order to adore our maker, at one single tabernacle or a temple, for in every place, that God who is a spirit is worshipped now, even by public assemblies, "in spirit and in truth." *John* iv. 23. We are not forced to spell out the mercies of God, by types and dark figures; but we see his overflowing goodness, in the person and offices of his beloved Son *Jesus*; we read the pardon of our sins in his blood, and our sanctification by his holy Spirit. There is no such veil spread over the invisible world, as covered the ancient dispensation. Heaven and hell, and all the awful and eternal things that belong to them, are discovered in a clear and surprizing light. We are not left to live upon the promises of temporal good things, and to search out the spiritual blessings, that are covered and wrapped up in them; but the spiritual and everlasting mercies which are provided for the saints, stand open to sight, in the promises of the new testament: They seem to court our embraces, and invite us to rejoice in hope. We need no longer be "subject to a bondage of spirit through fear of death, for death is conquered by the Son of God; life and immortality are brought to light by his gospel, and God hath not given us the spirit of bondage and terror under the christian dispensation; but the spirit of courage, and faith, and love, and joy unspeakable." *2 Tim.* i. 7—10. For ever blessed be the Lord, who hath called us to be christians.

Inference III. "Do we enjoy the privilege of knowing this better covenant, and shall any of us content ourselves without a certain interest in the blessings of it?" Do we hear of these better promises, and shall we be satisfied without a title to them? Shall we belong to that wretched tribe of despisers, who behold this great salvation, and wonder, and perish? *Acts* xiii. 41. What double anguish will seize  
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our consciences, when the judge shall pronounce at the last day, "Go ye cursed into endless misery; ye had all the glories and joys of heaven brought nearest of all to you in this better covenant, and offered to you in these better promises, and yet ye refused to accept them?"

Inference IV. "If we christians live under a better covenant, and enjoy better promises, we must needs reproach ourselves if we find our faith and obedience fall below that of the *jews*." Have we nobler assistances in our holy race to heaven, and yet shall we move on slower than they, and lagg behind them? Have we brighter encouragements, and yet shall our zeal be colder? Are our duties set before us in a far clearer light, and shall our obedience be more defective? Does divine mercy reign in the promises of the gospel with superior glory, and shall our faith in these promises be more feeble and wavering? O let us set the pattern of *Abraham* and *David*, and other ancient saints before us, and shame ourselves out of our earthiness of spirit, our lazy humour, our cold affection to divine things, and our languishing hope of immortality. Let the name, and pattern, and spirit of the blessed *Jesus* inspire us with new vigour to follow him, who is the mediator of this new and better covenant, till he shall have brought us to the accomplishment of all these better promises. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N IV.

## The exaltation of CHRIST to his kingdom, and his sending down the holy Spirit.

ACTS II. 33.

*Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and bear.*

**I**T was a strange amazement that seized the hearts of the multitude who came up to Jerusalem at the days of Pentecost, when they heard the apostles speak so many new languages: The jews and the gentiles of various nations were struck with one general surprize, when they found fishermen, and persons of no learning, declare in every tongue the wonderful works of God and his grace: And while they were busy in their enquiries into the cause of this great event, Peter standing up with the eleven, lift up his voice as their speaker, and beginning with the prophecy of Joel concerning the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh, preaches to them the life and death, and resurrection of Christ, and assures them, that these miraculous gifts descended upon the apostles from that Jesus whom the jews had crucified and slain: "But we are witnesses, says he, that God has raised him from the dead; and being exalted by the right hand, or power of God, he has shed forth these wonderous gifts of the holy Ghost, which the Father had promised him, and of which your own eyes and ears are present witnesses."

The two great subjects of my appointed discourse, are evidently contained in this text, viz. The exaltation of Christ to his kingdom, and his pouring down of the holy Spirit.

In pursuit of the first of these, I shall shew you wherein consists the exaltation of Christ, and what are the several parts of it; and here I might take notice,

I. That at his ascension to heaven there was a glorious change passed upon his body to make it fit for the heavenly state: For though Christ was raised from the dead, yet being designed to continue forty days on earth, he was not raised in a glorified body. Luke xxiv. 39. "He pronounces his body to be flesh and bones, and bid his disciples handle him:" but St. Paul assures us, 1 Cor. xv. 50. "That flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption;" and therefore the bodies of the saints at the resurrection must be all changed into spiritual and incorruptible, that is, such as are fit for the services of a glorified spirit, and for an immortal life. Such a change passed upon the flesh and bones of our blessed Lord, when the bright cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples, and conveyed him upward to the mansions of light and immortality. Acts i. 8.

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II. I might

II. I might also take notice in the next place, That it is part of the exaltation of *Christ* to be delivered from all possible sorrows and pains and temptations, to which he was exposed in our world, to be placed above the reach of the malice of earth and hell, as well as to be delivered from all mortal infirmities, and to be filled with inward satisfaction and joy unspeakable. He is exalted to "the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore." *Psal.* xvi. 11. His holy soul, which once endured such terrible conflicts and agonies, now sits triumphant in eternal peace, never to be ruffled and disquieted again. He now enjoys those sweet and sacred satisfactions of heart, which arise from the review of his own finished labours and sufferings; tiresome labours indeed, and tremendous sufferings, but never more to be repeated! He is now for ever drinking in fuller pleasures from the indwelling godhead, from the smiles of his Father's face, and shall never more complain, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" *Matth.* xxvii. 46. He, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame," *Heb.* xii. 2. and these are the joys which he is now possessed of as a just and divine recompence.

III. He has authority given him by the Father, to govern the world as long as it stands, and to judge it at the last day. "He is exalted to be both a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to men and forgiveness of sins." *Acts* v. 31. He calls those who are given him out of the world, and makes them parts of his church: He changes their sinful natures, he makes them the children of God, and pardons all their iniquities. Nor doth his kingdom reach only to his own church, who are his willing and joyful subjects, but it extends over the whole world; the rebellious and infidel nations are under his reign and controul. His lordship not only includes all mankind, but it reaches over angels and devils, over all the regions and the inhabitants of heaven, earth and hell: "All things are put into his hands, and placed under his dominion; he is Lord of all." *Mat.* xxviii. 19. *Acts* x. 36. He doth not reign only in *Sion* as heretofore, and as king of the *Jewish* nation, but "the heathens are now made his inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth his possession:" *Psal.* ii. 8, 9. Not only his own followers and friends are under his government, but every creature is made subject to him; "His people are his willing subjects in this day of his power, and his enemies shall be made his footstool. Angels, principalities and powers are put under him as his ministering servants," for the purposes of his government over the church and the world. *Psal.* cx. 2.—3. *Eph.* i. 20. *Heb.* i. 4. *Rev.* iii. 21.

And yet further; he is not only the appointed heir and Lord of all, but he is constituted the final judge of the living and the dead: He who stood once at the bar of *Pilate* and the high-priest as a transgressor, hath a throne of judgment preparing for him, and the high-priest and *Pilate* shall be arraigned there: All the tribes of the earth shall be gathered together before him, and shall receive their eternal sentence from his mouth. *Mat.* xxv. 31, 32, 34, 41. "God the Father hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, and has given assurance of it to all men by raising him from the dead." *Acts* xvii. 31. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment into the hands of his Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man," *John* v. 22, 27.

IV. Our

IV. Our blessed Saviour must have a most extensive knowledge and power to execute this vast authority, and to fulfil this glorious trust.

Let us first consider his extensive knowledge. He has not only the kingdoms of nature and grace committed to his care, but the book of the decrees of God is put into his hands, that he may govern these kingdoms according to the Father's will. So that text is generally explained, *Rev. v. 1—9*. "The lamb in the midst of the throne came and took the book out of his Father's hand." He must know what God hath ordained, that he may execute all his Father's counsels with regard to the church and the world, and that he may send his prophets to reveal to his church, so much as is needful for them to know. The whole book of the *Revelation*, is an instance of this knowledge communicated to him by the Father. *Rev. i. 1*. "The revelation of *Jesus Christ* which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant *John*." The day and hour of the last judgment, which were unknown to the Son in the days of his flesh, *Mark xiii. 32*. and were reserved in the Father's hand, are now laid open before him in this book of divine counsels. Both as a priest and a king he must know the hearts of men. He must see their secret thoughts, that he may govern and judge them aright, *1 Cor. iv. 5*. And he must know all the groans and breathings of holy souls, that he may present them in the sympathy of his affection before the Father, and may have a fellow-feeling of their infirmities and sorrows. *Heb. ii. 18*. and *iv. 15*.

Again, he must be acquainted with the hidden iniquities of men and devils, that he may countermine their pernicious plots, that he may sometimes prevent the mischiefs which they design, and sometimes permit them to accomplish their wicked purposes for the trial of his people. All the dark perplexities of providence, and the whole maze and labyrinth of human events lies open before him, and the secret things in the heart of man; for "he must bring to light the hidden things of darkness, he must manifest the counsels of the heart, and reward every one according to their works," *1 Cor. iv. 5*. *Rev. xxii. 12*.

But besides all this, we must remember in the next place, that he is possessed of active power equal to this extensive knowledge. What could the name of such a sublime authority do toward the government of all things, even if he had sufficient knowledge, without a correspondent power? It would be but a splendid title, and a mere shadow of kingship. But *Jesus* our king has universal royalty, and has power to support it. He must not sit like a shining cypher on the throne of government, nor on the tribunal of judgment. *Rev. v. 6*. "The lamb who had been slain appears in the midst of the throne, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Whether this denotes the seven chief angels, which are prime ministers in the court of heaven, employed by our exalted Saviour, or whether the number "seven" signifies a perfection of knowledge and power, described by eyes and horns; still it must imply, either such outward mediums of power and knowledge, or such inward capacities, as the Son of God is furnished with, in order to govern the ends of the earth, and execute his Father's decrees. The sun and moon with all their attendant lights, the earth, air and sea, with all their millions of living inhabitants; nature and time, with all their wheels and motions, are put under his controul: all move onward in their constant courses by his word, and they shall stop at his command, and finish their last period. Then shall he call to the graves to give up their dead, the graves shall obey the Son of man, and the dead shall arise in

millions at his call. *John* v. 26. And indeed, without such all commanding power, which can subdue all things to himself, how can he execute the office of being "head over all things for the good of his church?" How can he fulfil his Father's decrees? How is it possible he should transact the important affairs of the last day, that he should judge the intelligent creation, that he should reward his friends and favourites in the heavens, and send his implacable enemies to the second death? I do not presume here to impute or ascribe all these things to the human nature of *Christ* as the agent\*: It is sufficient if his human nature be made the constant and conscious medium whereby the indwelling godhead shall exercise these powers.

V. The last instance I shall mention wherein his exaltation consists, is this; that "he is invested with honours suitable to his power and grandeur." While he was on earth he was obscure and unknown: and though he was the Son of God, yet the sons of men knew him not. *1 John* iii. 2. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." *John* i. 10. And instead of doing honour to him, agreeable to his character and dignity, the princes and people of this world joined to affront and blaspheme him: He was reproached, he was buffeted, he was scourged, he was put to a shameful and cruel death: The princes and the people joined to "crucify the Lord of glory." *Acts* iv. 27. *1 Cor.* ii. 8. But the Son of God must not always be the mockery of sinful men. There were honours then reserved for him, which he is now possessed of, such as became his native perfections, and his acquired merit. The scriptures are full of these honours which are paid to the Son upon his exaltation. *Phil.* ii. 8—11. "Because he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that *Jesus Christ* is Lord to the glory of God the Father." And you find all the creation actually joining to pay him these honours, in *Rev.* v. 12, 13. "And the angels and the elders say with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, &c. And every creature in heaven, earth and sea, echo to the song, blessing and honour, and glory and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever." According to the tenor of scripture, I think the man *Jesus* is not capable of receiving these honours, without such a personal union to the godhead, as makes him a God-man, or one with God: And upon this foot, I allow, with the learned and pious doctor *Owen*, and other protestant writers, that the human nature of *Christ*, in the person of the mediator, and considered as God-man, may be worshipped and receive

\* Yet if I should have ascribed all this to the human nature of *Christ*, considered as united to godhead, that great man doctor *Thomas Goodwin* would abundantly support and vindicate me, in his discourse "of the glories and royalties of *Christ* as God-man," volume II. in folio, where he exalts the knowledge and power of the man *Jesus Christ* in many pages together to far higher degrees. Some of his expressions are such as these; "there is a wisdom in *Christ's* human nature, which is so high an imitation of the attribute of wisdom in God, as no mere creature could reach to or attain. *Christ's* human nature now glorified, knows all that God hath done or means to do. By virtue of it's union with the divine nature, it had a right to know, both things past, present and to come. The same holds in his power; it is not equal with God's, but there is an image of it in *Christ's* human nature, both in that he can do whatsoever he will, and whatsoever God will have done, he is the instrument of it." *Matt.* xxviii. 18. "All the businesses of the world run through his hand and his head." What things soever the Father doth, the Son doth likewise, *John* v. 19. "he speaks all this of himself as the Son of man," verse 27. and much more to this purpose.



receive it's own share of these honours, so far as is possible for a creature in so close an union with the eternal godhead.

Before I proceed to the second general part of the subject which is appointed me, I would make a few remarks or inferences from the first.

Remark I. Is *Christ* exalted to such glory, then all the real scandal of the cross ceases: It vanishes away and is lost, when the crucified man is all glorious [at the right hand of God. The scandal ceases from *Christ*, and it ceases from his people too: It is no longer a matter of shame or folly to be a believer or follower of such a *Jesus*. The power and grandeur of the Son of God, sitting on so illustrious a throne, takes away and annihilates all the scandal of a man hanging on a tree. The time is coming, and it hastens apace, when the *jews* shall be ashamed of their reproaches cast upon him, and the sons of men shall be confounded at the thoughts of their former mockery of the Son of God. If we keep this thought warm at our hearts we shall never be ashamed of the profession of the cross of *Christ*.

Remark II. Is *Christ* exalted by the Father's right-hand, "then his doctrines are worthy of our belief, his promises are worthy of our trust, and his laws of our obedience." His doctrines are certainly worthy of our belief; for never would God the Father have exalted his Son to such honours, if he had brought one doctrine to the world which was not divinely true. Had he not been a faithful prophet in delivering all his messages from God, he had never been raised to be a king. We may venture therefore safely to receive all the lessons that he teaches us.

And we may safely rely on his promises too, for when *Jesus* the faithful witness, is exalted to be Lord of all, he can fulfil every promise he has made. We may venture to trust him, in our most important interests of heaven and eternity. Does he assure us, that "they who believe on him shall never perish?" *John* vi. 40. Then we may rejoice with *St. Paul*, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him till the great day." *2 Tim.* i. 12. Does he promise his followers, that he will raise them from the dead, and give them eternal life? *John* vi. 24. Then we may safely commit our bodies to the grave under his care, for these dead bodies "shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live:" The grave shall resign it's prisoners at his command: He has the keys of death, and the gates of eternal life are in his keeping.

And as his promises are worthy of our trust, so are his laws of our obedience; for in this exalted state, he can enforce them powerfully with temporal and eternal rewards, with temporal and eternal punishments. Heaven, earth, and hell, with all that belong to them, being placed in his power, the blessings and the vengeance are within the reach of his hand, he shall distribute eternal recompences to men and angels, as the righteous and mighty judge of all. *Psal.* ii. 11, 12. "Serve the Lord with fear, — kiss the Son, or adore him with love, lest you perish upon the spot, if his wrath be kindled but a little: But blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Remark III. Is *Christ* exalted, then "his faithful followers have a pledge and pattern of their own exaltation, though not to equal degrees of pleasure, honour or power." It is as their forerunner he is entered within the vail, and is dignified with many glories, as their great representative. Is his body of flesh and blood by some glorious change made fitter for the heavenly world, and better suited to be the mansion or instrument of a glorified spirit? Such shall be the bodies of all his people, for they must be like him: "He will change their vile bodies till they are made like his own glorious body." *Phil.* iii. 21. Is his holy soul filled with all joy and blessedness

bleſſedneſs in the preſence of God, and in the review of his paſt labours and ſufferings? Such ſhall be the felicity of their ſouls, for “they muſt be like him when they ſhall ſee him as he is:” 1 *John* iii. 2. “They ſhall rejoice for ever, and their joy ſhall no man take from them.” *John* xvi. 22. Is he exalted to power and dominion, to a crown and a throne, and to royal honours? His followers alſo muſt have a crown of life and righteousneſs, they ſhall ſit upon thrones to judge the tribes of *Iſrael*, they ſhall have power over the nations, and ſhare according to their meaſure and capacity in the honours of an exalted Saviour. *Rev.* ii. 10, 26. and iii. 21. *Matt.* xix. 28. Fix the eye of your faith on a glorified *Jeſus*, and behold there a pattern of your own joys and glories; ſuch honour have all his ſaints. *Pſal.* cxlix. 9. But again I ſay, remember that your character and your ſhare is far inferior to his; you are but members, he is the head: You are but ſinners ſaved, he is the Saviour and without ſin: You are but adopted children, he is the original Son: You are but creatures made in time, he is the Son of God before the creation: “In the beginning he was with God, and he was God.” *John* i. 1. “In all things he muſt have the pre-eminence.” *Col.* i. 18.

Remark IV. Is *Chriſt* exalted, “then he can ſecure to himſelf and to his people, whatſoever honours or bleſſings his humiliation has purchaſed, for himſelf or for them.” He offered up himſelf a ſacrifice for the ſins of men, and thereby, according to the ancient covenant with his Father, he procured a ſeat of glory and power, at his right hand for himſelf, and eternal ſalvation for all his people. He is riſen from the dead, he is poſſeſſed of theſe promiſed powers, he can vindicate his own honours, and ſure grace and glory, and all the bleſſings of the purchaſed ſalvation to all his people.

Remark V. Is *Chriſt* exalted to the kingdom, then “the plots of all his enemies in earth and hell againſt his church are but vain devices.” His enemies muſt ſubmit to him or periſh before him. When God has ſet his Son *Jeſus* as “king on his holy hill *Zion*,” *Pſal.* ii. 1—12. and “given him the heathen for his dominion; it is but a vain and fruitleſs rage, that the princes or people can diſcover againſt his kingdom. Let the “kings of the earth be wiſe,” let them “ſerve the Lord with fear,” and bow before him, or he ſhall cruſh them “with a rod of iron, and daſh them as a potter’s veſſel.” The church of *Chriſt* may rejoice in her loweſt eſtate, having ſuch a ruler and ſuch a Saviour on high. He will never forget nor forſake her intereſts, till he has fulfilled all his Father’s promiſes, and made her all glorious and bleſſed for ever.

I proceed now to the ſecond general head of my ſubject; and that is, to conſider the pouring down of the Spirit at the exaltation of *Chriſt*. This was matter of aſtoniſhment to the *Jews*, and to the inhabitants of all nations who were gathered together at the feaſt. This is generally repreſented, and with great propriety, as the noble donatives which a conqueror diſtributes on the day of his triumph, or the royal gifts of a king ſcattered among his people at his coronation. Thus it is prophieſied in *Pſal.* lxxviii. 18. Thus it is recorded in hiſtory, *Eph.* iv. 8. “He aſcended on high, he led captivity captive, he triumphed over the powers of darkneſs, which had led captive the nations of the earth, he received gifts for men, ſaith the prophet, even for the rebellious or heathen world, that the Lord God might dwell amongſt them as he dwelt of old in *Sion*.” The apoſtle interprets this verſe, that he gave gifts to men, even the gifts of the holy Spirit, to make apoſtles, prophets, evangeliſts, paſtors and teachers, for the converſion of ſinners, and the edification of the church. Theſe are the glorious bleſſings, or gifts of the Spirit, which he received  
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of the Father, and which he shed forth on his disciples, under the visible emblem of tongues of fire. Let it be first observed here, that these divine donatives, these influences of the holy Spirit are generally distinguished into gifts and graces; and though in truth they are all really gifts of the Spirit from the grace of an exalted Saviour, yet it is chiefly those new capacities or powers of action, which are usually called gifts, and are reckoned among his extraordinary operations, because they belong chiefly to the primitive times; whereas the christian virtues are more frequently called the graces, or fruits of the Spirit, and are attributed to his ordinary influences, because they continue through all ages of the church\*.

