

The Works of William Jay

Volume IX

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Volume IX

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THE
WORKS
OF
WILLIAM JAY.

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THE
WORKS,
OF
WILLIAM JAY.

COLLECTED AND REVISED BY HIMSELF.

VOLUME XI.

SHORT DISCOURSES,
TO BE READ IN FAMILIES.

LONDON:
C. A. BARTLETT PATERNOSTER ROW.

SHORT DISCOURSES,

TO BE READ IN FAMILIES.

BY WILLIAM JAY.

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

GEN. xviii. 19.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

DEUT. vi. 6, 7

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
C. A. BARTLETT PATERNOSTER ROW.

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O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.—NEHEM. i. 11. 521

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THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS.

(Easter.)

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand,

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THE PUNISHMENT OF ADONI-BEZEK IMPROVED.

But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught
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 bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs
 and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my
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SIN RUINS A KINGDOM.

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Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart:
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ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and
your king. — 1 SAM. xii. 24, 25. 627

DISCOURSE LIII.

OUR SAVIOUR COMFORTING HIS DISCIPLES.

(AFTER A FUNERAL.)

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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be
also.—JOHN xiv. 2, 3. 643

DISCOURSE LIV.

THE DISCIPLES IN A STORM.

And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.
And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch
that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.
And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord,
save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye
fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the

winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!—MATT. viii. 23–27. Page 657

DISCOURSE LV.

FAMINE.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land.—AMOS viii. 11. 671

PREFACE.

MANY persons who maintain the worship of God in their houses, wish, occasionally at least, to blend instruction with devotion. But they are not able to deliver any thing of their own, nor can they easily avail themselves of satisfactory assistance from others.

We have commentators; but expositions are designed to be consulted rather than read, and are calculated to aid sacred criticism, and promote a general knowledge of the Scriptures, rather than to enliven the exercises of social piety. We have also paraphrases; but these too often consist of a mere languid redundancy of words which, by pretending to illustrate, only oppress and encumber the sense, and generally serve no other purpose than to destroy the simplicity, weaken the force, and diminish the effect of the word of truth. "In the very best compositions of this kind," says a judicious writer, "the Gospel may be compared to a rich wine of high

flavour, diluted in such a quantity of water, as renders it extremely vapid." Paraphrase is useful only in cases of obscurity; but the word of God, generally considered, is not hard to be understood. We do not apply the same censure to the reflections which are found at the end of the chapters or paragraphs, and which sum up their contents. These are often exceedingly valuable and useful; but it is easy to see that they are not very well adapted to the design before us. They are necessarily too refined in their coherence, too extensive in their review, too general in their remark, to leave a forcible impression on the minds of common readers or hearers.

Sermons have been often employed, and many discourses have been published, professedly for the use of Families. But it has been remarked—That these Discourses have not been distinguished from others, either in their length, their style, or their subjects. It has been asked, Is there no difference in circumstances between public worship and domestic devotion? It has been said. Let a minister place himself in a private family, and lead the morning or evening devotion, and he will soon find how unsuitable it would be to deliver in a parlour a sermon which he had prepared for the pulpit.

Discourses to be used on such occasions as these should be short—not commonly surpassing ten minutes; seldom more than a quarter of an hour. As

children and servants often form the greatest part of the little assembly, and should never be overlooked, those addresses should be plain and apprehensible, not argumentative, nor consisting of long paragraphs—they should be easy and natural, not elaborate nor highly polished—they should be entertaining and interesting, not dry and soporific.

Hence they should shun the formality of method and numerous divisions; and abound with short and significant sentences, bold images, striking incidents, lively descriptions and characters. Two classes of Scriptures would furnish perhaps the best foundations for these exercises. First, the *historical*, which holds forth the duties of religion in examples and instances. And secondly, the *figurative*, which explains divine things by resemblance. There is no better method of gaining the attention and of impressing the minds of children and common people, than teaching by comparison, or illustrating spiritual things by natural. It is needless to observe how much our Saviour's discourses abound with such allusions. Witness the prodigal son, the strayed sheep, the mustard seed, the leaven, the lilies—all this made its way directly to the heart; it was impossible ever to forget it; his followers hung upon his lips; children cried, Hosanna! and the common people heard him gladly.

In compliance both with his own conviction and

the repeated solicitations of others, the Author has ventured to undertake the present Work. He does not affirm, however, that what he has done comes perfectly up to his wishes, or corresponds with the plan he has suggested. He found that it was easier to censure than to amend: to judge than to execute. But this he professes: he has attempted to be simple, without being coarse: and to be intelligible to the illiterate, without proving disgusting to the wise. He has laboured to unite perspicuity with brevity; and, in the small compass allowed him, to introduce a subject, and secure an effect. Frequently unable in a few pages to do justice to the various parts of a Scripture, he has endeavoured to seize some one more prominent view of it, and to turn it into a source of consolation, a motive to holiness, a help to devotion. His aim has been to show that faith is not a notion, but a principle; and to bring down religion from airy speculations into common life, that our piety may not be periodical, but keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long. He wished to make Christianity to appear lovely in its spirit, reasonable in its commands, rich in its motives and resources, and beyond expression kind and tender in its promises.

The wish of the Author to engage particularly the attention of Servants and Children, will frequently appear in his manner. For such adaptations he makes no apology. Though he does not wish to

indulge in bad taste, he would ever remember that a preacher ought to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. That which is too smooth, easily slides off the memory; and that which is lost in the act of hearing, will do little good. It is desirable to get something that will *strike* and *abide*; something that, recurring again and again, will employ the thoughts and the tongue; and if this cannot be accomplished in certain instances but by model of address which perhaps are not so classically justifiable, should not a minister prefer utility to fame? Paul in his noble energy adds the comparative degree to the superlative, and calls himself less than the least of all saints. He invented new words, and used quaint ones. He could say, "I have made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means gain some." If a child ran away and became a profligate, a good father would be anxious to have him reclaimed; and if a person should go to him and say, "I think I could prevail upon your son to abandon his unhappy course of living"—would such a father say, "O try! but see to it that you conform perfectly to every rule of good speaking." Or should he return and announce his success, would the father deem it worth while to ask, "Did you dispose your arguments quite logically, or make use of no obsolete term or trite phrase?"—"He that winneth souls is Wise."—"If a man err from the truth, and one con-

vert him, let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." What a recompence!

—The circumstances of families are perpetually varying, and what is suitable seldom fails to impress. It was not possible, however, to accommodate a lecture to every supposable case; but the Author has endeavoured to introduce a comprehensive variety, and hopes something will be found pertinent to all the more common and interesting occurrences. He has more than once noticed events of an afflictive nature. The heart is then soft and serious. He has improved the various seasons of the year. He has also provided subjects which are adapted to all the greater festivals. Members of the Established Church may read these on the appropriated days, while Dissenters can surely have no objection to read at some time or other a few reflections on the birth or ascension of Christ. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike: let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.—Why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."

—Such was the Prospectus by which the Author

announced the work he had undertaken. The circulation of the proposals occasioned from his friends a variety of hints concerning the plan. Some of these could not be regarded, but others have led to a little deviation from the original sketch—in two cases—The one respects the style; the other, the length.

With regard to the former, it was suggested, that, in families where discourses of this kind were likely to be read, there were often Youths of both sexes, of some education and improvement—that these formed a very important part of the object of such a publication—and therefore that the eye should not be too exclusively fixed on servants and children. In consequence of this, the Author has frequently paid a little more attention to the composition.

With regard to the other, it was observed, that, between an hour and the time proposed, there were many intermediate degrees; and that those who had been accustomed to read discourses of the former length, would find the latter too disproportionately short. The Author has therefore rendered some of these exercises a little longer; but, as far as he can judge, none of them even now will take up more than thirty minutes. This circumstance has rather reduced the number of addresses.

After all, the Author scarcely knows whether the alterations are improvements. He has found, that if

in the multitude of counsellors there is safety, there is also perplexity. The work has been finished in a short space of time, under frequent indispositions and many interruptions. It might have been much better executed. But all human productions are susceptible of endless improvement; and were an author to wait till his own mind is completely satisfied, he may linger in idle hope till death—every moment hastening on—deprives him of all opportunity to serve his generation. The grand point at which we should aim is—to work while it is called to-day, knowing that the night cometh, wherein no man *can* work—and to gain from the Master the sentence with which he defended and applauded Mary—“Let her alone—she hath done what she could.”

The Author has not placed the Discourses according to any principle of arrangement; but the INDEX will enable the reader to find the subject suited to any particular purpose.