Let it be observed in the second place, that these extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit did not necessarily carry with them christian virtues or graces; for in *Matt. vii. 22.* our Saviour declares, that some who prophesied in his name and cast out devils by virtue of these gifts, were workers of iniquity, he will not know them, he will at the last day bid them depart from him, and banish them for ever from his presence; and on the other hand, the graces of the Spirit are bestowed on thousands in every age, where these extraordinary gifts were never received; though some suppose that in the primitive days all that were converted by the apostles themselves, received some or other of these gifts by the imposition of their hands.

Give me leave now briefly to set before you, the several kinds of these gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, which were poured down from heaven upon men by our exalted Saviour; together with a hint of the chief designs or uses of them, and then I shall conclude with some remarks upon them.

The extraordinary gifts are of various kinds; they are represented by the apostle *Paul*, *1 Cor. xii. 8—11.* and explained by learned and ingenious writers. In the first place, the word of wisdom, or an extensive acquaintance with the mysteries of christianity, the doctrines and duties of the religion of *Christ*. This eminently belonged to the apostles, that they might be able upon all occasions to preach the gospel in all the substantial and necessary parts of it, and answer the questions of importance which were proposed to them. The next was the word of knowledge, which may imply such an insight into the old testament and the writings of the prophets, as to cite them and happily apply them by way of interpretation or allusion, to illustrate or confirm the gospel of *Christ*, and to refute the *jewish* abuses and perversions of them. The third is the gift of faith, that is, probably, a peculiar impulse that came upon them from heaven, when any difficult matter was to be performed, which inwardly assured them, that the Spirit of God would enable them to perform it. Then follows the gift of healing of various distempers by a word of their mouth, or a touch of their hand, and the gift of working other miracles also, even the power of inflicting diseases or death it self upon offenders. So *St. Paul* not only healed the maladies of men, but struck *Elymas* the forcerer blind; so *St. Peter* not only bid *Tabitha* arise from the dead, but he also pronounced sudden death upon *Ananias* and *Sapphira*. Another of these gifts was prophecy, which taken in general signifies a power to speak by inspiration: And perhaps it may include the gift of utterance or freedom of speech: But in a more particular sense implies the foretelling of things to come. So *Paul* foretold the rise of *Anti-Christ*, *1 Thes. ii. 7.* And *Agabus*, a christian prophet, predicted the famine in the days of *Claudius Caesar*. *Acts xi. 28.* Besides these, there was the gift of discerning spirits; that is, either of discovering the heart of a man, which on some occasions might be necessary in those early days of the gospel.

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I grant my text speaks chiefly, if not only, of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; but as the graces proceed also from the Spirit of *Christ* exalted, I thought it not proper to omit them here.

or of discerning the temper and talents of a person, that it might be better judged in what service to employ him. And after these follow the gifts of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, whereby one person could speak several foreign languages which he never learned, that he might preach the gospel to persons of distant nations: And another could interpret tongues, or explain to the bulk of the assembly, what was spoken in a strange language, for the use of strangers who might come amongst them. Besides all these, we might reckon also the gifts of singing psalms and praying by the Spirit, which parts of worship were performed by inspiration, in those primitive times. Thus much of the gifts.

The graces of the holy Spirit are also of various kinds, for they include all those christian virtues or principles of holiness, which are wrought in the hearts of men by the influence of the holy Ghost; such as faith, repentance, love to God and man; add to these, meekness, temperance, a well-grounded hope, holy joy, patience in suffering, and courage to profess the name and religion of *Christ*, even in the face of death or martyrdom. *2 Tim. i. 7.* See the fruits of the Spirit reckoned up by the apostle, *Gal. v. 22, 23. Ephes. v. 9.*

The design of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were shed forth by our ascended Saviour, was to spread the gospel more speedily in the world, to diffuse an over-powering evidence of it among men, and to establish this new religion in the earth, *Heb. ii. 3, 4.* This great salvation at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will." St. Paul assures the *Corinthians*, that when an unlearned man, or an unbeliever came into their assemblies, and heard them speak by inspiration the doctrines of the gospel in a proper manner, "he is convinced, he is judged, the secrets of his heart are made manifest, and falling down on his face, he will worship God, and will report that God is in you of a truth;" *1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.* And indeed without these demonstrations of the Spirit attending the gospel in the first publication of it, it was not to be supposed, that so new and strange a religion should make it's way like lightening through the nations, in opposition to the prejudices of mankind and the power of princes, and in a few years illuminate so many dark countries, which had lain for long ages under the shadow of death. When christianity was well established in the world, these extraordinary gifts died away by degrees.

As for the graces of the Spirit, the design of them was directly to change sinners into saints, and to raise a church for *Christ* among men. These were communicated sometimes in an extraordinary manner and degree in the primitive days, in order to give the gospel a more speedy success, after the exaltation of our blessed Lord: But these are continued also in following ages, and sent down among men daily, by our blessed Saviour in his glorified state, who is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, that he may maintain an everlasting kingdom on earth, through all ages, by bestowing repentance on men, and forgiveness of sins. *A&S v. 31.* It is by these influences new converts are made, sinners are called and sanctified, churches are raised or continued in a long succession, and the family of *Christ* restored, when it is diminished by the persecution of tyrants on earth, or by calling away the saints to heaven by death in the course of nature.

Thus I have given you a very brief account of the influences of the blessed Spirit, both with regard to gifts and graces, which were promised by the Father, and shed forth by our exalted Saviour, together with the most eminent and important uses and designs of them. Permit me now to conclude with these four remarks.

Remark I.

Remark I. Since the gifts of the Spirit are shed forth, in a way of promise and prediction, they more plainly appear to be divine. It is the promised Spirit which our Saviour gave to men. It can never be said they were casual events, or they happened by chance, for they were foretold by the ancient prophets, by *John* the baptist, and by our blessed Saviour: They were promised to *Christ Jesus* by his Father, and he promised them to his own disciples, and bid them wait at *Jerusalem*, till they received them. *Luke* xxiv. 49. There is a long shining track of divine promise and faithfulness, and a blessed harmony of grace and truth, that runs through all this event of the pouring down of the holy Spirit, and we may trace it through the writings of the prophets and apostles with sacred delight. Is the Spirit sent down to men in this wonderful manner, then God has not failed of his promises to the *jews* and gentiles, made by his ancient prophets; then the Father hath not failed of his promise to his Son *Jesus*, nor has the Son of God failed of his promise to his disciples and followers. *Acts* ii. 16, 17. *Luke* xxiv. 49. *John* xv. 26. *Acts* i. 8. compared with my text.

Remark II. Are these wonderful gifts of the Spirit sent down to publish and confirm the blessed gospel; then surely "it demands our firmest faith, since it was propagated at first by such divine miracles, and has been established by such surprizing and glorious gifts." How wisely has God ordained these visible and sensible wonders, to prove the exaltation of his Son *Jesus*, when he left the world, and became invisible to men? "He hath shed forth all this which you see and hear;" and this is the last and the greatest witness to christianity, and it confirms all the rest. Our Saviour wrought many miracles indeed, and he spoke as never man spake; yet he assured his disciples, that after his departure they should not only do the same works, "but greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father." *John* xiv. 12. Our blessed Lord cast out devils, healed diseases, and raised the dead; what greater works then can we suppose were left for the apostles to perform, or what greater gifts than these can be conferred upon them? May I have leave to express a conjecture here, that these might be the "the word of wisdom and knowledge, and the gift of tongues." We grant it was indeed a miracle, to heal the bodies of the sick with a word; but does it not seem a more astonishing thing, that the souls of persons, who were in a great measure ignorant of divine truths, should be at once illuminated with a word of wisdom, should be furnished so soon with such an extensive knowledge of the mysteries, doctrines and duties of the gospel, that they were able to preach them to an ignorant world; and that they should be so fully persuaded of these doctrines at once, in opposition to many former prejudices which reigned in them, that they could now venture their lives in the defence of these divine truths, which they learned from heaven by such an inspiration? It is granted again, that it is a miracle to make the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, to put life into a dead body: But is it not a more amazing event, that the mind of a fisherman who knew nothing but his mother-tongue, should at once be furnished with a million of words, even the languages of various nations, and that his organs of speech should be enabled to pronounce them right, which would be the learning and labour of two or three ages; and that they should speak to "every man in their own tongue the wonderful works of God?" And yet still this wonder is greater, when we consider, that the apostles not only spake with strange tongues themselves, but they communicated this gift of tongues to others also, which was never done by our Saviour himself in his own life time. Such were the attestations to the gospel of our blessed Lord, and so bright was the evidence that was shed over it by these gifts of the Spirit,

that this is appointed to be the supreme seal to the truth of it, and he that blasphemes the holy Ghost, and renounces this evidence, after it has been convincingly set before him, and obstinately attributes these divine wonders to the sleights of men, or to the craft of the devil, is sealed up under condemnation by the lips of the Saviour of the world; and there is no forgiveness for him. *Matt. xii. 31, 32* \*.

Remark III. "Though *Jesus* the founder of the christian religion submitted to death, yet the christian church was never designed to die, because *Jesus* lives again in an exalted state, and hath all the gifts and graces of the holy Spirit in his hand, which have been the life and soul of the church." When he left the world, he sent down his Spirit, both in the gifts and graces of it, to raise and maintain a temple or dwelling for himself in it so long as the world should stand: He hath promised that his Spirit should abide with it for ever, at least for the ordinary communication of gifts, and the influences of special grace, and therefore "the gates of hell or death shall not prevail against it." *Matth. xvii. 18.*

And it might be added here also, that this is the reason why believers persevere in faith and holiness, because *Jesus* their exalted head has the fulness of the Spirit in him, and it is from him that the members derive their life, and all their support. "He that was dead is alive, and behold he lives for ever." *Rev. i. 18.* And because I live, says our blessed Lord, ye shall live also. *John xiv. 19.*

Remark IV. This thought points to us "whither to direct our eyes and hopes, when the Spirit of God is withdrawn from amongst us." Since *Jesus* ascended to heaven the great God communicates his promised Spirit to men only through the hands of his Son. Let ministers, let christians, let churches learn, whence to derive new supplies, new gifts, new graces and influences, when spiritual things run low in the midst of them. It is from the hand of an exalted Saviour that we must receive all these blessings: It is he must give new life to all his churches under their dying circumstances, and new zeal and vigour to our souls under all their witherings and decays.

Thus all-glorious and divine is our salvation, from the original love, power and promise of God the Father, through the sufferings, the death and exaltation of *Jesus Christ* his Son, and by the gifts and graces of the blessed Spirit. Hence arise the talents and furniture of ministers, and hence the faith and hope, the life and holiness, the joy and comfort of christians. Nor can I put a sweeter period to such a discourse as this, than in those words of the great apostle, which unite the divine springs of our salvation, *2 Cor. xii. 14.* "May the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the holy Spirit, be for ever with you. Amen.

\* Of the gifts of the holy Spirit, and the efficacy and power of them, to prove and confirm the gospel of *Christ*; see the best account that ever I read, in "Miscellanea Sacra." Essay I.

## S E R M O N V.

The perpetual obligation of the moral law ; the evil of sin, and it's desert of punishment.

I JOHN III. 4.

*Sin is the transgression of the law.*

And ROM. VI. 23.

*The wages of sin is death.*

**T**HE blessed God has an undoubted right to command and govern his creatures, and when he makes known his will or lays the knowledge of it within their reach, this becomes a law to them, this determines what is their duty ; and a transgression of this law or disobedience to it is sin ; and sin carries in it the notion of moral evil, which deserves some penalty to be inflicted on the sinner.

Now that the moral law is such a law as I have described, and has such consequences attending the transgression of it ; I shall endeavour to shew in the following method.

I. I shall consider what we mean by the moral law, and where this law is to be found.

II. I shall prove that it reaches to all mankind, and is of perpetual obligation.

III. That sin, or the transgression of it, is a very great and hainous evil.

IV. That it justly deserves punishment from the hands of God. I shall pursue each of these in their order.

The first enquiry is, what we mean by the moral law. To which I answer,

Answer. The moral law signifies that rule which is given to all mankind to direct their manners or behaviour, considered merely as they are intelligent and social creatures, as creatures who have an understanding to know God and themselves, a capacity to judge what is right and wrong, and a will to chuse and refuse good and evil.

This law, I think, does not arise merely from the abstracted nature of things, but also includes in it the existence of God and his will manifested some way or other, or at least put within the reach of our knowledge ; it includes also his authority, which obliges us to walk by the rule he gives us.

The commands or requirements of the moral law may be represented in different views, but all agree in the same design and substance.

Sometimes the moral law is represented as requiring us to seek after the knowledge of that God who made us, as obliging us to believe whatsoever God discovers to us,

and as commanding us to perform those duties he prescribes, and to abstain from those things which he forbids.

Sometimes again this moral law is represented by distinguishing it into those duties which we owe to God, to our neighbours, and to our selves. The duties which we owe to God are fear and love, trust and hope, worship and obedience, prayer and praise, doing every thing to his glory, and patience under his providences in life and death. The duties which we owe to our neighbours are submission to our superiors, compassion to our inferiors, truth and fidelity, justice and honesty, benevolence and goodness toward all men. The duties which we owe to our selves are sobriety and temperance; and in general the moral law requires a restraint of our natural appetites and passions within just bounds, so that they neither break out to the dishonour of God, to the injury of our neighbour, or to hinder us in the pursuit of our own best interests.

There is yet another general representation of the moral law, which is used in scripture both in the old and new testament. It is mentioned by *Moses, Deut. vi. 5. Lev. xix. 18.* and repeated and confirmed by our blessed Saviour, *Matt. xxii. 37.* "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, and thy neighbour as thy self; on these two commandments hang all the law and prophets:" And therefore *St. Paul, Rom. xiii. 10.* tells us, "love is the fulfilling of the law." For he that loves God and his neighbour as he ought, will perform all necessary duties toward them, as well as govern himself aright in obedience to God his maker.

Having explained what I mean by the moral law, we come to enquire where it is to be found? I answer, it is found in the ten commands given to the *jews* at *Sinai*; it is found in the holy scriptures, scattered up and down through all the writings of the old and new testament, and it may be found out in the plainest and most necessary parts of it, by the sincere and diligent exercise of our own reasoning powers. It was written by the finger of God in tables of stone; it is written by the inspiration of God in the holy bible; and it is written in the hearts and consciences of mankind by the God of nature. The voice of God from heaven proclaimed this law, the voice of the prophets and apostles confirm it, and the voice of conscience, which is the vice-gerent of God in the heart of man, speaks the same thing\*. See *Rom. ii. 14, 15.* which must be thus explained. "When the gentiles, who have not the written law, are admonished by nature, and their own consciences, to do things contained in the written law, their hearts and reasoning powers are a natural law to themselves, which shews or discovers the work of the written law or ten commands impressed on their hearts; their very consciences bearing witness for or against themselves, and accusing, or excusing them, according as they have obeyed or broke that natural law within them."

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\* That which is in the heart of man is called the natural law, because it arises from our natural principles of reason; that which was given at *Sinai* is more frequently termed the written law: Both are called the moral law, yet with these few differences. 1. The written law is more clear and express in ten particular commands; the natural law is more secret and less evident, especially among the greatest part of mankind. 2. The written law was a more peculiar favour of God given to the *jewish* nation; the natural law lies within the reach of all men whose consciences are not grossly blinded or hardened by sin. 3. The natural law contains nothing but moral precepts or rules of life for men as intelligent, sensible and sociable creatures; the written law includes in it something ceremonial, that is, the seventh day sabbath, and other modes of expression peculiar to the *jewish* state and people. But the grand requirements and the design of both these are the same, as appears in many scriptures, especially *Rom. ii. 14, 15.*



The second general head of my discourse leads me to prove that this moral law is of universal and perpetual obligation to all mankind, even through all nations and all ages. The will of God their maker concerning their conduct being revealed to them or laid within the reach of their knowledge, as I said before, becomes a law or rule of life to men. Now this moral law is so far discovered to all, whether *jews*, gentiles or christians, both by the light of reason, and by the writings of the old and new testament, and thus it becomes an universal law which requires the obedience of all mankind.

And as it hath universal authority over all men, so it's obligation is perpetual and everlasting; there cannot be any dissolution of it, nor a release from it's commands or requirements; which will appear if we consider the following reasons.

I. "It is a law which arises from the very existence of God and the nature of man." It springs from the very relation of such creatures to their maker and to one another. Every creature must owe it's all to him that made it; and therefore all it's powers ought to be employed so as to bring some honour to it's maker-God. He is the supreme Lord and ruler, and he ought to be revered and obeyed: He is all-wise and almighty, he ought to be feared and worshipped: He is in himself the most excellent of beings as well as merciful and kind to us, and the spring of all our present comforts, and our future hopes; he ought therefore to be loved above all things, and to be addressed with prayer and praise; nor can it ever be said that a creature is under no obligation to love and obey, to fear and worship his Creator, or to render what is due to his fellow-creatures, even according to his utmost powers.

H. "This law is so far wrought into the very nature of man as a reasonable creature, that an awakened conscience will require obedience to it for ever." Wheresoever the reasoning powers of man are diligent and sincerely attentive to his most important concerns, he must acknowledge the great God demands our best obedience, our honour and our love, and he deserves it: Every conscience acting on reasonable principles must confess that truth and honesty ought to be practised towards our neighbour, and temperance and sobriety with regard to our selves; that we are bound to restrain our vicious appetites and passions within the rules of reason and our better powers; that we must not be savage or cruel to others, nor must we abuse our understanding and our senses which God has given us for better purposes, and by drowning them in wine and strong liquors or by any intemperance behave like the brutes that perish. As long as man is man, and reason is reason, so long will this law be a rule to mankind.

III. This law must be perpetual, for "it is suited to every state and circumstance of human nature, to every condition of the life of man, and to every dispensation of God." And since it cannot be changed for a better law, it must be everlasting. It is suited to the state of man in innocence, and of man fallen from his happiness: It is suited to every tribe and nation of mankind: All are required to yield their utmost obedience to the commands of God. It began in paradise as soon as man was created, and it will never cease to oblige in this world or the other. Neither *jew* nor gentile, neither saint nor sinner on earth, nor *Enoch*, nor *Elijah*, nor the blessed spirits in heaven, nor the ghosts of the wicked under the punishments of hell, are released from their obligation to this law which requires them to love and honour God, and to be faithful and just to man: For if any persons whatsoever were released from

from the bond of this law, they would not be guilty of sin, nor do amiss in neglecting the practices of virtue and godliness.

IV. It appears yet further that this law is perpetual, because whatsoever other law God can prescribe, or man can be bound to obey, it is built upon the eternal obligation of this moral law. Every positive command of rites and ceremonies and sacrifices given to the patriarchs, or the *jews*; every command of faith in the *Messiah*, trust in the blood of *Jesus*, and obedience to him in his exalted state; every institution of the old testament and the new, circumcision and baptism, the feast of the passover and of the Lord's supper, with all the forms of worship and duty towards God and man, which ever were prescribed, receive their force and obligation from the moral law. It is this law which requires all men to believe whatsoever God shall reveal with proper evidence, either by the exercise of their own reason, or by his divine revelation: It is the moral law that requires our heart and hands to yield obedience to all the positive laws God has given to men: Some of those rites and ceremonies, so far as we can discover, seem not to be of any great importance in themselves; but a wilful neglect of the least of them is a disobedience to the great God, and a violation of this law; and I think we may say that if this law were abolished, no other could bind us: for it is one of the first and strongest requirements of this law, that a creature must obey his maker in all things. And for this reason it was that our blessed Saviour, who had no need to be washed from sin, yet submitted to baptism under the ministry of *John* his forerunner, even when *John* seemed to dissuade him from it, *Matt.* iii. 15. "Suffer it to be so now, said he, for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness, that is, to obey whatever God commands.

V. I would add in the last place, that scripture asserts the perpetuity and everlasting obligation of the moral law, *Luke* xvi. 17. "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for the least tittle of the law to fail; and our blessed Saviour declares, *Matth.* v. 17. that "he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; by which he cannot mean the *jewish* ritual which was soon abolished, but he means eminently the moral law, for it is the precepts of that law he proceeds to explain. And it is in conformity to this doctrine, the apostle *Paul* makes use of this law to convince *jew* and gentile, and all mankind in all ages, that they are sinners and guilty before God, in the second and third chapters to the *Romans*. "By the law is the knowledge of sin, whether the natural law of the heathens, or the written law of the *jews*: All have broken this moral law of God, "every mouth is stopped, and all the world lies guilty before God."

I know that there are some contrary opinions rising up in the heart of man against this doctrine. Some have objected here, that since the fall of *Adam* no mere man is able perfectly to comply with the demands of it, for it requires universal obedience in thought, word and action, and a perfect abstinence from every sin; but since no man is able to yield this obedience, it can never be supposed that a righteous and a gracious God can continue to require it. To this I answer, first,

Answer I. That man has not lost his natural powers to obey this law; he is bound then as far as his natural powers will reach: I own his faculties are greatly corrupted by vicious inclinations or sinful propensities, which has been happily called by our divines a moral inability to fulfil the law, rather than a natural impossibility of it. But though the powers of man be vitiated, and his inclinations to evil are so strong, that they will never be effectually subdued without divine grace, yet the great and holy God continues still to demand a perfection of obedience; he cannot

not give an imperfect law, or a law that requires but an imperfect obedience to it. His title, as the creator and the God of nature, demands the best service that our natural powers can perform: Our understanding and will, our heart and hand and tongue owe him their utmost obedience.

Besides, if the law did not continue to require our best and highest obedience, we should not be guilty of sin where we fall short of perfection; that is, if we loved God in part, if we serve him in part, though it was not "with all our mind, with all our soul, with all our heart, and with all our strength," yet we should not be transgressors; but this I think is a very absurd supposition. I answer in the second place,

Answer II. That the moral law may continue still to demand perfect obedience of all men, though since the fall they cannot perfectly fulfil it; for the grace of the gospel which is revealed in scripture, and which runs through every dispensation since the fall of *Adam*, has not abated the demands of the law, though it has provided a relief for us under our failings. And though we do not fulfil what God requires in this law, yet he condescends in this gospel to pardon and to accept the humble, the sincere, the penitent sinner, on the account of the perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice of his own Son. It is granted indeed that all men who have been saved in the way of the gospel have yielded but a very imperfect and defective obedience to this law, yet still the law of God demands a perfection of holiness according to our utmost natural powers and capacities; the law demands that "we sin not at all;" but the gospel says, "if we sin we have an advocate with the Father, even *Jesus Christ* the righteous, who is a propitiation for the sins of the world: 1 *John* ii. 2\*.

Having proved the perpetual obligation of the moral law, I proceed to the third part of my discourse, and that is, briefly to represent the evil nature of sin. Our text informs us wherein it consists. "Sin is the transgression of the law." When a creature transgresses any command that God hath given, he commits sin; but this chiefly refers to the moral law, because it is this law upon which all others are founded,

\* There is also another objection against this doctrine which some raise from the words of scripture. Does not the apostle tell *Timothy* that "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners?" &c. 1 *Tim.* i. 9. But this is readily answered, by considering what is the apostle's meaning here. It is only to shew, that disobedient and ungodly men have need of particular and express laws or precepts, with threatenings and terrors annexed to them, in order to restrain them from iniquity; but the righteous man hath a sanctified nature, and an inward aversion within himself, to all evil practices; and therefore though his conscience acknowledge him to be under the commands of this law, yet he does not so much need the express and public proclamation of it in order to secure him in the practice of duty.

It has been objected again, that *St. Paul* confirms the christians and encourages them to holiness by telling them they "are become dead to the law, and they are delivered from the law, that being dead, wherein they were held," *Rom.* vii. 4, 6. To this I answer, that the apostle allows that christians are delivered also from the law as to its cursing and condemning power by their pardon and justification in *Christ Jesus*; they are delivered also from the unhappy effect which the law may sometimes have upon the hearts of sinners to irritate, awaken and provoke sin in them, by lusting for things forbidden; but he does not allow even himself or the best of christians to be delivered or released from the commands of the law; for in this very place, he is persuading christians to holiness or obedience to the precepts of the law; and in 1 *Cor.* ix. 21. he declares, he is "not without law to God, but he is under the law, as it is in the hands of *Christ*. Not an apostle or an angel from heaven can release creatures from the demands of duty to their creator, for while we are the work of the hand of God, and continue to be creatures, this law never ceases to command perfect obedience to the God that made us, viz. "that we must love him with all our soul, and with all our strength."

Nor do all the lessening expressions which the apostle uses in his epistle to the *Hebrews* against the law, give us a release from the moral law, for his design is only to shew the weakness and unprofitableness of the *Jewish* law or covenant of *Sinai* in comparison of the glorious state of the gospel, and the new covenant, when the moral law shall be written on the hearts of men. *Heb.* vii. 8. and viii. 10, 13. This is the law that must stand, for ever, when the *Jewish* covenant vanishes and is abolished.

founded, and which gives force and authority to them all. Now there is a hainous evil contained in the nature of sin, if we consider the following characters of it.

I. "It is an affront to the authority and government of a wise and holy God, a God who has sovereign right to make laws for his creatures, and has formed all his commands and prohibitions according to infinite wisdom. Every act of wilful sin does as it were deny the sovereignty of God over us and the propriety that God has in us, according to the expression of profane sinners, *Psal.* xii. 4. "Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?" Wilful sin against God renounces his right to govern us and pours high contempt upon his wisdom and his righteous dominion; it denies his laws to be wise and righteous, as though they were not fit to be enjoined of God or practised of men.

II. "Sin carries in the nature of it high ingratitude to God our Creator, and a wicked abuse of that goodness which has bestowed upon us all our natural powers and talents, our limbs, our senses, and all our faculties of soul and body." Such a Creator, who has furnished his creatures with so many excellent faculties, may reasonably expect and demand of them a return of love and obedience; but to employ these very talents and powers for the dishonour of him who gave them, is abominable in it self and highly provoking to that God who formed us.

III. Sin against the law of God "breaks in upon that wise and beautiful order which God has appointed to run through his whole creation." *Prov.* xvi. 4. "God has made all things for himself" and his own glory; but if we set up ourselves and our own honour as the chief end of all, and neglect to pay our duty and honours to the blessed God, we run counter to this divine appointment, and place our selves in the room of God. He has ordained that his creatures should be mutually helpful to each other, and that man should love his neighbour; but if malice and envy and falsehood prevail in us, and if cruelty and injustice be practised toward our fellow creatures, the proper and beautiful harmony between the intelligent creatures is broken, and it is a hateful thing in the eyes of God to see those rules of order violated, renounced and trampled upon, which he has established with so much wisdom and justice. Yet further, God has ordained reason in man to govern his appetites and passions and all his inferior powers: But sin brings shameful confusion into our very frame, while it exalts the appetites and the passions to reign over our reason, to break the rules and dictates of conscience, and transgress all the bounds of reasonable restraint. Sin working in the heart gives a loose to those licentious and unruly powers of nature, and spreads wild disorder through all the life.

IV. As it is the very nature of sin to bring disorder into the creation of God, so it's natural consequences are pernicious to the sinful creature! Every act of wilful sin tends to deface the moral image of God in the soul, and ruin the best part of his workmanship. It warps the mind aside from it's chief good, and turns the heart away from God and all that is holy. Sin forms itself in the heart into an evil principle and habit of disobedience; one sin makes way for another, and increases the wretched trade of sinning. A frequent breaking the restraints of law and conscience, not only strengthens the inclination to vice, but it infeebls the voice and power of conscience to withhold us from sin; it sets man a running in the paths of intemperance and malice, folly and madness, down to perdition and misery: It many times brings painful diseases upon the body, and it is the spring of dreadful sorrows in the soul: All these are the natural consequences of sin.

V. In the last place I add, "sin provokes God to anger, as he is the righteous governor of the world; it brings guilt upon the creature, and exposes it to the punishments

punishments threatened by the broken law. When sin entered into the nature of man there was an end of all the friendly converse between him and his maker. Man is afraid of God, and God is angry with man. Sin throws him out of his maker's former favour, and exposes him to the wrath and indignation of a righteous and almighty God, who will vindicate the honours of his own law. He is a "God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and he is angry with the wicked every day." *Pfal.* vii. 11. The great creator and governor of the universe will not always bear to be affronted by such contemptible little worms as we are: "If we turn not from our evil ways, he will whet his sword, he has bent his bow and made it ready, he hath prepared for him the instruments of death," and the soul of the sinner shall feel his arrows. Verses 12, 13.

And yet further, as God has set up conscience in the bosom of man to be a witness for God there, and to put man in mind of his maker's law and his own duty, so this power called conscience is also ordained to be a judge in the heart of man in the room of God, and to sentence and condemn the guilty creature, and to begin the execution of this sentence with sharp anguish of heart, with inward reproaches and bitter terrors. This home-bred torment is a hell upon earth, and it often begins before the sinner dies.

Who sees not the dreadful evil of sin, in the wretched change that is introduced by it into the creation of God in the upper and lower worlds? It has turned angels of light into devils and spirits of darkness: It has thrown millions of glorious and happy beings out of their heavenly habitation: It made our first parents afraid of their maker even in paradise, and turned them out of that happy garden. It brought many curses upon human nature, many sorrows and sufferings of every kind. It is sin that has run through every generation, and exposed us to all the evils that we feel, and to all that we fear, either from the hand of God, or our fellow-creatures. While man stood innocent and obedient, nothing could hurt him; but he broke the law of his God and renounced his government, and the bonds of love between mankind are broken, and the brute creatures have broke their subjection to man in a great degree. He who was made to govern them is afraid of them, and has often been destroyed by them: Innocence had been a sure and everlasting defence. All the desolations that have been made by famine and pestilence, and wars and earthquakes, and by the rage of wild beasts from the beginning of the world, are owing to the sin of man.

But these thoughts bring me down to the fourth general head of my discourse, which is to consider the proper demerit of sin, or what is the punishment it deserves. This I shall represent under these four plain propositions.

Proposition I. "When God made man at first, he designed to continue him in life and happiness so long as man continued innocent and obedient to the law, and thereby maintained his allegiance to God his maker." This is agreeable to the terms of the law represented in *Rom.* ii. 7. If he had patiently continued in well doing he should have enjoyed glory and honour, immortality and eternal life: And the blessed God seems to have promised it to man, at least by way of emblem and sacrament, in giving him the tree of life, and perhaps also by a more express promise of life, which through the designed brevity of the history, *Moses* might not mention.

Proposition II. "By a wilful and presumptuous transgression of the law, man violated his allegiance to God his maker, and forfeited all good things that his creator had given him, and the hope of all that he had promised." Every sin incurs a forfeiture

feiture of life it self, and all the present and future comforts of it, according to the express words of the threatening, *Gen. ii. 17.* "In the day that thou eatest of the forbidden fruit thou shalt surely die," that is, thou shalt become mortal and liable to death\*. And the apostle tells us, *Rom. vi. 23,* "The wages of sin is death." Nor is such a forfeiture of life and the blessings of it by sin, utterly unknown to the heathen world, as *St. Paul* declares, *Rom. i. 32.* "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death:" And I think the very light of nature might find out this; for it would be strange indeed if God the Creator should be bound to continue life or any blessing to a creature which had broken his allegiance to his maker, and by a wilful and presumptuous offence, had as it were renounced the very end and design for which he was made.

Proposition III. "This forfeiture of life and the blessings of it by sin, is an everlasting forfeiture." Every sin is usually and justly supposed to increase it's demerit or desert of punishment, according to the dignity of the person whose law is broken. Sin against a father or a prince carries greater guilt in it, than that which is committed against a neighbour or a servant: And in this way of argument sin against God appears to have a sort of infinite evil in it, because it is committed against the infinite majesty of heaven: And on this account every sin deserves a sort of infinite or everlasting punishment, that is, an everlasting loss of life and all the blessings of it, which are eternally forfeited thereby. And perhaps this is the lowest punishment that ever is inflicted for the lowest degree of sin or guilt, where the law of God is suffered to take it's proper course in executing the penalty; for the mere loss of life is a less punishment than the continuance of it in any degree of misery.

Proposition IV: "There is scarce any actual, that is, wilful sin, but carries with it some particular aggravations, and these deserve such further positive punishments as the wisdom and justice of God shall see reason to inflict. Hence arises the penal continuance in life with the loss of all the comforts of it, that is, the pains and sorrows of the future state †. God is the righteous governor of the world, his justice weighs in the nicest balances every command of his own law, and every grain of the sinners offences, with all their circumstances of guilt and aggravation; and strict justice distributes sorrows in proportion to sins: This appears in the punishment of *Babylon*, *Rev. xviii. 6.* "God hath remembered the iniquities of *Babylon*, and rewarded her as she rewarded his saints: Double vengeance unto her, according to her double malice and persecution: How much she hath glorified her self and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her." And this proportion of sorrow.

\* Death in it's original, and most proper and natural sense, signifies the loss of life, and together with it the loss of all it's blessings and comforts. This is the common if not the universal sense of the word in the writings of *Moses*: And in the sanction of a law it is reasonable to suppose the word is used in it's most natural and proper sense. Death in scripture is used sometimes for the loss of privileges, blessings and comforts, even where life remains: In this sense it signifies the soul's loss of the image of God, of holiness and peace: This is called spiritual death. Thus the *Ephesians* are said to be dead in trespasses and sins. *Ephes. ii. 1.* Sometimes death signifies the loss of blessings in the world to come, together with positive sorrows and sufferings both in soul and body for ever. So in *Rom. viii. 13.* "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." And *John vi. 50.* "This the bread which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." In *Rev. xxi. 8.* this is called the second death. Now death in all these senses is either the natural consequent of sin, or it is the legal punishment of it, according to it's several aggravations, as will appear afterward.

† This is usually called eternal death, or the punishment of hell.

Sorrow to sin will terribly appear in the last judgment and the final punishment of sinners in the world to come\*.

It is time now to conclude this discourse with some few reflexions.

Reflexion I. Is the law of God in perpetual force, and is every transgression of it so heinous an evil; then let "us take a survey how wretched and deplorable is the state of mankind by nature. We have all broken the law of our God, which we have been all bound to obey; we are still bound to obey it, and are still breakers of it. Our daily thoughts, our words and our deeds sufficiently shew us that we are transgressors, and there is in our nature a perpetual propensity to transgress. Where is the mortal that has lived according to the purity and perfection of this law? "There is none righteous; no, not one." *Rom. iii. 10, 12.* Where is the son or daughter of *Adam*, that is not pronounced guilty and condemned by it? "Every mouth is stopped, and all the world is guilty before God." What a miserable region is this earth, overspread with sinful inhabitants, criminal creatures, who are all transgressors against the law of the God that made them, and by the sentence of that law stand condemned to death, considered in their natural state?

Reflexion II. Is the moral law of such constant obligation, and is death the due recompence of every transgression of it; "then it is necessary for ministers to preach this law, and it is necessary for hearers to learn it. We should all know our duty and our danger. Not the best of christians are arrived at a dispensation above the knowledge and the practice of this law. There is no honour done to the gospel by explaining it in such a manner as to release us from the duties of the moral law; for it is one great design of the gospel to restore us again to a chearful and regular obedience to it. To release christians from the precepts of the law is to make "*Christ* the minister of sin, and to turn the grace of our God into wantonness," which the apostles *Paul* and *Jude* speak of with detestation and abhorrence. *Gal. ii. 17.* *Jude* verse 4. To pretend that obedience to the moral law is needless for christians who believe the gospel, is to deny and destroy, as much as in us lies, the great end for which *Christ* and the gospel came into the world; which is to "redeem us from all iniquity—that we might be zealous of good works." *Tit. ii. 14.* "To deliver us from the curse of the law," and the condemnation of it, that we might love the precepts of the law, and practise them with delight and newness of heart.

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\* Now from the desert of sin and the punishment due to it being set in this light, I would humbly enquire whether we may not better learn the meaning of the apostle; *Rom. v. 12—14.* when he says, "death entered into the world by sin, and passes upon all men for that all have sinned; that is, sin is imputed to all, and death reigns over them, even over those that have not sinned after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression, which is generally interpreted concerning infants, who have committed no actual personal sin as *Adam* did: Yet here is a forfeiture of life and it's blessings derived to the children of *Adam*, and they come under a sentence of death by original imputed sin, which we may suppose to be the lowest kind of guilt. But in *Rom. ii. 8, 9.* "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish are denounced against every soul of man that doth evil," that is, that doth commit wilful actual sin, because there are special aggravations, some of a greater and some of a lesser kind, that belong to all actual iniquities.

Whether therefore sin has any particular aggravation attending it or no, there is an everlasting forfeiture of life incurred by it, and an eternal loss of the blessings of it; and whatsoever further aggravations the sin carries in it, so much further pain or anguish does it deserve in body, or in mind, or in both, that is, it requires so much further continuance in life and being, as to sustain that degree of anguish and sorrow which is due to the sinner: And therefore the life of a wicked soul is continued in sorrows, in the other world after the death of the body as a punishment for sin; and therefore also at the last day shall be raised again, that all wilful and impenitent sinners may sustain punishments according to the various dispensations of God under which they have lived, and the several aggravations of their sins; and all these things shall be perfectly adjudged by the wisdom and righteousness of God, "who is the judge of the whole earth, and always does what is right." *Gen. xviii. 25.*

It is not therefore our preaching of the law to promote the gospel, that deserves the reproach of a legal sermon ; but to preach the law instead of the gospel, or to preach the gospel as a law of works. *Christ* and *St. Paul* well understood the gospel, and yet they both preached the law in the commands and terrors of it. We must learn the law if we would be acquainted with our own guilt and danger, or if we would know our duty, and practise religion and virtue. “ By the law is the knowledge of sin,” and by the law our feet are guided into the paths of righteousness. It is in the glass of the law of God that we see the sinfulness of our hearts and lives : It discovers every blot in our souls, and every blemish in our conversation : It lays us under guilt, it makes us know our misery, it humbles us to the dust before God, and is made use of by the blessed Spirit to drive us out of our selves, and all our own pretences to righteousness, that we may seek the appointed salvation of *Jesus*, and fly to our better hope.