After publishing the Prospectus, a much-esteemed friend sent the Author the following reflections, which he had never seen before. They are extracted from the *Monthly Review* for May 1800. In noticing “Family Sermons, by the Rev. E. Whitaker, Canterbury, 3 vols.,” the writer observes,

“Prepossessed by the title of this work, we commenced our perusal of it with the flattering expectation

of finding what has indeed been long wanted: viz., a Hot of sermons particularly calculated for the use of families; such as are proper for parents and masters to read on Sunday evenings to their children and servants. It is astonishing that, amidst the torrent of sermons continually issuing from the press, there should scarcely be found any which answer this description: but our clergy do not sufficiently consider that compositions calculated for the pulpit are not nlwayR adapted for the purposes above specified. In our opinion, Family Sermons ought to be short, plain, pious, and practical. They should not tire by length, nor perplex by profundity. The plain truths of the Christian religion, the social and personal virtues, should be their subjects, and these should be treated with a view to practical application, rather than to learned explanation.

“Our modern sermons are considerably shorter than those of the last age, but they are still too long for domestic use. Children and servants are soon tired of listening to admonitions; and, when languor prevails, the mind ceases to be in a proper state to receive instruction. Above all things, therefore, he who composes Family Sermons should avoid prolixity and dry argumentation. He should endeavour to put himself in the situation of a sensible and well-disposed master of a family, who wishes to embrace the opportunity afforded on the Sunday evening of inculcating till those under his care and authority the lessons of

religion and virtue. Such a man, in making such an attempt, would select no subject of controversy, would discover no desire of display, but would strive, with all brevity, affectionately and piously to address their plain understandings, consciences, and feelings.”

The Author has inserted this extract because there is such a remarkable coincidence of reflection, and because by such an authority he would strengthen his own opinion. He apprehends there is only one article in which the work now introduced will be found to differ from the plan recommended above. And it is this: He has brought forward, sometimes more fully and distinctly, and oftener still by connexion and implication, subjects which the conductors of this celebrated Review may consider as too much partaking of the controversial and speculative, and which they would entirely exclude from such a performance. But the Author is satisfied not only of the truth, but of the importance of these doctrines: he has seen their beneficial influence practically exemplified; and he is persuaded the inculcation of them is necessary to ministerial usefulness. And as he has written from conviction, and has delivered himself without censoriousness, he expects from impartiality the same candour with which, notwithstanding difference of sentiment, his former works have been received.

Percy Place, June 1, 1805.

AN
ADDRESS TO MASTERS OF FAMILIES.

MASTERS OF FAMILIES!

YOU have often heard, and perhaps always admired, the resolution of Joshua. He had gathered all Israel together in Shechem, and thus he addressed them—“If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord; choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

THIS DETERMINATION DERIVES A CONSIDERABLE FORCE FROM THE PERSON WHO FORMS IT. It was Joshua. But who was Joshua? A soldier, a hero, a commander-in-chief of the armies of the living God, the governor of Israel, the principal man in the state. He it was who in the presence of an assembled country was not ashamed to say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

And does religion degrade talents, tarnish dignity, disparage greatness? It ennobles titles, and adds lustre to a crown. Are they only the vulgar, the

foolish, the dastardly, who profess to acknowledge God? God has been served by persons of all ranks, and of all distinctions. In every age of the world some of the wise, the mighty, the noble have been called. And no where does religion shine to more advantage than in circumstances of elevation. Nothing is more pleasing than to see a combination of greatness and goodness in the same character. And nothing can be more useful. The higher classes have more opportunities and capacities for doing good than others. They are like a city set upon a hill; they cannot be hid. They are widely visible. Their influence is extensive and powerful. Their example regulates not only manners, but morals: for it would be easy to prove that morals, equally with fashions, work downwards from superiors to inferiors. If the great distinguish themselves by the profession of truth, the worship of God, the practice of virtue, they will be sure to draw others after them. Whereas, if they are infidel, irreligious, vicious, they are infected fountains, poisoning the multitudes that drink of the streams, and spreading mischief all around.

Observe also THE INDEPENDENCE WITH WHICH THE DETERMINATION IS EXPRESSED. Joshua was by no means indifferent to the welfare of others. He wished all who heard him to choose the God he had chosen, and serve the God he served. But he could not allow himself to be influenced by them. If they will not follow him, he resolves to go alone. "O ye seed of Abraham! if you forsake him, which God forbid, not I. If you will not cleave to him, I must. If there was no individual in the nation, in the world, to accompany me, I would say as I now do—'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'"

The case which Joshua here supposes is neither an impossible, nor an unusual one. In a thousand instances you will find yourselves alone, if you are resolved to obey the dictates of truth, and the calls of duty. If “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” and you will be “holy in all manner of conversation and godliness,” you must be singular. If you live among fools, and are wise, you must be singular. If you live among the poor, and are rich, you must be singular. And it is presumed that you would have no great objection to be distinguished by wisdom, or wealth. And why should you be so terrified at the charge of singularity, in a cause infinitely more honourable? Nothing is so excellent as goodness, and no goodness is so praiseworthy as that which is singular. This shows a purity of motive, and a dignity of principle. This argues a grandeur of mind, a soul not meanly enslaved by custom, but asserting its own freedom, and daring to think and act for itself. Such a man does not wait for the company and countenance of others to embolden him—he can venture by himself: and despise the shame—when, as he advances, abandoned crowds pursue him with their sneers and reproaches. Such was Abdiel.