Reflexion III. “ What a holy regard and jealousy has God shewn for the honour of his everlasting law, and what a sacred indignation has he manifested against sin, when he sent his own Son to obey this law, and to suffer for our disobedience to it ?” Not the Son of God himself when he came into flesh and blood was exempted from the duties of this law, and he magnified it and made it honourable by his practice of it in perfection : And when so glorious and divine a person condescended to become a sacrifice for our transgressions against this law, he gave the highest instance of his own veneration for it as well as of the just resentment of God his Father against every sin. The great and glorious God, the governor of the world, thought it more necessary and becoming his majesty that the Son of his love should be put to a painful and shameful death to make a propitiation for our sins against this law, than that any one transgression should be pardoned without an atonement. These awful sentiments should be an everlasting caution to us against entertaining slight thoughts of the evil of sin. It is no trifling matter to indulge the least sin, when it awakens the resentment and wrath of the eternal God. Fools are they indeed that “ make a mock of sin, *Prov. xiv. 9.* when the Son of God must die, before it could be pardoned.

Reflexion IV. “ How glorious is the wisdom and the mercy of the gospel, which does honour to the law in every respect, which prepares a honourable atonement and pardon for guilty rebels who have broken this everlasting law, and provides grace and power to renew our nature according to the demands of it.” It not only pardons returning transgressors, but it promises to write this law in the hearts of men, that it may be better observed and obeyed. A double and complete salvation. Read the language of the gospel and rejoice in it, *Heb. viii. 10.* “ This is the covenant, saith the Lord, that I will make with men ; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” And it is repeated *Heb. x. 16, 17.* The law of God requires universal and everlasting obedience, and it is an unspeakable blessing to have this obedience made natural and easy by sanctifying grace.

Reflexion V. “ Happy is the world above, where such natural and such easy obedience is for ever paid to this law of God without the least transgression.” The moral law carries all it's demands up to that blessed country, and whatsoever other laws are in force there, it is this eternal law that gives authority to them all, and every inhabitant answers all the demands of it by a free and chearful obedience. Happy world indeed, where so pure and so perfect a law of the Creator cannot charge one creature with transgression and guilt ! A world without sorrow and without sin ! A strange unknown blessing to creatures such as we, who were born and brought up  
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in this dark region of sins and sorrows ! It is the office of the law here on earth to give us the knowledge of sin ; but there it shall lose this office, it shall convince us of sin no more ; for it shall dwell in us, to discover the beauty of holiness and to make us for ever holy. O when will the day come, that we shall be sanctified in this complete degree ? When shall that blessed state commence, and the law be wrought into our nature with such power, and be practised with such perfection, that it will be able to bring no charge of sin against us either in thought, word or deed for ever ? While we groan here, being burdened under the remainders of corruption, while the law of God which works in our consciences gives us many a severe reproof and heart-ake, let us look forward with hope and desire toward that state where our hearts shall be moulded into the very form of this law by the efficacy of divine grace, where sin shall be banished from all the powers of our souls, and pains and sorrows and death, and all the bitter fruits of sin, shall be done away, and shall be found no more for ever. Amen.

## S E R M O N VI.

## The Lord's day, or christian sabbath.

GENESIS II. 3.

*And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it ; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.*

**I**N the history of the creation of the world and the beginning of mankind, *Moses* gives us an account of the appointment of a sabbath, or one day in seven that should be sanctified or separated from the common affairs of this life, devoted to the purposes of religion, and receive a peculiar blessing from God. I think it cannot reasonably be supposed, as some writers have done, that the sacred historian would take such special notice in this place of a certain day, which was not appointed at that time, but which should be appointed and sanctified and blessed among the *jews* two thousand four hundred years afterwards. It is probable that the most ancient patriarchs did, according to this early appointment, observe it as a day of rest from labour and of the worship of God, their Creator. And it is very evident that if it were lost among the nations, it was renewed again by *Moses* to the people of *Israel*, with many particular sanctions: and there is still one day in seven continues in the new testament to be a day of christian worship, observed by the apostles and first disciples. So that upon the whole survey of the dispensations of God to men, as they are recorded in the bible, "it seems highly probable, that there is some sabbath or one day in seven divinely appointed both for the rest of man and the worship of God, which has run through all dispensations both before and after *Moses*, and which must remain to the end of the world."

It is impossible, in the compass of one short sermon, to run through all the reasonings \* that are necessary to confirm this doctrine; yet that I may give some short hints toward the proof of a sabbath running through all ages, I desire you will consider the following particulars.

1. "What was the time when the first appointment of a sabbath was given to men, and who were the persons to whom it was given?" Was it not in paradise as soon as ever man was created that God claimed one day in seven for his own worship, as well as gave it unto *Adam* for his rest and release from labour in the garden of *Eden*? Now there is at least as much reason and as much need for all the sons of *Adam* in all ages and nations, in their feeble and sinful state, to have a day appointed for their own rest and for the worship of their God, as there was for *Adam* himself in paradise and in a state of innocence; for his body was then in perfection of health and vigour, and his mind more inclined to remember God and worship him.

2. "Consider

\* These reasonings are now published in a book entitled "The holiness of times, places and persons under the the *jewish* and christian dispensations considered and compared." 1738. See volume the second, pages 395—418.

2. "Consider the original reason that is given for one day in seven to be sanctified," and this seems to confirm the perpetuity of it. God rested on the seventh day from his work of creation: The sabbath was given to man to put him in mind of the creation of the world by the true God in six days, and to do honour to God the Creator. But all mankind in all ages, as well as *Adam* their father, should preserve this truth in their remembrance: and the continual return of a seventh day of rest is an everlasting memorial of it, and gives opportunities continually for paying homage to that almighty being that made us.

3. "Consider the place which this command of the sabbath bears in the law of God, when it was renewed and enjoined to the nation of *Israel*:" This doth in the opinion of most divines add considerable weight to this argument. It is one of the commands of the moral law, that was pronounced by the mouth of God himself on *Sinai*, with much glory and terror: It stands amongst those laws in *Exodus* xx. 1—17. which are conceived to be moral and perpetual, except in some small limitations and accommodations to the *jewish* state. "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord thy God," &c. It was written with the rest in the two tables of stone, which perhaps in that typical dispensation might denote perpetuity, and that it must last like a rock for ever. It was written by the finger of God himself, which gives a peculiar honour to it, and it was laid up in the ark of the covenant on which God dwelt in a bright cloud, or a blaze of glory behind the cloud; and thus it was put under God's own eye and care, together with those laws which are of perpetual obligation.

It is granted indeed that in the books of *Moses* there are some peculiar rigors and ceremonies, and severe prohibitions of every earthly work under capital penalties added to the sabbath and enjoined to the *jews*; but these do not belong to the sabbath considered in itself, but are properly the ceremonial and *jewish* appendages of it.

4. When the apostles by divine appointment had abolished all the *jewish* sabbaths, and all those ceremonies and peculiar austerities which belonged to the observation of the seventh day in the *jewish* state, *Gal.* iv. 9—11. and *Coloss.* ii. 16, 17. yet "they still practised the observation of one day in seven, even the first day of the week, for christian worship; and they taught it to the churches." It was on the first day when the disciples met together with the doors shut for fear of the *jews*, that the Saviour arose and appeared to them more than once, *John* xx. 19—23. and 26—30. It was on this day that pentecost fell out on that year, when the Spirit was poured down upon the disciples, as learned men assure us by their calculations, and then were three thousand converted at *Peter's* Sermon, *Acts* ii. 1—4, 41. It was on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread at *Troas*, and *Paul* preached to them. *Acts* xx. 7. It is on this day that *St. Paul* gives orders for a collection for the saints, or at least that every one should then lay by him in store for this purpose, in *1 Cor.* xvi. 1, 2. This same order he gave also to the churches of *Galatia*. Thus the collection for the poor, which was made in the *jewish* synagogues on the sabbath, seems to be transferred to the first day of the week among christians.

Let it be further added, that the religious appointment and observation of the first day of the week was so universal and so well known, that it acquired a honourable title in early times, and was called the Lord's day, *Rev.* i. 10. even as the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine was called the Lord's supper, both having a reference to the

the appointment and honour of our blessed Saviour, 1 *Cor.* xi. 20, 23. This practice also was continued by all those who professed the christian religion in the primitive times, and they were known and distinguished from the heathens as well as from the *jews* by this particular character of observing the Lord's day. If we take all these things together, they give us a great deal of reason to infer, that our blessed Saviour himself appointed the celebration of this day, and gave the apostles notice of it among the rest of those things which he taught them in the forty days after his resurrection, when he appeared to them, conversed with them, and instructed them in things that pertained to the kingdom of God, or the institution or support of his visible church. *Acts* i. 3.

5. "Consider the reasonableness and the necessity of such an appointment in order to keep up religion in the world, as well as to give rest to the animal bodies of men and beasts." This is another proof of the morality or perpetuity of it. The seasons of worship which men would have chosen, and even of natural rest which some men would have allowed either to themselves or their servants, probably would have been short and few enough, if God had not always devoted one day in seven to these purposes. It is evident in common experience and by observation made upon persons and churches and nations, that where no sabbath is observed, where one day in seven is not separated to God by a rest from the usual labours of life and a dedication to his service, religion is in a very decaying state and in great danger to be lost. As it is a common confession of persons who fall into the vilest crimes and are executed by the public justice of the magistrate, that their disregard of the sabbath was the beginning of their guilt and ruin, and led the way to all iniquity; so a careful observation of one day in seven for religious purposes has been the great spring and support of virtue and piety amongst mankind, and the constant guardian of it in its purity and power.

Now if all these considerations put together will but go so far as to make it highly probable, that one day in seven has been always the proportion of time which God has appointed for a sabbath, that is, for rest from labour and divine worship, this probability as to the time and manner of a duty should go for evidence, where no further evidence can be procured, and where the duty itself is clear and certain: And since some rest from labour, and some seasons for worship are necessary, we cannot do a more reasonable thing than to separate that proportion of time which the wisdom of God has certainly separated in some of his dispensations to men, and most probably in all of them.

Before we proceed, it will be necessary to answer a few enquiries.

Question I. "Why was the first day of the seven appointed for christian worship rather than any of the others?"

Answer. When God rested from his work of creation he appointed the seventh day for the ancient sabbath, to keep in mind the Creator of the world and his work; and so when *Christ* rested from his works of redemption he appointed the first day, even the day on which he arose from the grave, as most proper to keep the great work of our redemption in memory. That the first day of the week was observed by the apostles and first christians in honour of the resurrection of *Christ*, and the finishing of their redemption, is evident from several hints of scripture, and many plain expressions in the history of the primitive church\*.

I might

\* There have been some very great and learned men who suppose that the apostle *Paul* in the fourth chapter to the *Hebrews* builds a christian sabbath on this principle. See verse 4. "He spake in a certain place of

I might add here also, that as the redemption or rest from *egyptian* bondage given them by God and *Moses* is mentioned in *Deut. v. 15.* as one reason of the *jewish* sabbath, so our greater redemption by *Christ* or rest from the bondage of sin and *Satan* being on this day completed, seems by parallel reasoning to be a proper argument for observing the christian sabbath.

Besides, it is worthy of our notice that by chusing the first day of the seven for a sabbath after the seventh day was abolished, there remains still one day in seven to perpetuate the memory of the creation, and it is the first day of the seven to perpetuate the memory of the work of redemption. Thus our Lord's day includes both.

Question II. "But what need is there of a whole day devoted to this purpose under the new testament? Is it not enough to perform christian worship in public assemblies, and thereby answer the purposes of the day, without observing that day as a sabbath or day of rest?" I answer,

Answer. It is too evident an observation, that unless the whole day be separated from the business and pleasures of this life, the hours and minutes of worship will for the most part be but poorly improved, and become much less profitable to our spiritual interest. It is hardly possible to attain the best ends of preaching and hearing, praying and praising, administering and receiving of the Lord's supper, if we come into the sanctuary with our heads and hearts full of the affairs of this life, and all our earthly cares buzzing about our souls. And how much less good will a sermon do us, if as soon as the hour of worship is ended, we run immediately from God and plunge ourselves into worldly affairs, without giving our thoughts leisure and leave to reflect on what we have heard? And much worse would it be still for religion if we spent the rest of the day in recreations and sports, for these carnalize the spirit and estrange it from God and things heavenly much more than the common labours of life.

Alas! how difficult a matter do we find it to disengage our thoughts from this world when we come into the presence of God, even though we have a day appointed for this purpose? How hard it is to shake off all the dust of this earth when we would arise to God in devotion? And though we have bid farewell to our secular concerns the night before, and have had a long interval of sleep to divide our thoughts from this vain and busy life, yet how do the weighty cares of it hang continually upon our spirits, or the trifles and amusements of it hover and play about our souls, and divert our hearts from the exercise of godliness? And let us think with ourselves, how much harder it would be to fulfil the duties of the sanctuary with any good success, to improve public worship to our further acquaintance with God and things heavenly, to our greater delight in him, our mortification of sin and our growth in holiness, if there were no time devoted to religion but only that hour or two while we are at church? How would the words of the preacher run off from our souls, like a stream of oil gliding

of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. Verse 7. Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in *David*, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if *Jesus*, that is, *Josua*, had given them rest, that is, if he had given them all that complete rest in the land of *Canaan* which was typified by the *jewish* sabbath, then he would not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest, or "sabbatism" as the *greek* word is, there remaineth the keeping of a sabbath to the people of God; for he that is entered into his rest, which they refer to *Jesus Christ* in the work of redemption, he hath also ceased or rested from his own works as God did from his." See doctor *Owen*, "in his treatise of the sabbath." Thus the Son of God, the redeemer, is supposed to have appointed a day or sabbath to celebrate his rest from his labours and sufferings, as God, the Father, the Creator, did when he rested from his works.

over a marble, if there were no recollection to fix it in our memory? How easily would *Satan* pluck up the good seed that was sown in the heart, if we join to assist him by giving a loose immediately to the cares or delights of this life, and call them to break in upon us when the sermon is ended? We may reasonably conclude, if *Christ* appointed the first day of the week for a season of the worship of God, he appointed it also to be a season of rest from the cares and labours of this life, that this worship might be better performed, and the great ends of it best secured:

Question III. "When must the christian begin his sabbath or the Lord's day, how must it be spent, and when must it end?" Here I answer,

Answer. That whatsoever is the usual and customary beginning and ending of the days of common labour and business in the nation where we live, such should be the beginning and ending of the Lord's day, or day of rest. The one day of rest answers to the six days of labour in the words of the fourth command, and must begin and end like them.

The *jews* began their day at the evening or setting sun, and it ended the next evening. The nations of *Europe* where we dwell begin and end the day at twelve a clock at mid-night. But as the design of rest and worship on the Lord's day is to bear a proportion of one in seven to the business and labours of life on the other six days, we may reasonably suppose that the command never requires any thing more, than that the same hours be spent at home or abroad, in public or private, for the general purposes of religion upon the Lord's day, which are spent in the common affairs of life on other days; and consequently that the time which is devoted to eating and sleeping and the necessities of nature and short intervals of refreshment on other days, may be employed to the same purposes on this day also. Public worship seems to be the chief design of the day; but when we are not engaged in public worship, we need not be, and indeed we ought not to be, idle, but we should employ ourselves, as far as health and other circumstances will allow, in reading or hearing divine things at home, in prayer, singing psalms, alone or in families, in meditation, in holy conferences, or any of those actions which have a more direct and immediate tendency to the knowledge and worship of God, to the improvement of religion and virtue, and to our preparation for the everlasting rest and worship of heaven.

Question IV. "May we not labour or work on the Lord's day to preserve ourselves from imminent dangers or threatening calamities, or to do good to the miserable or the helpless?" &c. I answer,

Answer. That works of necessity and of mercy were not excluded on this day, even under the rigors of *judaism*, where rest seems to be the primary or most obvious design of the sabbath; and much less should those necessary and merciful works be excluded in the christian dispensation, where the chief design is not bodily rest but worship; such works, I mean, as leading cattle to drink, giving them fodder, sailing a ship, quenching a fire; stopping inundations of water, defending a town or city that is invaded by enemies, resisting an assault, raising cattle out of a pit whereinto they are fallen, relieving the distressed, nursing the sick, and taking care of children. In short, there is nothing of this kind forbidden, even though it may in a great measure sometimes hinder the proper work of the day, which is religion and worship; for "God will have mercy and not sacrifice." *Mat.* xii. 1—7. "Jesus healed the sick on the sabbath," verses 10. 13. and his "disciples rubbed out the corn from the ears when they were hungry;" *Mark* ii. 23—28. and though the pharisees reproved them,

them, yet the Lord pronounced them blameless. "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath," *Luke vi. 1-11. John v. 8, 9.* Even the infirm man who was healed, was ordered by our Saviour "to take up his bed and walk," verses 10-12. as a proof of his cure. "The Son of God is Lord of the sabbath," *Mark ii. 27, 28.* and he still more abates the severities of it when the *jewish* dispensation is finished.

Under the new testament we have no such strict and severe prohibitions of every care and labour in the common returns of the Lord's day, where they do not interfere with the primary design of it, that is, the worship of God and our best improvement thereby. As I would not bind new burdens on the servants of *Christ*, so neither would I release what *Christ* has bound. And therefore I say, where the necessary labours of a few in some part of the Lord's day, by providing food and other conveniencies of life, render many more persons capable of spending the day in religion, I cannot find that the new testament forbids it. I say, in some part of the Lord's day, for I think none ought to be so constantly employed in secular affairs as to exclude the whole day from it's proper business, that is, religion or devotion, unless in the cases of necessity before mentioned. I think it may be maintained in general, that as whatsoever tends to destroy or nullify the great designs of religious worship should be omitted on the Lord's day, so some lesser labours which tend to make the performances of religion more easy, chearful and regular to ourselves and to great numbers of others, may safely be performed on this day without a sinful violation of it. But wheresoever the conscience is doubtful, it is best to chuse the safer side. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in what he alloweth." *Rom. xiv. 22.*

And I would take leave to add here also, that as it is a day of sacred rest and refreshment, we are not called to draw out the duties of worship to such unreasonable and tiresome lengths, nor to be so incessant and uninterrupted in works of religion on this day, as would overmuch fatigue the spirits, and overpress animal nature. This does not tend to the edification of men, or the honour of God; but it has a certain and evident tendency to prejudice younger persons against the observation of the Lord's day, if we render the services of it too irksome and tedious. According as our constitution is more or less healthy, or our circumstances in the world, as servants or masters, as poor or rich, call us more or less to necessary works on this day, so we are to employ ourselves in the affairs of religion at such hours, and with such intervals of release and refreshment, as that the sabbath of the Lord may be a pleasure to us, and may not overtire feeble nature instead of giving it rest. We should all employ this day to the designs and ends appointed, to the honour of God and our risen Saviour, not with *jewish* rigors and superstitious abstinences, not in indulgence of the flesh and lazy idleness, not in sports and pastime, but with christian wisdom improve our time for religious purposes according to our capacities and stations, knowing that we are in a state of gospel liberty, freed from a state and spirit of bondage, and rejoicing in the Lord our deliverer and Saviour.

This leads me to some practical exhortations.

I. "Delight in the Lord's day as a high privilege bestowed upon you: make it the matter of your holy joy." Give thanks to God your Creator, who has not suffered you to wear out all your time in the drudgeries of this world, and the cares and toils of a mortal state, but has appointed one day in seven for your release from the business of earth and your employment in the work of heaven. Give thanks to *Jesus* your redeemer, who on this day finished the work of your redemption, and arose from the dead; and as those which are risen with *Christ* set your "affections

on

on the things that are above, where *Christ* is at the right hand of God." *Col* iii. 1, 2. "This is the day which the Lord has made, we will be glad and rejoice therein." *Psal.* cxviii. 24. Bless his holy name that he has appointed christians to assemble themselves together for divine and heavenly purposes on this day, and be not the last in those assemblies, because if you are frequently so, it looks as if you had no mind to attend upon them at all.

Give thanks again to God the Creator and governor of the world, who has fixed your birth and habitation in a land wherein the Lord's day is observed, and wherein there are laws to guard the observance of it; so that you are not disturbed and hindered by the sons of wickedness in the practices of religion on this day. This is a distinguishing favour which you enjoy above the christians of the primitive ages who dwelt under heathen princes, where they had much ado to observe any sabbath, or to employ the Lord's day in religious practices, while the whole nation around them was engaged, either in the busy affairs of this mortal life, or in vile idolatry and superstition.

Do not say, concerning the duties of worship on this day as the *jewish* hypocrites did in the days of the prophets *Amos* and *Malachi*, "Behold, what a weariness is it? and when will the sabbath be gone; that we may set forth wheat and sell corn?" *Mal.* i. 13. *Amos* viii. 5. Do not so much enquire, what earthly business may I do on this day without sin, as what is there I can omit till to-morrow? What worldly business can I be excused from doing on God's holy day? This will discover a truly religious temper indeed, and shew that you delight in the things of God more than in things carnal or earthly.

II. "Dispose of your earthly affairs wisely in the foregoing week, so that if possible you may not have the Lord's day, which is a day of rest and worship, invaded and intrenched upon by the cares and business of this world." Endeavour to quit yourselves of them so early the foregoing evening, that they may not cut short your hours of sleep that night, and thereby render you listless and drowsy upon the day appointed for worship. There is a great deal of christian prudence and discretion to be seen in such a disposal of our worldly businesses, as may give us full leisure for God and heavenly things upon the Lord's day; that when our thoughts are rising up to our risen and ascended Saviour, we may not feel the cares of life hang about them like so many clogs and chains to drag us downwards, and divide our hearts from God and our Saviour again.

III. "Think of the promises which are made to those who with a religious care serve and worship God upon his appointed day." There are some very gracious words of this kind spoken to the *jews*, and may with equal justice be applied to those who observe the day of God's appointed rest, for the spiritual purposes of it under every dispensation. *Isa.* lvi. 1—7. "Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment and do justice, for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed;" which words have a plain reference to the gospel-state. "Blessed is the man—that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it;—the sons of the stranger who join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love his name, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar: I will give them, in my house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters." And in the lviii. chapter of the same prophecy, and verses 13, 14. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the



the Lord honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thy own ways, nor finding thy own pleasure, nor speaking thy own words, then shall thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will feed thee with the heritage of *Jacob* thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." And there has been a multitude of instances even under the gospel, wherein the blessings of the upper and the lower world have been plentifully poured in upon those who have observed the day of the Lord, and spent it to the sacred purposes for which it was designed. Their basket and their store has been sensibly enlarged and increased by a divine blessing, and their souls have received much of the dew of heaven, have brought forth abundant fruits of holiness, and been fitted in an eminent degree for the business and blessedness of the upper world. Our famous *english* judge, sir *Matthew Hale* has left it upon record as his own experience.

IV. "Whatsoever spiritual advantages or improvements you obtain on God's own day, take care that you do not lose them again amidst the labours or the pleasures of the following week. 2 *John* 8. "Look to yourselves that ye lose not the things which we have wrought," that is, that ministers may not lose their labours in preaching, nor the disciples lose their's in hearing. Treasure up something on every christian sabbath that may add to your spiritual riches, your knowledge, your faith, your zeal, your hope. It is a day appointed for the enriching of your souls; let not the cares of the world bury those treasures, or rob you of them. Take large steps towards the heavenly world on that day, and see that you be not drawn back again by the allurements or the toils of this mortal state. Maintain that savour and relish of divine things, that holy nearness to God and heaven, as far as possible amidst the business of life, which you have gained amidst the ordinances of the sanctuary. Thus you will have a sort of sanctification spread over all your earthly affairs, and you will walk with God in them all.

V. "Take notice what relish and satisfaction you find in the duties or services of the Lord's day, and let that be a test whereby you may judge of the sanctification of your souls, and your preparation for heaven." I grant those who are fatigued and overpressed with the labours of this life, may be well pleased with a day of rest from labour, from mere principles of nature, and the desire of ease or idleness: But do they love the work of a Lord's day? Do they delight in christian worship? Do they rejoice to remember a risen Saviour? Do they take pleasure in the remembrance of God in his glorious works of creation and redemption, and converse with him with a holy satisfaction in prayer, in praise and other religious exercises? Let us enquire, my friends, how it stands with us in this respect. Are we glad of a day of rest and release from the business of this life, that we may be more at leisure for God? Or could we be well enough pleased if there were no sabbaths? Are the ordinances of worship our delight? Do we take pleasure in devotion and practical godliness? Do the things of inward religion relish well with us? Are they our pleasure and our joy?

What shall we do in heaven if we are not possessed of this temper, if our spirits are neither suited to the blessedness nor business of it; and if this world with the cares and pleasures of it be our chief delight? And how can we expect to be ever fit for heaven, which is a state of everlasting separation from the businesses of this world, and the perpetual enjoyment of God, and *Jesus* the Saviour, if we do not make some advances towards this temper on every Lord's day that returns, which separates us from the world, and is designed to bring us toward God?

In the last place, I would add, "Let every Lord's day, every christian sabbath, lead your meditations, your faith and hope onward to the eternal rest in heaven, and the glorious worship of that world." Amidst all the fatigues and cares of this life, amidst all the interruptions you feel in your devotions here, and the inroads that are made upon your religious employments and joys, even on God's own day, yet still rejoice in the view and hope of that state where you shall find everlasting rest, a sabbath which never ends, and be for ever employed in divine exercises without the weariness of flesh or spirit. Alas! how soon are our souls tired here, or rather our animal natures, with spiritual exercises? How dull and drowsy is this flesh of our's? How do we feel our hearts ever wandering from our God and his worship? But there you shall behold the great God with a steady fixation of soul on him, even that God who created all things in six days, and shall give him the honour of that creation in an immortal sabbath. There you shall see the blessed *Jesus* who rose from the dead on the first christian sabbath, who fulfilled his work of redeeming you from worse than *egyptian* bondage, and laid the foundation of the new creation, even of new heavens and of a new earth. There you shall find complete and perpetual rest from all that is sinful and all that is painful; you shall enjoy a day of glorious and blissful worship in communion with the holy and happy inhabitants of that world, and it must be an everlasting day, for "there is no night there." *Rev. xxii. 5.*

S E R M.

## S E R M O N VII.

## Christian baptism.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.*

**I**N all the religions which God hath prescribed to mankind, there have ever been some outward rites or ceremonies appointed for man to perform, whereby God would represent the blessings of his own grace, and whereby men might profess their humble acceptance of those blessings, and their own correspondent obligations to duty. These are a sort of seals of the covenant of grace between God and man: Such were sacrifices, which we have good reason to believe were appointed to *Adam* just after his fall, when the Lord God made them coats of the skins of beasts which were sacrificed: Such was the rite of circumcision given to *Abraham* and his children: Such were the numerous trains of ceremonies or ordinances which were prescribed to the *jews* by the hand of *Moses*, wherein, by many offerings made by fire, by washings and sprinklings of water and of blood, the blessings of the covenant of grace were described in a sort of emblem or typical language; and the people gave up themselves to the Lord in a way of covenant, according to the several appointed rules of duty.

In the religion or gospel of *Christ*, there are but two ordinances of this kind, instituted for christians to observe, that is, baptism, which is performed by water, and the Lord's supper, which is celebrated by bread and wine. The institution of baptism is contained in the words of my text, "Go ye and teach all nations, or make disciples of them, as it is in the *greek*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost: and I am with you, to authorize this practice and to bless you therein, even to the end of the world." The Lord's supper is represented in *1 Cor. xi. 26.* "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come." Thus it appears that both of them are to continue till the Redeemer comes the second time, and puts an end to this world.

Baptism is my present subject, and in order to give you a brief sketch of it, I shall set the most important parts thereof before you in this plain easy method, as I think they may be derived from scripture.

I. I shall consider what this ordinance of baptism is, and what it doth imply or signify.

II. Who are the persons to whom it is to be administered.

III. In what manner this ceremony is to be performed.

IV. What practical inferences or exhortations may be drawn from this subject.

First,

First, "What is baptism, and what is implied in it, or intended by it?" The ordinance itself, that is, christian baptism, is the washing a person with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost. When it was introduced by *John* the baptist, it was but imperfect, and therefore it was repeated in the name of *Christ* to the *epheſians*, who had received the baptism of *John* before, *Acts* xix. 3—5. And even as our Lord himself practised it in the days of his personal ministry, it did not seem to be drawn out into it's complete form: *John* baptized his disciples, pointing their faith to *Jesus*, who should come after him: *Jesus* might possibly baptize into his own name as a great prophet, but not under the character of the *Messiah*, since he kept that point very much concealed from his common followers or disciples in his life-time. However, all that was done both under the ministry of *Christ*, and of *John* the baptist, seem to be continued and included in this most perfect form of baptism, which our Lord appointed to his apostles after his resurrection from the dead, and just before his ascent to heaven. Whatsoever I find therefore in the baptism of *John*, as well as of *Christ* himself, or his apostles, I may reasonably presume are contained also in the outward form, and in the spiritual signification of christian baptism.

Let us consider now, "What doth this baptism, this washing with water, mean and imply in a spiritual sense." And under most of the following particulars, I shall endeavour to shew what is the use of the sacred names of Father, Son, and Spirit in this ordinance.

I. "Christian baptism implies a humble acknowledgment of some defilement; otherwise there would be no need of washing." Sin is often represented in scripture as a matter of uncleanness, which pollutes the soul, and this it doth two ways. First, The principle of sin within us defaces the image of God, which was stamped on man in his first creation, and thereby it renders us unfit for the presence of God, and communion with him as he is a God of spotless holiness: And, secondly, The guilt of our actual sins exposes us to his punishing justice on account of the breach of his law, for every sin is a transgression of the law of God, and deserves death. Whoſoever therefore is baptized, doth profess and declare that he is a defiled creature, a sinner; that he is guilty in the sight of God, and lies exposed to his anger, that he is unfit to converse with him, or to stand before him. So the *jews* who attended on the ministry of *John*, *Matt.* iii. 6. "were baptized of him in *Jordan*, confessing their sins;" and therefore they came to the water seeking to be purified. The foundation of our hope and salvation is laid in the acknowledgment of our misery. This acknowledgment is eminently made to God the Father, as sustaining the character of supreme governor of the world, whom we have offended by sin.

II. "Baptism implies a belief of the blessed provision which God hath made in his gospel for the purification of our souls from sin, and all it's defilements."

I. "He provided for the removal of the guilt of sin;" for he sent his own Son *Jesus Christ* to take flesh and blood upon him, that he might die to make atonement for the sins of men, and that God, without dishonour to his governing justice, might pardon repenting sinners. This is sometimes called in scripture, "washing away our sins by the blood of *Christ*," *1 John* i. 7. *Rev.* i. 5. And for this reason the blood of *Christ* is called the "blood of sprinkling," *Heb.* xii. 24. Now this is particularly applied to baptism, *Acts* xxii. 16. "*Ananias* said to *Paul*, arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord *Jesus*." Therefore baptism is called the "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," *Mark* i. 4.

2. "God

2. "God hath also provided for the removal of the principle of sin, which defiles the soul of man, by the persuasive arguments of his gospel, which was revealed by the Spirit of God, and by the powerful operations of this Spirit on his heart." It is the Spirit of God, who is appointed to work on the dark and sinful mind of man, to change his corrupt nature, enlighten his mind, and give him a new bent and bias toward holiness. This is called "renewing us by his Spirit, regenerating us, or causing us to be born again by the Spirit, giving us a new heart and a new spirit, sprinkling clean water upon us, and making us clean, and pouring out his Spirit upon men, and their seed, *John* iii. 3, 6. *Ezek.* xxxvi. 35. *Isa.* xlv. 3. This also is in scripture applied to the ordinance of baptism, and therefore we are said to "be born of water, and of the Spirit," *John* iii. 5. And the "washing of regeneration is explained by the renewing of the holy Ghost which he shed on us abundantly," *Tit.* iii. 5, 6.

But here I would stay to observe, that though both the ceremonies of the gospel, baptism and the Lord's supper, do in some sort represent both these methods of purification from sin, that is, by the atoning blood of *Christ* and by his sanctifying Spirit: yet the Lord's supper more expressly represents the death and blood of *Christ*, and so more naturally and properly shews forth our pardon and justification from the guilt of sin by the atonement which *Christ* hath made, whereas it is the more peculiar office of baptism, to represent our regeneration or sanctification by the Spirit of God, or the cleansing our natures from the power and principle of sin, by pouring the holy Spirit upon us under the emblem of water; by which emblem in scripture the Spirit of God is often exhibited to us.

However, in general it is to be acknowledged, that christian baptism in the completeness of it, implies a belief of both these blessings, even these provisions of God the Father, for the cleansing us both from the guilt and from the principle of sin by the blood of *Christ*, and the operation of his Spirit: And I take this to be one reason why we are baptized in the name of the Father, as the author of these blessings, and of the Son and Spirit, as divine mediums to procure and convey them.

3. The next thing implied in christian baptism is a "humble acceptance of these blessings in the method of God's own appointment; that is, by repentance for sin in the sight of God, by faith in *Jesus Christ* his Son, and by seeking the influences of the holy Spirit, and obeying them." When we come under this ordinance, we do as it were by way of action and emblem consent to accept of this purification, both from the guilt and principle of sin; we repent and are ashamed of our past iniquities; we trust in *Jesus Christ* and his atonement for pardon; we declare our desire to become new and holy creatures, by the cleansing and purifying power of the Spirit of God in the gospel; and therefore when persons professed their belief in *Christ*, and repentance of their sins, they were baptized; and those who were sincere were inwardly cleansed from their defilements, and received both these blessings. See *1 Cor.* vi. 11. when the apostle had been reckoning up many vile pollutions of the inhabitants of *Corinth* before their conversion, "and such were some of you, saith he, but ye are washed in baptism as a token and seal that you are justified in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God." Faith and repentance were the great things required of those who were admitted to baptism: This was the practice of *John*, this the practice of the apostles in the history of their ministry. Did *John* the forerunner of *Christ* preach "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins?" *Matt.* iii. 2, 8. so *St. Peter*, *Acts* ii. 38. "Repent and be baptized in the name of *Jesus Christ* for the remission of your sins." Did *John* call them to "believe in *Jesus* who

should come after him?" *Acts* xix. 4. So *Philip* the evangelist saith to the eunuch, "If thou believest with all thy heart, that is, in *Jesus* as the Son of God, thou mayest be baptized," *Acts* viii. 37. He answered, I believe; and *Philip* baptized him."

And here the sacred names of Father, Son and Spirit are of great use and importance again. When we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, we do humbly accept of God, the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as our Father and our God: We accept of the Son of God as our Saviour, especially by the blood of his sacrifice, and of the holy Spirit as our sanctifier by his gospel, and his powerful influences.

4. Baptism implies also by necessary consequence, a "profession of our obligation to God the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit, and our engagement to act consistently with this solemnity;" that is, to live agreeably to these favours we receive from God, viz. the pardon of our sins, and the sanctification of our souls; to watch against sin for time to come, to abstain from all pollutions of flesh and spirit; for we are not washed by the blood and Spirit of *Christ* that we may defile ourselves again. We engage to carry on the work of repentance and mortification of sin all our lives, as well as to live upon *Christ* by faith for the remission of daily rising transgressions. In short, it includes a holy resolution through the grace of *Christ*, and by the aids of his Spirit to follow every other means which God hath appointed for the rooting out of sin, with all it's defilements from the soul, and restoring us to purity and holiness, and the likeness of God. Thus baptism becomes a seal of the covenant of grace between God and men, an acceptance of his blessings, and engagement to their correspondent duties, even as circumcision was to *Abraham*, "a seal of his justification by faith," *Rom.* iv. 11. and an eminent proof and assurance of his obedience. Persons who desire baptism, and yet will not take these obligations upon them, have no claim to this ordinance: And therefore *John* drove away the scribes and pharisees from this baptism, because they would not "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," *Matt.* iii. 7—9.

5. Baptism being significant of all these blessings and these duties, "it becomes the appointed ceremony and sign of professing the whole christian religion, and the rite or form of entering into the visible church of *Christ*." Those who are baptized are professed christians; they are avowed disciples of *Christ*. And herein also the sacred names of Father, Son and Spirit have their proper plain significancy. Baptism is a profession of the religion which was contrived by the wisdom and grace of God, the Father, it was published and preached to the world by *Jesus Christ*, his Son, and it was confirmed and established by the miraculous gifts and operations of the holy Spirit. It implies also a resolved obedience to the authority and commands of the Father, a professed belief of the gospel, as taught us by the Son, with a dependence on the grace and salvation of *Christ*, as carried on by all his offices of prophet, priest and king, together with a compliance with all the outward discoveries, and all inward influences of the holy Spirit: This is the duty, and these are the engagements of every professor of christianity. As circumcision was the mode of entrance into the *jewish* church, and becoming a professed disciple of *Moses*, and hereby an obligation arose to perform and practise the whole *jewish* law, *Gal.* v. 3. so by baptism, we lay ourselves under a holy obligation to practise the whole religion of *Christ*, and to wait for all it's promised blessings. We hope for the love and grace of the Father, the salvation of *Jesus Christ*, his Son, and the sanctifying and comforting influences of the holy Ghost; and we are hereby devoted to the service and honour of the blessed trinity

nity, God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; whose adorable unity in respect of the godhead, and whose three distinctions, in respect of their personal characters, have been set before you at large in a former sermon on this same text\*.

Having said thus much in describing the ceremony itself, and what is the spiritual meaning of it, we come now in the second place to enquire,

Who are the subjects of this ordinance of baptism, or to whom it is to be administered?

To this I answer, The first, the most proper, or at least the most evident subjects of it, are persons who confess their sins, and profess to repent of them, and who accept of this grace and salvation offered in the gospel: Those who have been taught the chief doctrines and duties of the gospel of *Christ*, and profess to believe and receive them, and to comply with them: Those who take upon them the religion of *Christ*, become his disciples, and give up their names to him. Here is no difference, whether *Greek* or *Jew*, whether male or female, as there was in the *Jewish* ceremony of circumcision, which belonged properly to the *Jewish* nation, and admitted none but males: But all professors of the gospel must receive this ceremony, and be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and holy Ghost; and this is the most common account the new testament gives us of this matter, that when persons professed their faith in *Christ*, they were baptized. Texts of this kind need not be cited they are so numerous.

But in the Christian church from its early ages, and we think from the apostles time, it hath been the custom also to baptize the infant children of professed Christians; and though there be no such express and plain commands or examples of it written in scripture as we might have expected, yet there are several inferences to be drawn from what is written, which afford a just and reasonable encouragement to this practice, and guard it from the censure of superstition and will-worship. This has been a long and troublesome dispute indeed among the churches since the reformation: I shall not pretend to debate it here, but only rehearse a few hints of argument, which are commonly used to vindicate the practice of baptizing children, viz.

1. That ever since God called the family of *Abraham*, and settled his visible church in it, he has never suffered it to fail. It was an "everlasting covenant that he made with *Abraham*, to be his God, and the God of his seed," *Gen. xvii. 7, 8.* "that he might be the father both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*," who were brought into the church, as in *Rom. iv. 11, 16.*

2. The *Jewish* and the Christian church are but one and the same visible church in a continued succession, though under different administrations and ordinances. The same spiritual promises and blessings which belonged to the church under the old testament, belong also to it under the new, *Acts ii. 39. 2 Cor. i. 20.* *Abraham* is represented as the root or stock of the visible church, *Rom. xi. 16, 17, &c.* The *Jewish* church are the natural branches of it, the *Gentiles* are ingrafted into the same stock, verses 17, 24. and partake of the blessings of it.

3. The children of the *Jews* were visible members of the *Jewish* church under the covenant of *Abraham*, and as such they were recognized, acknowledged and received into it by circumcision, as the door of entrance: Now circumcision was a seal in general, both of spiritual blessings, and outward privileges, *Rom. iv. 11.* A seal of the righteousness of faith, as well as of the possession of *Canaan*, and of the covenant of grace, as well as of the covenant of *Sinai*.

4. The children of Christians were never cut off from this privilege, when the fathers were received into the church, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles*; and therefore they are to be reckoned at least a sort of incomplete members of the Christian church

church also, under spiritual promises and blessings. When the *jews* the natural branches were cut off from the good olive tree, their little buds were cut off with them also; and when the *gentiles* by a profession of faith were grafted in as foreign branches, their little buds were grafted in with them. *Christ* received the children that were brought by the hands of their believing parents, and "laid his hands on them, and blessed them, and said, of such is the kingdom of heaven," *Matt.* x. 13—16. The promises of the old testament, wherein children are included in some of the prophets do refer to the *gentile* church as well as the *jewish*, *Isa.* xlv. 3, 5. *Isa.* lxxv. 23. *Joel* ii. 28, 29. For it is the "blessing of *Abraham*, which reaches to his seed, that comes upon the *gentiles* through *Jesus Christ*," *Gal.* iii. 14. *Rom.* xv. 8, 9. "that the *gentiles* may glorify God for his mercy."

5. As this sort of reasoning seems to manifest the right of the children of christians to these blessings, or that they have some interest in this covenant, so there are some considerations which render it very probable that children should be admitted into the visible church, by the christian door of entrance, that is baptism. As for instance,

First, That circumcision being abolished, and baptism coming in the room of it, baptism should be applied to all those who have any interest in the covenant, as circumcision was. Now that baptism is come in the room of circumcision, seems plain from *Col.* ii. 12. where the apostle argues, that being baptized we need not be circumcised: And besides, baptism and circumcision signify the same thing, that is, the removal of sin, one by cutting off, and the other by washing away.

Again, The gospel, which is a dispensation of greater grace, does not lessen, but increase the privileges of the church: It takes away yokes and burdens indeed, such as circumcision was, *Acts* xv. 10. but does not diminish it's honours, titles and privileges.

Yet further, when the father or mother of a family believed in *Christ*, their households were baptized together with themselves, even where there is no mention that the household believed in *Christ* also: As in the case of *Lydia* and *Stephanas*, *Acts* xvi. 15. *1 Cor.* i. 16. Now children are usually a considerable part of the household.

In the last place, Children under the new testament are as capable of receiving the blessings signified, and fulfilling the duties enjoined, as ever they were under the old. It is granted indeed, they neither could then nor can now understand the blessings nor the duties; yet they might receive the seal of circumcision or of baptism, as a bond laid upon them in infancy, to fulfil the obligations and the duties at riper years, and as an encouragement to wait and hope for the blessings. This was the case of *jewish* infants, and why may not christians be favoured with it also?

I proceed now to the third general enquiry, viz. "What is the manner of performing this ceremony?" which also I shall dispatch in a brief hint or two. The *greek* word "baptizo" signifies to "wash" any thing, properly by water coming over it: Now there are several ways of such washing, viz. sprinkling water on it in small quantity, pouring water on it in larger quantity, or dipping it under water, either in part or in whole: And since this seems to be left undetermined in scripture to one particular mode, therefore any of these ways of washing may be sufficient to answer the purpose of this ordinance. Now that the *greek* word signifies "washing" a thing in general by water coming over it, and not always "dipping" is argued by learned men, not only from ancient *greek* authors, but from the new testament itself, as *Luke* xi. 38. "The pharisees marvelled that *Jesus* had not first washed before dinner;" in *greek*, that he was not first baptized; and can it be supposed, that they would have had him dip himself in water?



water? *Mark* vii. 4. "The pharisees when they come from the market, eat not except they are washed," that is, baptized; surely it cannot mean, except they were dipped: And if this should be restrained to signify washing their hands only, yet it does not necessarily signify dipping them; for the manner of washing their hands of old was by pouring water on them, as "*Elisba* poured water on the hands of *Elijah*," *2 Kings* iii. 11. Yet further, they practised the washing of tables, in *greek*, of beds, as well as cups and vessels. Now beds could not usually be washed by dipping. *Heb.* ix. 10. The *jews* had divers washings prescribed by *Moses*, in *greek*, baptisms, which were sprinkling and pouring water on things, as well as plunging them all over in water. *1 Cor.* xii. 2. The children of *Israel* were baptized unto *Moses* in the cloud and the sea, in their passage through the red-sea at their march from *Egypt*; not that they were dipped in the water, but they were sprinkled by the clouds over their heads, and perhaps by the water which stood up in heaps as they passed by.

Besides, it is said farther on this head, that pouring or sprinkling more naturally represents most of the spiritual blessings signified by baptism, viz. the sprinkling of the blood of *Christ* on the conscience, or the pouring out the Spirit on the person baptized, or sprinkling him with clean water, as an emblem of the influence of the Spirit; all which are the things signified in baptism, as different representations of the cleansing away of the guilt or defilement of sin thereby.

But this shall suffice for a hint of this controversy, which has filled large volumes in the world, made a huge noise in the church, and destroyed the charity of a multitude of christians. Since I do not here profess to enter into the argument, but only to give a few short notices or rehearsals of what is said in our vindication, who practise the baptism of infants by sprinkling water on them, I do the rather ask leave to speak one charitable word on this subject, viz. that since this controversy has considerable difficulties attending it, persons of a honest and sincere soul in searching out the truth, may happen to run into different opinions: And the things wherein we agree are so important, as should not suffer us to quarrel about the lesser things, wherein we differ. Our brethren who reject infant baptism, as well as we who practise it, all agree in a belief of the sacred institution of this ordinance, and in our reverence for it: We all agree that the children should be devoted to God, and should be partakers of all the utmost privileges into which scripture admits them, and that they should grow up under all possible obligations to duty; and since each of us desires to find out the will of *Christ*, and practise it accordingly, it is a most unreasonable thing, that we should be angry with each other; because some of us are devoted to God and *Christ* by this ceremony a little sooner, or a little later than others; or because some devote their children to God in baptism as a claim of privileges and an obligation to duties, before they can do this for themselves; whereas others let this claim and obligation alone, till children themselves are capable of acting therein: Or because some of us think this ordinance requires much water, and that the whole body be immersed in it, others suppose a little is sufficient; and that he who hath the face or head washed in this solemnity, has as true a significancy of gospel-benefits and obligations, as he who has his whole body put under water, since our Saviour thought so when he washed *Peter's* feet. *John* xiii. 10. In short, where faith in *Christ* and love to God, and obedience to the sanctifying operations of the Spirit are made necessary to salvation and agreed upon by us all, it is pity that these lesser things should raise such unhappy and scandalous contentions among the disciples of the blessed *Jesus*, who is the prince of peace.

Having

Having given you some account of the subjects of this ordinance, and the manner of performance, I cannot finish this head without adding, that since every thing under the new testament is sanctified by the word and prayer, it is generally most proper to administer this ordinance, with a word of exhortation or instruction to men, and a prayer lifted up to God in the name of *Christ*, that the blessings of grace may accompany this ordinance, that it may not be a vain or empty sign, but may be attended with special and divine graces.

I come now to the last thing which I proposed, and that is to mention a few practical exhortations relating to the point in hand.

Exhortation I. "Adore the wisdom of God, and give thanks to his goodness, who hath appointed such sensible helps to our faith, such sensible memorials of his grace and our duty." True religion is in a great measure an inward and spiritual thing; but it is of vast importance towards the preservation of any particular religion in the world to have some of the most considerable points of it held forth or represented in visible ceremonies, to strike the senses of men, and to dwell upon their imagination. The God of nature knows our frame, how much we are touched and affected with things sensible, and therefore he hath condescended to deal with us in this manner in all ages of his church; and upon this account the two chief blessings of the new testament, viz. cleansing from the defiling principles of sin by the holy Spirit, and washing from the guilt of sin by the blood of *Christ*, are held forth to our senses in the two great ordinances of the gospel, baptism and the Lord's supper. Words and discourses, precepts and promises, given out by the lips of men, oftentimes vanish into the air and are lost and forgotten: Writings are preserved indeed, but all men are not learned, nor know letters; and though our age be blessed with so much knowledge, yet multitudes in all former ages could not so much as read. But these sensible emblems and ceremonies preserve the articles of our holy religion in the blessings and in the duties of it from age to age, and write them upon the memory of the unlearned, and that in lasting characters. Blessed be God for his condescending goodness in such an evangelical ceremony!

Exhortation II. "Let us enquire into the spiritual meaning of all christian ordinances, and never content ourselves with the mere outward forms without enjoying the blessing signified thereby and practising the respective duties." Children should enquire of their parents when they see a child washed with water, and say, "What is the meaning of this washing? And what are we to understand by the use of these Names, Father, Son, and holy Ghost?" And parents should be able and willing to instruct their children, and teach them these important points of their holy religion, viz. that they are under a defilement by sin, they are to be washed from the guilt of it in the blood of *Christ*, and to be cleansed and purified from the principles of it by the renewing grace of the Spirit. So it was among the *jews*, *Exod. xii. 26, 27*. And "when your children shall say unto you, what mean you by this service, then ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of *Israel* in *Egypt* when he smote the *egyptians*: and thus should it be among christians. But remember that washing with water in never so solemn a manner, and using these sacred names with never so great seriousness by the minister, doth not profit the persons baptized, if they still continue to wallow in their sinful pollutions and take no care to seek purification of heart and life. You may be washed with the water of baptism, and yet be driven down to hell among the polluted souls.

Exhortation III. "Do not think yourselves exempt or excused from this ceremony though you are possessed of all the graces signified thereby." *Christ* himself passed under

under it. *Matt.* lii. 13—17. Those who had received the holy Spirit received baptism also. *Acts* x. 47. "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?" As there must be faith in order to salvation, so it is the common and appointed way of God that there should be baptism too. *Mark* xvi. 16. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." A wilful and entire neglect and contempt of any ordinance of *Christ* gives too much reason to suspect whether there be any true faith.

Exhortation IV. "Take all proper occasions to refresh the sense of your baptism on your spirits, and to act over again between God and your own souls all that baptism implies, though the ceremony itself be but once to be administered to you." When you see baptism administered to others, remember you yourselves were once baptized; recall the season when you were thus washed with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit. Acknowledge your defilement by nature and by practice: Go to the laver that is opened for sin and uncleanness, even the fountain of the blood of *Jesus*; seek the fresh influences of the purifying spirit to cleanse you from all impurities of your heart, and to make you clean and holy. Give up yourselves afresh with sacred pleasure to God as your Father, to *Jesus* as your Saviour, to the holy Ghost as your Sanctifier: renew the surrender of yourselves to *Christ* as his disciples, and engage yourselves afresh to be the Lord's.

Exhortation V. "Be very watchful to answer all the engagements of your christian baptism, to guard yourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, and to grow up into greater degrees of holiness and purity." It was a happy and successful defence against temptations in the primitive days, when the christian could say "I am baptized." Let this also be the constant language of our souls; "I am washed in the sacred laver of regeneration, how shall I defile myself again? I am devoted and consecrated to *Christ*, how shall I estrange myself from him? Forgive, O Lord, all my shameful pollutions, since I have been washed in the christian baptism, and guard me, O blessed Spirit, against every new defilement, that I may be presented at last before my God and my Saviour without spot or blemish in the day of his public glory and of my complete joy. Now to him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever. Amen."

# S E R M O N VIII.

Christian diligence, with the blessings that attend it,  
in opposition to sloth, security, backsliding, &c.

PROVERBS XIII. 4.

*The soul of the sluggard desireth and bath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.*

**S**HOULD we apply these words to labour or learning, to trade or religion, to the concerns of this life, or that which is to come, still we shall find this sentence of *Solomon* true and useful; it is a remark well worthy of our attention, and our best improvement. The son of diligence considered either as a man or a christian, is in a fair way to obtain the good things he seeks: His desire shall be satisfied, his soul shall be made fat, or filled with them, he shall increase in earthly possessions, he shall abound in knowledge and wisdom, or he shall grow rich in grace and the fruits of righteousness; but the slothful wretch shall be poor indeed. In vain doth he sit with folded hands, and wish for the blessings of nature or grace, of time or eternity: The idle hand shall be empty still, he shall desire in vain, and shall never possess.

Diligence is the appointed theme of my discourse, the diligence of a man or a christian. I shall endeavour, first to describe it in all the several parts of it, and then take a short survey of the blessings temporal and spiritual which attend it; and by the way, I shall give some occasional hints of the crime and punishment of the contrary vices.

First, Let us enquire what are the several things which are implied in true diligence, whether it relate to the things of this life, or the life to come.

1. "Diligence includes the employment of every part of our time in proper business; and thus it stands in opposition both to fauntering and doing nothing at all, to trifling, or doing what is to no purpose, and to mistiming the businesses which are to be done."

Every person in the world has some proper business to do daily, for God, for themselves, or for the good of their fellow-creatures. Mankind, even in the golden age of innocence, was not made for idleness. *Adam* was put into the garden of *Eden*, "to dress and keep it," *Gen.* ii. 8, 15. and it is our duty wisely to enquire what is our proper work, and to employ ourselves in it. But how many idle creatures are there in the world that act quite contrary to this rule?

1. How many do we find who faunter their lives away, and let their days, and months, and years run to waste in doing nothing at all, as though they were brought into the world to eat, drink and sleep, to gaze away life, and then to lie down in death?

death? O wretched abuse of these precious blessings, life and time! "I must work, saith our Lord, while it is day, I must do the particular work, for which my Father sent me hither: the night is coming when no man can work," *John ix. 4.* Let us all be imitators of our blessed *Jesus*. The business of the rich is to render their wealth useful to the good of the world, and to the interests of religion: The business of the poor is to labour to obtain their daily bread, and not be burdensome to their neighbours, nor useless inhabitants of the earth: The business of a scholar is to improve his mind in daily knowledge; and as for all the learned professions, their business is to lay out that knowledge for the ease and happiness of mankind in this world, or the next.

It is the proper business of a sinner to seek after converting grace, to return to God by repentance, to secure his salvation by faith in the Son of God, and all instances of new obedience. It is the proper business of a true christian to grow in grace, to adorn his profession with holiness, and abound in good works. It is the necessary and daily business of a mortal and an accountable creature to prepare for death and judgment, that he may die in peace, and give up his account with joy, if he should be summoned away on a sudden. Thus it appears every creature hath some proper business, both relating to this life, and the life to come: And therefore a sauntering and idle life is a high offence to the God of nature and grace, time and eternity.

2. "Trifling or wasting time in impertinencies, is another vice contrary to this part of diligence." Doing nothing to the purpose, is little better than doing nothing at all: As if a youth designed for the study of divinity, should lay aside his bible, and spend his whole time in measuring squares and circles, and mathematical figures; or if a man of trade, or an artificer, who must provide daily bread for himself and his household, should waste his days in coffee-houses, still learning, and still discoursing of the rights of election of the kings of *Poland*, or in adjusting the bloody quarrels between the *turkish* and the *persian* armies. This is such an impertinence in the sight of God and men, as deserves the just reproaches of men, and punishment from the hand of providence. To wear out those seasons in prating and rattling, which are appointed for useful labour or business, is a wretched abuse of time, and merits the frequent censure of *Solomon* the wisest of men. "The talk of the lips tendeth only to poverty, and a prating fool shall fall." *Prov. xiv. 23.* and *x. 8.* And too many there are who pretend to christianity, but they are only talking christians instead of being active in the duties of their appointed station, and their zeal for religion appears no where but in their tongues. Others also shall be pronounced idle, and triflers at the bar of God, who lay out all their spirits in little controversy, perhaps about mint, anise and cummin, or in vindication of rites and forms and ceremonies which God never appointed, while they neglect the weighty matters of the law and the gospel, justice and goodness, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord *Jesus*, the correction of their tempers, and the amendment of their lives. Again,

3. "Mis-timing the various actions of life is another abuse of time, and contrary to true diligence." "There is a time, saith the wise man, for every purpose under heaven, and every thing is beautiful in it's season." *Eccles. iii. 1, 11.* If we should be dancing at midnight, and sleeping at church, or seeking our diversions in a hour of business; if we should work with our hands, when the season calls us to our closets, or spend that time in reading and praying, which is appointed for the labours and cares of the family; these are all failures in our duty, and contrary to the true diligence which the word of God requires. That is but trifling or impertinence

nence in one season, which is a necessary duty at another; nor will any works out of season prosper or succeed well, or be approved of God: And yet there are some persons so habitually guilty of this folly, that whensoever the certain season of any duty returns, they are ever beginning to do something else first, which perhaps they did not think of before, which would be much better left till afterward, *Prov. vi. 6—8.* "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," who seizes the days of summer and fair weather, to gather her food, and hides herself at winter, and lives upon her former provisions.

2. The second thing implied in true diligence, is "earliness in opposition to delay." If we consider ourselves as men; the early man shews that his heart is in his work; but he that from hour to hour, or from day to day, delays the practice of any duty or service, gives sufficient notice that he doth not like it, and would never perform it at all, if he could safely avoid it. If we begin betimes the service of the day, we happily provide against hinderances, and we are not in danger of being thrown into a hurry by accidental avocations: We have hours before us to do our work well, to review and correct it: We keep our temper, and are composed amidst our cares and labours and finish our designs with honour. But if we suffer our work to lie neglected, till the latter end of the appointed time, we are ever in a hurry, in perpetual confusion, our temper is ruffled with every incident that comes in our way, and gives us the least hinderance, and we never perform with such accuracy or such success. Have we not sometimes learned these inconveniencies by sad experience, and shall we ever be guilty of delays again?

Or if we consider ourselves as christians, have we not found that by needless delays we have lost the season of morning prayer, and could never recover it again, but have past the morning without solemn addresses to the God of our lives? And hath not many a sinner felt the dreadful consequences of his delays of repentance, when, day after day, and week after week, his own conscience and the voice of God in his word have called upon him to repent and return to God, and invited him to accept of pardon and peace, to receive the grace of *Christ* and everlasting life? What terrible agonies of soul, what reproaches of conscience on a dying bed, what horror of spirit in the review of his cursed delays? And with what tormenting despair his soul hath been hurried out of this life, and been plunged into an eternal state, without hope, or at least at a terrible uncertainty? Children, can you hear this, and not enquire betimes, "what must I do to be saved?" *Mat. xvi. 30.* Can you hear this in the days of youth, and delay any longer to secure your immortal concerns, and provide for the approaching hour of death and judgment? It is a dangerous thing for children in their younger years to learn the language of idleness, and to cry out on every occasion, "it is time enough yet." They generally grow up to feel the bitter fruits of delay. It is an excellent rule in the things of earth or of heaven, "Never leave that to be done the next hour, which may properly be done now, nor dare to put off till to-morrow the business which you may as well begin to-day. Who knows what a day may bring forth?" *Prov. xxvii. 1.* He that hath done his work to-day is secure of peace, but to-morrow may be all disappointment. Let us who pretend to be christians, or to have a regard to God and religion, let us upon the first notice of any duty, make haste to the practice of it. Upon the first conviction of sin let us apply ourselves immediately to God for pardoning and sanctifying grace: Let us return to our duty with early diligence like *David*, "As soon as thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart replied, thy face will I seek. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments," *Psal. xxvii. 8. and cxix. 60.*

3. Diligence

3. "Diligence implies activity and vigour, in opposition to sloth and laziness, languor and indifference." It is not lazy wretches that will perform work or obtain a blessing. The sluggard desireth and hath nothing, *Prov. xiii.* 4. therefore the wise man advises, *Ecl. ix.* 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might:" Then it is likely to be finished in proper season; but the slothful wretch makes no riddance of his work, he moves heavily in his business, just as he doth upon his bed, "like a door upon it's hinges," and never gets forwards, *Prov. xxvi.* 24. A beautiful simile indeed, nor is the description of the sluggard less elegant, verse 25. "When he hath hid his hand in his bosom, it grieves him to bring it to his mouth."

And what poor work doth a christian make who is cold, indifferent, slothful and lazy in the things which concern his soul and salvation? He makes a pretence to religion, but how poorly doth he proceed in it who hath no activity, no vigor, no fervency therein? Where he was last year, there he is now, or else gone farther backward: His sins are still as unmortified, his temptations still as powerful and prevailing, his hopes still as low, and his holiness as much interrupted as in years past: He was not fit to appear before God then, and he is no fitter now: He was then in terror at the thoughts of dying, and he is still in the same terror. The slothful christian upon examination finds his faith hath scarce improved one grain, he is no nearer salvation than when at first he believed. Is this the obedience we owe to the command of *Christ*, *Luke xiii.* 24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life?" *John vi.* 27. Regard the advice of the blessed apostle, *Rom. xii.* 11. "Be ye not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Permit me to ask the lazy christians of our present age, "is this an imitation of ancient saints, who laboured night and day to get nearer to heaven, and as it were took the kingdom of heaven by a holy violence?" Let us bestir our selves then and shake off this lethargy of soul, this dull humour, let us call up all our natural and christian powers into exercise, and "be no longer slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," *Heb. vi.* 11.

4. "True diligence implies also watchfulness, in opposition to a drowsy heedless temper, a thoughtless security of soul." We must be awake to seize all advantages for our work, as well as to guard against surprizes and dangers. How dreadfully is the sluggard exposed to loss and ruin? If the sailors sleep in their voyage, they run upon sands and rocks, and lose their ship and their lives. If a centinel sleep in his watch-tower, the enemy gains considerable advantage, and seizes some post of importance, or enters the gates of the city. How often hath a whole army been surprized and routed, who lay secure in their camp and kept no due watch? We christians are soldiers under the banner of *Christ*, our enemies are many within and without; our great adversary the devil is malicious and busy; if we indulge security and drowsiness, he seizes every unguarded hour to wound and defile and distress our souls. Therefore the apostle *Peter* demands our watchfulness, *1 Pet. v.* 8. "Be sober, be vigilant, or watchful, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. One unwatchful hour, one slumber in the day of temptation hath given *Satan* opportunity for unknown mischief, and administered matter to a christian for bitter repentance all his days. Shall we then ever hearken to the enticements of slothful nature? Shall we ever gratify the tempter at this rate to our own certain loss, and to the danger of our eternal ruin?"

5. "Diligence yet further implies a constancy in our work, in opposition to looking back, and perpetual avocation by diversions and pleasures." The foolish *Israelites* were often looking back to the leeks and onions and flesh pots of *Egypt*, and were

in danger of losing the promised land. Where love of pleasure and diversion often interrupts the business we are engaged in, we shall make but poor broken work, and have little hope to succeed in it, *Prov. xxi. 17.* "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man."

And as they can never grow rich in temporal things who are carried away from their business by every diversion, so neither can a christian grow rich in grace, who frequently interrupts his duty to indulge mirth and carnal delights. We must be steadfast and constant in our christian race, and not turn aside from the path of duty to gather this and the other flower of sensual pleasure, if we would finish our course with joy, and so run as to obtain the prize.

6. Another thing implied in true diligence, "is firmness and resolution in our labour, in opposition to all the difficulties which attend our work." We suppose every valuable and excellent design hath some difficulties more or less always attending it, some hardship which must be endured, some obstacles and impediments which must be broke through; but if we are frightened at every shadow of difficulty we shall never fulfil our service nor perfect our design. This *Solomon* hath often observed: "The sluggard cries, it is cold, and will not go early to plough, and therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing." He complains "there is a lion in the way, there is a lion in that street," where the path of duty lies; therefore he sits down in sloth, and keeps himself safe and idle at home. "The way of the sluggard is as a hedge of thorns," he imagines every step he takes in the path of diligence and industry hath such troubles attending it, such thorns and briars, as he calls them, that he cannot break through, and therefore he refuses to labour. See *Prov. xx. 4.* and *xxvi. 13.* and *xxv. 19.*

And is not this matter the same in spiritual things? How many are there who cry out of the ways of religion as painful and hard? They are frightened at the duties of repentance, self-denial and mortification of sin, at cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes; they are offended at persecution, which sometimes rises against strict godliness; the frowns of the world terrify their hearts, they dare not be singular in the profession of faith, or the practice of virtue: They are ashamed of the worship and the name of God in the midst of profane and sinful men; they go back, as some disciples did in the days of *Christ*, and walk no longer with him: But let us remember the divine threatening, "The man who hath put his hand to the plough, and looks back, *Luke ix. 62.* my soul, saith the Lord, shall have no pleasure in him," *Heb. x. 38.*

7. The last character I shall ascribe to the diligent man is, "perseverance in opposition to fainting and weariness." The man of diligence must hold out to the end, if he expect to have his labour crowned. An imperfect work among men is very little worth: It is the end that crowns all.

And it is just the same in religion, unless we persevere in the duties of holiness, we have no reason to expect the divine reward; but the glorious recompence is sure to us, "if we are not weary in well doing; we shall reap in due time if we faint not." *Gal. vi. 9.* *St. Paul* just before his martyrdom rejoices in this, "he had fought the good fight, in opposition to all the enemies of the gospel, and he had finished his course of faith and holiness: Henceforth saith he, is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," *2 Tim. iv. 7.* Let us animate ourselves by his blessed example, and by the promise of our Lord *Jesus* to the church of *Ephesus*, *Rev. ii. 10.* "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Let these thoughts awaken our drowsy spirits, and prolong our patience in the work of the

Lord;



Lord, that we may not at last be found "among them who draw back to perdition, but among those who believe, and persevere to the saving of the soul," *Heb. x. 39.*

Thus far I have been engaged in setting before you the several things implied in diligence or industry, both in matters of this life, and that which is to come; but I have in some measure entered upon my second general head, by often touching upon the happy fruits of diligence, as well as the dismal consequences of all the contrary vices. My remaining work therefore will be very short, and that is to mention in a more express and distinct manner, the blessings which attend diligence in a course of virtue and goodness; and they are such as these:

1. Diligence hath a natural tendency to success, and to obtain the good things we seek. "In all labour, saith *Solomon*, there is profit," *Prov. xiv. 23.* "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread," *Prov. xii. 11.* and "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," *Prov. x. 4.* But as for the "field of the slothful, it is overgrown with thorns; nettles and briars cover it," *Prov. xxiv. 30.* "And drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags," *Prov. xxiii. 21.*

It is the same in spiritual things, as in the things of nature. Diligence in seeking the knowledge of God, shall be crowned with an increase of sacred knowledge, *Hos. vi. 3.* "Then shall we know the Lord, if we follow on to know him." Give attendance to "reading, saith *Paul* to *Timothy*, that thy profiting may appear to all," *1 Tim. iv. 14.* Diligence and labour with our own hearts in weaning them from the world, and a fervent constancy in the pursuits of godliness, is the proper and rational way to obtain the blessings of grace and glory. But I add,

2. Diligence hath the rich and special promises of a faithful God to encourage it's hope. What *David* said to his son *Solomon*, with regard to building the temple, the gospel saith the same to every christian, *1 Chron. xxii. 16.* "Arise and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee:" And *Solomon* gave the same advice to his son, and the same promise, *Prov. ii. 3, 4.* "If thou seekest after wisdom as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou obtain saving knowledge, and learn the fear of the Lord." "Give all diligence, saith *Peter* in the name of *Christ*, *2 Pet. i. 5—10.* give all diligence, and add one christian grace to another, add to your faith virtue, to your virtue temperance, patience, godliness and charity. Give diligence again to make your calling and your election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall, but an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ.*"

3. Diligence and industry are a happy guard against snares and temptations of every kind. When the devil finds you idle, he hath a proper moment to assault you with some powerful temptation: He will employ you in his work, when he finds your hands and hearts entirely at leisure and unemployed; he that is not awake to his duty, is not awake to his danger, and is easily surprized into mischief; but the wakeful diligent christian is like *Nehemiah's* builders on the walls of *Jerusalem*, "with a weapon in one hand, while they laboured with the other;" *Neb. iv. 17.* and thus their work went on with good success and safety.

4. Diligence is always making a progress towards it's designed end, but the slothful man is in great danger of going backward. The gardener who neglects his daily work, will find the ground which he hath cultivated overrun with weeds again in a little time. If a waterman who rows against the stream be slothful and drowsy, his vessel will make no progress, but be carried backward continually: So if a labourer hearkens to the inticements of drowsy nature, and learns this slothful language, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, poverty will come upon him as an armed man,"

man," *Prov.* xxiv. 33, 34. and rob him of all his gains. Negligent, and unwatchful and lazy christians, will for the most part lose what they have gained in the things of religion too: The apostle *John* in his second epistle, verse 8. guards against it, "Take heed that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." How many have lost their first zeal, their first love, and their early joys in religion, by a sinful security of soul, and for want of a due concern to grow in grace. It is growth in religion that evidences the truth of it, and secures the comforts of it.

5. The diligent christian is a most useful person in the world, he does the most good himself, and becomes an excellent example to all that are round about him. He lays the sluggard under continual conviction, and puts him to daily shame, if he have any of his senses awake to see, or feel, or take notice. Such a christian animates and encourages all that are near him to the same diligence, as fire kindles fire, and spreads the blaze far and near. Active and lively christians make one another's hearts warm in religion, and help to diffuse the sacred fire round about. The zealous servants of the blessed God, give credit and honour to their profession; but what a shameful thing is it, to see some christians idle and careless in the duties of their daily calling, and slothful and lazy in their practice of religion too? The truth is, they do not make religion their practice, but a mere matter of talk and sound; and while they refuse to labour in the station where God has placed them, they disgrace their profession, and expose themselves to the just and severe sentence of the apostle, *2 Thess.* iii. 10. "He that will not work, let him not eat," that is, let him starve, for christianity is no just pretence for idleness.

6. The diligent christian finishes his work with peace, hope, and joy. He shall review his conduct and his labours with an inward satisfaction, and a sacred pleasure of soul: his conscience is a joyful witness; he hath not only a safe but an abundant entrance generally administered to him into the heavenly kingdom, and he obtains a fairer crown; for "the Lord the righteous judge will reward every one according to his works." *Rom* ii. 6—11. He who had one talent, and improved it, by gaining ten more, had rule over ten cities: He that gained five talents, had five cities under his government, *Luke* xix. 17, 19. But let us dread the curse of the wicked and slothful servant: Observe the slothful servant is pronounced wicked by the mouth of *Christ* himself, *Matt.* xxv. 26. He is to be "cast into utter darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The slothful wretch at the end of his days, sees his great work undone, his heart not yet turned to God and godliness, and is overwhelmed with horror when in view of death and judgment. It is the cry of his soul, "O that I might die the death of the righteous!" *Numb.* xxiii. 10. but there is no crown of righteousness for him, no prize of glory; he hath neither run nor fought, nor laboured so as to obtain it. He wishes for heaven in vain; his desires are his torment, for they shall never be fulfilled, desire and despair are misery enough. Happy soul, who hath been faithful, diligent and watchful in every station of life, and has made suitable advances in faith and love, and holiness. He waits till his Lord shall come, and he rejoices in hope, for he shall then receive the glorious sentence from the lips of his judge, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord, *Matt.* xxv. 21, 23. and be thou possessed of blessedness in the upper world, in proportion to the talents I trusted thee with on earth, and to thy diligent and faithful improvement of every talent." Amen.

SERMON

## S E R M O N IX.

## Christian fellowship, with it's duties and advantages.

ROMANS XV. 6, 7.

*That ye may with one mind, and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,—Receive ye one another, as Christ also hath received us to the glory of God.*

**F**OR christians to join themselves in particular societies or congregations, in order to carry on the great interests of religion, appears to be both a duty and a privilege: It stands upon just foundations as a duty, and as a privilege it is attended with excellent advantages. I confess the words of my text chiefly design to teach us what is the particular rule whereby this practice should be conducted, and who should be the persons thus joined together in holy fellowship, even the *gentiles* who are converted to *Christ*, as well as the *jews*: Yet the general duty is plainly intimated, viz. that those who profess the name of *Christ*, and have reason to hope that *Christ* has received them, should also receive one another into mutual communion in all the social parts and privileges of the christian religion, “that with one mind and with one mouth they may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.”

In my discourse on this subject, I shall endeavour to set before you these several things.

- I. The reasonableness of this practice.
- II. Some special advantages that arise from it.
- III. The characters of the persons more particularly, of whom this is required, and in what numbers they should unite together to make a christian church.
- IV. The duties of persons thus united in christian societies or churches.
- V. I shall mention the officers which *Christ* has appointed in his churches to perform peculiar services therein.

First, We are to consider the “reasonableness of this practice, whereby it will appear to be the duty of those who profess the religion of *Christ* to agree together, and form themselves into particular societies.”

The first reason is this, That “without such an agreement to unite together in the practice of christianity, there can be no such thing as public worship regularly maintained among christians, nor public honours paid to God in the name of *Jesus*.” Now the worship of God in public assemblies is so necessary for his honour in all ages, and under all dispensations, and was so carefully practised among the primitive christians by the authority of *Christ* and his apostles, that we cannot be excused from it, if we profess ourselves to believe in *Christ*. This has been made sufficiently evident in a former discourse.

discourse \*. And if there be such a thing as public worship maintained, the light of nature shews us there must be some certain time, and some certain place appointed by agreement among such worshippers, since no one christian that I know of has any authority given by the scripture to appoint precisely the times and places, and magisterially to impose them upon his brethren.

As for the place under the *jewish* dispensation, God himself appointed the tabernacle in the days of *Moses*, and the temple in the time of *Solomon* as sacred places for public sacrifices, and some peculiar solemnities of worship; but the sacredness of place is now at an end, as our Lord informs us, *John* iv. 21, 24. and even during that dispensation, the synagogues throughout the land where God was weekly worshipped by the people, were built and frequented by the agreement or consent of the people, as the light of nature directed; and the worship of christian churches is more a-kin to that of the synagogues than that of the temple.

As for the time, the first day of the week is the christian day of worship by apostolic appointment: But christians must agree together upon the hour, as well as the day, in order to unite in the several parts of worship.

Without such an agreement of christians among themselves, there could be no celebration of public ordinances in a becoming manner, no united prayers and praises could ascend to heaven, there would be no social attendance upon the word preached, no participation of the great ordinance of the Lord's supper, which is a part of social religion, a sacred feast or representation of the blessed communion which christians have both with Christ their Lord, and with one another. For this reason they must agree upon the place to meet in, "that the whole church may come together in one place," as *1 Cor.* xi. 20. and they must agree upon one hour, or "tarry for one another till they are come," *1 Cor.* xi. 33.

The second reason for such a practice is this, viz. "Without an agreement to keep up such societies for worship, the doctrines of *Christ* and his gospel could not be so constantly and so extensively held forth to the world, and there would be no rational hope of the continuance or encrease of christianity among men." Particular christians die out of this world from day to day, and there would be few rising up in their stead to support this religion, if there were not public assemblies appointed or agreed upon: It is in these assemblies the gospel, with all the duties and blessings thereof, is published to the world; it is here unbelievers may attend and hear the glorious truths of the gospel set forth in a proper light, and the name and memory, the person and offices, the graces and glories of our great redeemer are displayed among men, *1 Cor.* xiv. 23. "When the whole church is come together to one place, there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers," and when the important affairs of christianity are managed with becoming order and decency, and the doctrines of our salvation are set forth in a happy light, "They that believe not are convinced, the secrets of their hearts are made manifest, they will worship God together with us, and report that God is among us of a truth:" verse 25. Hereby those that are convinced of their sin and danger, and have fled for refuge to lay hold on *Jesus* as their only hope, are encouraged to come and join themselves to the church, when they behold the beauty of the Lord in his gospel-sanctuary, and the appearances of his power and glory there.

In short, I might add, that there is no public religion, no worship of any kind, can be well maintained in the world, without such an agreement among the persons that profess that religion: Even heathens, and *turks*, and *jews*, all sorts of worshippers

\* See sermon XLIX. of *Berry street sermons*, volume II. page 305.

pers in every age, think it necessary to agree to worship their God in particular societies, and thereby maintain their religious communion with each other.

It is granted indeed, that where a national religion is established by the authority of the magistrate, and the times, and places, and modes of worship are appointed by him, together with the persons who shall minister therein throughout the several cities, towns, and villages in that nation, there is no such necessity for private persons to form an express agreement among themselves about this matter, if their consciences lead them to the same worship and practice which the magistrate requires: Their constant willing attendance implies such an agreement. But I can find no power of imposing this public worship, given to magistrates, among all the principles of natural reason, nor among any of the writings of the new testament: And those persons whose consciences lead them to differ from this established religion, are then directed by the light of nature, as well as scripture, to form such agreements among themselves, in order to maintain christian worship, and the practice of christianity, as they find it represented in the bible.

The second thing I proposed was to shew you some of the advantages of such an agreement for christian fellowship, and among others I might mention such as these.

1. "It gives courage to every christian to profess and practise his religion, when many persons are engaged by mutual agreement in the same profession and practice." We do not love to be singular, and to be pointed at by the world, as standing and acting alone, especially in the affairs of God and religion; but when a good company unite themselves together for such a sacred purpose, this takes away the reproach of singularity; they all strengthen one another's hands in the ways of the Lord, and they bear up with more firmness of heart against the reproaches of the world.

2. "It is more for the particular edification of christians, that such societies should be formed, where the word of *Christ* is constantly preached, where the ordinances of *Christ* are administered, and the religion of *Christ* is held forth in a social and honourable manner to the world." Hereby every christian knows where to go to hear the gospel preached, and multitudes are instructed at once in the great things that relate to their eternal peace: Hereby those who have known the things of *Christ* more easily call to mind what they have learned, and are admonished of their daily duty by the public preacher: Here their prayers are united, and their songs of praise; and such an union of prayers and praises is delightful and acceptable to him who inhabits the praises of *Israel*, and who has encouraged them to agree in asking mercies from God, and to strive together in prayer. United devotions are much more likely to obtain success.

3. "Such a holy fellowship and agreement to walk together in the ways of *Christ*, is a happy guard against backsliding and apostasy, it is a defence against the temptations of the world, and the defilements of a sinful age." Having given my name up to *Christ* in a public manner, how shall I dare to renounce him? Having joined myself to the followers of *Christ*, how shall I break those bonds, and depart from them, or disgrace that holy fellowship by any known sin? Having made a public profession of my avowed obedience to *Jesus* as a Lord and king, how can I dare decline his service, or indulge myself in those iniquities which his gospel forbids?

4. "Christians thus united together by mutual acquaintance and agreement, can give each other better assistance in every thing that relates to religion, whether public or private." They warm one another's hearts by mutual holy conversation; they support one another when ready to fall, and raise and "restore those that are fallen in a

spirit of meekness," *Gal. vi. 1.* But as *Solomon* warns us, "wo to him that falls while he walks alone, who shall help him up? Or how can one be warm alone?" *Eccles. iv. 10.* Hand joining in hand adds force and strength, assistance and stability to any purpose or design whatsoever; and frequent meeting together gives fellow-christians opportunity of exhorting one another to maintain their common christianity, as in *Heb. x. 25.* "For sake not the assembling of yourselves together, but exhort one another, and provoke one another to love and to good works." Christians when they come to mutual acquaintance and agreements of this kind, they afford better help to one another, when under difficulties by advice, and under sorrows they relieve each other by christian consolation and social prayers. They afford greater aid and strength to each other against temptations and dangers, because they are better informed of each other's circumstances and tempers. They know one another's wants and weaknesses more, they pity one another with more tenderness, and they guard each other against the common injuries and insults of men. Happy the persons who are thus united in the fellowship of the gospel, and who by practising these duties, and communicating and enjoying these advantages, cast a glory upon the gospel of *Christ*.

The third general head leads me to enquire more particularly "Who are the persons who should thus receive one another in the Lord, or join together in christian fellowship." The general direction of the new testament is contained in the words of my text, that we should receive into this sacred communion all that *Christ* has received to partake of his salvation, and that we make no other test whereby to receive persons into our particular congregations, than a credible profession of those things which *Christ* has made necessary in order to partake of his benefits. "Receive ye one another as *Christ* hath us," *Rom. xv. 7.* whether ye be jews or greeks, whether ye be bond or free, whatsoever different character ye sustain in the civil life, or whatever different nations gave you birth. Whosoever makes a credible profession to have received *Jesus Christ* and his gospel, and their practice be correspondent to their profession, they are to be received by us, though they may differ in particular opinions, or in particular practices, which are of less moment and importance. This is one great design of *St. Paul's* xiv. chapter to the *Romans*. In his day there were some christians that maintained a regard to *jewish* ceremonies, there were others who thought themselves entirely delivered from all those yokes of bondage; some eat meat with freedom, while others only eat herbs, some observed particular days as holy, while others neglected to observe them; some were weak in the faith, and others strong; but they are all called to receive one another into christian fellowship, and not to make these doubtful disputations a bar to their sacred union; "for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost; and he that in these things serveth *Christ* is acceptable to God, and approved of men," and therefore he should not be excluded from christian societies; *Rom. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 17, 18.*

This I say is the general rule: But it must be confessed, that there are some christians whose sentiments are so directly contrary to others, in matters of worship or discipline, that it is hardly possible they should unite in public worship; as for instance, he that believes prescribed forms of prayer to be an unlawful thing, cannot join with a society, who never pray but by prescribed forms; He that thinks no man can be a minister, unless he be ordained by the hand of a diocesan bishop, cannot unite in worship with a society whose ministers never had, nor desired such an ordination. But let each take heed how they embrace such limiting principles. There are others who differ so widely in some of the most important doctrines of christianity, that they

they cannot worship together with any tolerable edification or comfort, viz. Those who believe *Christ* died as a proper sacrifice of atonement for sin, and venture their whole hope of salvation upon it, and wait for sanctifying influences from the holy Spirit, cannot comfortably unite with such sort of christians as suppose *Christ* to be only a messenger and prophet sent to restore natural religion to men, and who deny any atoning virtue to his death, or any influences from the Spirit to change their hearts, and make them holy. These are articles which I take to be matters of so high importance in the religion of the gospel, that I cannot advise persons to unite in societies for worship, where they are no better agreed in their principles: The humble and sincere believer of the gospel of *Christ*, would find his devotion and his edification continually interrupted by such jarring opinions and contests, and the whole work of preaching, prayer and praise would be very disgustful to one part, while it pleases the other. "How is it possible two should walk together, except they are better agreed?" *Amos* iii. 3. They agree indeed in the name of christianity, but their real religion seems to be of a different kind.

The general advice which I would give as most conformable to the sentiments of the great apostle, is this, "Let every person take heed that he does not too much enlarge, nor too much narrow the principles of christianity, that he does not make any article of faith or practice more or less necessary than scripture has made it, and that he does not raise needless scruples in his own breast, nor in the hearts of others, by too great a separation from such as our common Lord has received."

I proceed now to consider "how great the number of persons should be, which may properly form such a christian society;" and in answer to this question, I must say, it is left very much to the liberty and prudence of men. In general there should be so many as to give it the name of a public assembly: And yet if there are but a few christians within the reach of one another, who can conveniently meet once a week at the same time and the same place for religious purposes, I think these may join themselves in christian fellowship, and the promise of our Saviour belongs to them, "where two or three of you are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," *Matth.* xviii. 20.

We might also observe, that no more should usually join together in one society, than can frequently meet together in one place at one time, and be edified by the mouth of one preacher, or lift up their joint prayers and praises to God by the lips of one minister: And perhaps the very words of my text may include that meaning, "Receive one another,—that with one mind and one mouth you may glorify God the Father." The *corinthian* church met together in one place, *1 Cor.* xiv. 23. And while one spoke in prayer, prophecy or exhortation, the others were called to silence and attention, *verse* 31.

Now a company of christians thus agreeing in the most important articles of faith and practice, and consenting to unite together to worship God through *Jesus Christ* in all his ordinances, and to keep up the christian interest in the world, are properly a church of *Christ*. Such was the church of *Corinth*, such the church at *Philippi*, such the several churches of *Galatia*, and the churches of *Asia*, of which mention is made in the new testament\*; and their agreement to worship and walk together in christian

\* It is granted the scripture sometimes speaks of a church in the house, which is smaller than that of a public assembly, unless it mean that the christians of one place met together in that house for worship: sometimes it speaks of the church at *Jerusalem*, which in the first formation of it seems to be of a larger extent than could worship in one place, as consisting of many thousand souls: But we must remember, that

christian fellowship, is that church-covenant which in the very nature of things is necessary to constitute a regular christian society, and to maintain the gospel in the world in the principles and practices of it: Nor can there be any christian communion maintained in an orderly manner, without such a covenant or agreement as this is, either more plainly expressed, or necessarily implied: It is only the addition of some things which *Christ* has not required to such a covenant or agreement as this is, that has exposed the name of a church covenant to so many reproaches in the world: Otherwise, I am sure, it deserves none.

The fourth head I proposed, was to represent some of the "duties which plainly arise from such an agreement of christians to walk and worship together, for the support of their religion.

1. May we not say, that "all the duties which the disciples of *Christ* owe to their fellow christians throughout the world, are more particularly incumbent upon those who are united by their own consent in the same religious society?" Such as to love one another, to assist, comfort, and succour one another in things that relate to this life, or the life to come, to watch over and warn one another, lest any fall into sin; to admonish one another in love, and to restore those that are fallen with holy tenderness, and in general to fulfil all kind and friendly offices to each other, in vindication of their common faith, and in the practice of pure religion. We are commanded "to do good to all men, especially to the household of faith," *Gal. vi. 10.* and what is due to all the churches of *Christ* on earth, seems more particularly due to the church of which we are members, because these are within the reach of our notice and our assistance, and we expect the same friendly offices from them, since we have mutually given up ourselves to one another in the Lord.

2. "Those who are united by such an agreement, ought most usually to attend on the public assemblies and ministrations of that church, where it can be done with reasonable conveniency;" for we have joined ourselves in society for this very purpose. It is granted indeed, that many particular circumstances in life may give a just occasion for persons, more or less, frequently to join with other churches in their solemnities, which it would be too large at present to reckon up; but if upon every trivial humour we absent ourselves from that worship, and those ministrations which we have agreed to support, it has a tendency to destroy that very fellowship which we engage to maintain; and if each take their liberty in this respect, without just reason, to wander where they please, the minister may preach to the bare walls, nor can any ordinances be celebrated with constancy and honour.

I might add also, that the constant attendance upon the same ministry, is the way to obtain a more uniform and regular knowledge of the whole scheme of christianity, since it is to be supposed that there is more uniformity in the sentiments of the same preacher, upon the several parts of the christian doctrine, and that in a course years he will run through the various articles of faith and practice.

3. It is the duty of persons thus united "to maintain their church or society, by receiving in new members amongst them by a general consent. Now when persons profess that they believe all the necessary and most important articles of the christian faith, when they declare they have solemnly given up themselves to *Jesus Christ* as their

that the national church of the *jews* could not be supposed all at once to be dissolved so as to form itself into particular congregations, with all that regularity and order which afterward was observed in single christian societies: Or perhaps the word "church" may be sometimes used to signify all the christians that dwell either in one city or in one house, without regard to any such special agreement of walking or worshipping together.



their Saviour and their Lord, according to the requirements of the gospel, and when they ingage to walk in all the ordinances of *Christ*, and desire to join with that particular society, it is the business and duty of the members thereof to receive such professors," supposing always that their good character in life gives a probable witness to the truth and sincerity of their profession. My text bids the converted *Romans* "receive one another in the Lord, as *Christ* has received them," and every church should receive such as desire to join with them upon these principles.

4. "In order to keep the church pure from sin and scandal, they should separate themselves from those that walk disorderly, who are guilty of gross and known sins," 2 *Thess.* iii. 6. They should reprove them with just severity, as the offence deserves; and if the crime be such as makes void their profession, they should be cast out of the church, or excommunicated, as the *corinthian* offender, who committed incest, was cast out by his brethren, when the church was gathered together at the order of the apostle, 1 *Cor.* v. 4, 5, 7, 11, 13. "They must put away wicked persons from among them," lest they be charged with encouraging or indulging iniquity. When there are settled elders or ministers among them, these ought to go before the church, in a way of advice and direction according to the will of *Christ*, and by their lips persons should be received into, or cast out of the congregation: This is called the "discipline of the church." Yet it is still to be deemed an act of the church; for *Paul's* epistles, which are written to the churches, require them to receive worthy members, and they are required to cast out those who are proved to be unworthy: Therefore this sentence inflicted on the *corinthian* sinner is called "the punishment that was inflicted by many," 2 *Cor.* ii. 6. and in the 7, and 8. verses, the church is commanded to forgive and receive him again upon his deep repentance.

5. "It is necessary that officers be chosen by the church, to fulfil several services in it, and for it." What person will take upon him constantly to speak in prayer, and be as the mouth of the people to God? Who shall preach, and be as the mouth of God to the people? Who shall baptize and administer the Lord's supper? Who shall take care of a place for worship, or provide bread and wine for the Lord's table? Who shall collect and distribute the money of the church to the minister or the poor, if no particular persons are appointed for these purposes? But how many sorts of officers belong to a christian church, and what their distinct services are, shall be shewn under the next general head.

6. "It is the duty of those whose circumstances will afford it, to contribute of their earthly substance toward the common expences of the society;" that is, for the provision of the place of worship, the maintenance of the minister, the support of the poor, and for every thing that relates to the outward preservation and interests of the church: And each one should give according to his ability: This is but a piece of common justice, and it is sometimes fit to tell them so.

7. Shall I add in the last place, "That every thing of church affairs ought to be managed with decency and order, with harmony and peace?" So the apostle directs the *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 40. and chapter xvi. 14. "Let all things be done decently and in order: Let all your affairs be done with charity:" So in my text, "with one mind, as well as with one mouth glorify God." It is true indeed, every man has a will, and particular sentiments and inclinations of his own; but the most common and peaceful way of determining public affairs, is by the will and inclination of the major part manifested by a vote: And in matters of lesser moment it is generally wisest and safest to submit to such a determination of the majority, where it may be done without sin: But it is a very desirable thing, if possible, to do nothing

without.

without the unanimous approbation of those that are concerned. If there are differences arising, those who dissent from the major part, ought to be treated with all tenderness, in order to convince and persuade them to consent. But if any thing be determined by the majority, which they cannot comply with, they may peaceably make their remonstrances; and if they please, be dismissed from that society, or depart.

The fifth general leads me to enquire "who are the officers which *Christ* hath appointed in his churches?" The names of the officers are these two, which probably include all the rest, "bishops and deacons;" so they are called, *Phil.* i. 1.

Bishops and elders in primitive times are both called overseers in the *greek*, and seem to be the same officers, for *St. Paul* gives *Titus* the several characters of a bishop, in order to direct what sort of persons should be chosen for elders. Their business is to teach and instruct, to go before the people in performing acts of worship, "to give themselves up to the ministry of the word and prayer," *Acts* vi. 4. and to exhort and govern the flock, not by their own will, nor by rules of their own invention, but only by the general rules that *Christ* has given, which must be applied to particular cases by their prudence, and in matters of moment they should do nothing without the consent of the society. What the difference is betwixt pastors and teachers, and whether there be any elders who only are called to rule, but not in a stated manner to teach or administer ordinances in the church, I cannot now tarry to inquire or determine.

The other officers are called deacons, the institution whereof you find in *Acts* vi. 1—6. and whose business it is to take care of the poor, and serve tables, that is, to see that the table of the Lord, the table of the poor, and the table of the minister be supplied; for the apostle informs us that the poor must be relieved, and "they which preach the gospel must live of the gospel, so has the Lord ordained," *1 Cor.* ix. 14. and other things which relate to the convenience of such a society in their public meeting, are generally supposed to come under the care of the deacons \*.

When a christian society is furnished with such officers, it seems to have every thing within itself that is necessary to the being or well-being of a church of *Christ*. Here are all things that are needful, which are within the power of man, for the preservation of piety and purity among them, and for the continuance of the same religion with decency and honour in a constant succession, so long as the gospel shall call in new converts out of this sinful world.

It remains only that I make a few reflexions upon the present discourse.

Reflexion I. "How beautiful is the order of the gospel, and the fellowship of a christian church? How strong and plain are the foundations, and the grounds of it? It is built on eternal reason, and the relations of things, as well as on the word of God." How happy it is that the very light of nature dictates to christians far the greatest

\* Now all these officers must be chosen by the church. Whatsoever may be pretended to be done by the apostles themselves, or what directions soever are supposed to be given to *Timothy* or *Titus* toward the settling of churches, or ordaining of officers, by virtue of their extraordinary gifts in the primitive times, without an explicit declaration of the choice of the people recorded, yet there is no authority given to any person that I can find, to make themselves, or any other persons elders or deacons in a particular church, without their free consent: And indeed in those very primitive days, the choice of the people was plainly required towards the making of deacons, *Acts* vi. 3. "Look ye out among you men of honest report," &c. though the apostles are said to ordain them "by prayer and imposition of hands," verse 6. And in the earliest histories and records we have of these matters, the people's choice or consent was required to introduce elders or bishops into a church: Nor indeed is it proper that the souls of the people, nor the church's money should be intrusted with elders or deacons imposed upon them by others.

greatest part of those duties which church fellowship requires, supposing still that the revealed doctrines and sacraments of christianity are first known and acknowledged. The peculiar positive prescriptions relating to christian churches are but few, whereas the general duties are such as reason and the light of nature seem to propose and approve in all voluntary religious societies whatsoever. If a deist, who professes nothing but natural religion, once came so far as receive the christian faith and the sacraments, his reason would lead him into almost all the parts of christian communion, which I have described. It is the evil mixture of the needless and fanciful inventions of men, with the plain and common dictates of the light of nature and scripture in public religion, and the imposition of these things upon conscience, that has been the disgrace and ruin of many christian churches, and is a high misdemeanour against *Christ*, who is the Lord and king of his church. Reason and revelation are the only principles of his religion, and of the government of his kingdom.

Reflexion II. "How little do they value the true interests of christian religion, the public honour of *Christ* and his gospel, or the edification and comfort of their own souls, who neglect this holy communion?" There are twenty little excuses that some persons are ready to make against uniting themselves in fellowship: But let conscience do it's office, and examine sincerely whether such excuses will be a sufficient apology in the great day. A late eminent divine well known to some of us, viz. *Mr. Nathanael Taylor*, gives this direction to those who have given up themselves to God in *Jesus Christ*. "Join yourselves, says he, as members to some particular church of *Christ* or other. For the better edification of his body, our Saviour has appointed the erecting of particular-churches: And wherever a sufficient number of persons were called, it was the constant practice of the primitive times, to unite in such societies as stated members of them, under the guidance and conduct of those pastors and teachers, which with their own consent the holy Ghost had set over them to rule and feed them. This is a constitution of *Christ*, which is directly thwarted and opposed by a generation of loose and rambling christians, that content themselves with bare hearing, and that too in a very odd way. For they are a sort of volatile auditors, perpetually frisking to and fro, who can fix no where. Were all men of this humour, there could be no such thing as particular churches, which *Christ* has appointed for the edifying of his members; And how they can rationally expect to flourish either in grace or peace, while they live in a direct opposition to a manifest institution of our Lord *Jesus*, which was not more an effect of his authority, than of his wisdom and goodness; I wish men would seriously consider. Are any of you so self-sufficient that you need no pastor, nor the assistance of your fellow-christians to watch over, admonish, rebuke, exhort, comfort, strengthen and counsel you? Are there none of the churches of *Christ* that are pure enough? None of them that have latitude, or strictness enough for you? None of them worthy enough for you to join yourself unto? When our Lord hath given such variety of gifts to his ministers, is there none of them whose abilities suit you, and please your curious palates; that by settling under them you may be edified? I may say to such persons as *Constantine* once did to such a self-conceited man, "Take a ladder and climb up to heaven by thyself alone." In short, a society of believers walking together in gospel order, is like the excellent composure of syllables, words and sentences, that have a great deal of sense and signification in them; but a separated and divided christian, that will join himself to no church, is like a single letter or disjointed syllable, that is perfect nonsense."

Reflexion.

Reflexion III. "How criminal are those persons who break the beautiful order and harmony of a church of *Christ* for trifles?" Whose fanciful humours, or whose imposing spirit raises up discord and contest in a well settled and peaceful church; some are peevish, because the church will not consent to let them have their own will, or because others will not obey their assumed power. Some affect to make divisions upon every little occasion, out of unreasonable pretences of purity and order, where scripture gives no plain rule. Whatever varnish may colour over such practices in this world, yet such humorous and unreasonable disturbers of the peace shall receive no thanks from our Lord *Jesus* in the great day, whether they be pastors or people.

Reflexion IV. "When we behold a society of christians flourishing in holiness, and honourably maintaining the beauty of this sacred fellowship, let us take occasion to raise our thoughts to the heavenly world, to the church of the first-born, who are assembled on high," where everlasting beauty, order, peace and holiness are maintained in the presence of *Jesus*, our common Lord. And "when we meet with little inconveniencies, uneasiness and contest in any church of *Christ* on earth, let us point our thoughts and our hopes still upward to that divine fellowship of the saints, and the spirits of the just made perfect, where contention and disorder have no place." There the glories and the graces of the Redeemer who is the head of the church, are diffused over all the happy assembly: They adore and love their God, and their Saviour with supreme fervency, and they love one another with pure affection; their hearts and souls are one, and they rejoice in the love of God, and in the presence of the lamb for ever.

The END of the first VOLUME.

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A

# L I S T

O F

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