“Faithful found

Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single. From amidst them forth he passed
Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustained
Superior, nor of violence feared aught.”

On such a man the Saviour fixes his eye, and cries, "Them that honour me, I will honour. He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father and the holy angels. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

It may be remarked, that THE RESOLUTION IS PERSONAL. Indeed he *begins* with *himself*: "As for *me* and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Nothing can dispense with an obligation to personal piety. Nothing merely official, or relative; nothing we do for others, while we are destitute of the grace of God in our own souls, can secure us. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" And indeed those who are regardless of their own souls are not likely to be very attentive to the souls of others. Mere profession and a regard to decency may carry you some way; but there is nothing like a personal experience of divine things to inflame zeal. Unless you serve God yourselves, your efforts will be transient, partial, irregular. They are also likely to be unsuccessful. A drunken master is a poor preacher of sobriety to servants. A proud father is a miserable recommender of humility to children. They will do as you *do*, rather than do as you *say*. Your example will counteract all the effect of your counsel; and all the convictions you would fix in the mind will fall like arrows from an impenetrable shield.—"Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"

You should therefore begin “both to do, and to teach.” You should be able, in a humble measure at least, to say to those who are under your care, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Personal religion must precede domestic—therefore Joshua does not say, *My house* shall serve him *without me*. But domestic religion must accompany personal—and therefore Joshua does not say, *I* will serve him *without my house*: he includes both—

And thus, finally, the determination is RELATIVE and EXTENSIVE: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

But the question is—How could he say this? Could he be answerable for his family as well as for himself? We may consider this two ways, as expressing either his happiness or his duty.

If he could say this from a knowledge of his family; if, after observation, he was assured of the good and pious dispositions of all those who were under his care—we should envy his happiness. This has sometimes been the case. But the privilege is not common.

The words therefore are rather to be considered as an expression of his duty. Not that he supposed it was in the power of his resolution to make the members of his household truly pious. He knew that God alone is the author of conversion; but he knew also that God uses means, and requires us to use them: that it is only in the use of them he has promised his blessing; and therefore that it is only in the use of them we can expect it. Were we to hear it pious husbandman saying, “This year I will have wheat in *this* field, and in *yonder* I will have barley,” you would not mistake him. He does not mean to

intimate that he can produce the grain; but he can manure, and plough, and sow, and weed—he intends to do this—and then to look for the Divine blessing to give the increase.

Thus Joshua resolves to endeavour, in the wise and zealous use of all proper means, to render the family he governs truly religious. He would instruct, reprove, admonish, encourage them. He would address every principle of action. He would rouse every passion in their bosoms. He would seize every favourable opportunity, and improve every striking occurrence, to impress the mind with seriousness. He would cherish every promising appearance. He would lead them to the house of God, and keep them from profaning his holy day. He would pray not only *for* them, but also *with* them. He would worship God not only in the closet, but in the parlour, and with his children and servants in the train.

And this, O ye Masters of Families! this is that which I wish to enforce upon you all. O that I could find out acceptable words, as well as words of truth! O that I knew by what arguments I could induce you to establish the worship of God in your own houses!

To render our reasoning upon this subject easy of apprehension and remembrance, let me call upon you to consider domestic religion in reference to God—in reference to yourselves—and in reference to your families.

I. Think of it IN REFERENCE to God. To him family religion has a threefold relation. The first is a relation of RESPONSIBILITY. For we are required to glorify God in every condition we occupy, and in every capacity we possess. For instance: If a person be poor, he is commanded to serve God as a poor

person. But suppose he should become rich. He would then be required to serve him as rich: and from the time of his acquiring this wealth he would be tried by the rule of wealth. If a man be single, he is commanded to serve God as single; but no sooner is he placed over a family than he is required to serve God as the master of a family: and from the moment of his obtaining this new connexion he will be judged by the duties which belong to it. God has committed to him a trust, and he expects him to be faithful to this trust. He has given him a talent, and he expects him to use this talent. In a word, he has made him a steward, and he will call him to give an account of his stewardship. When, so to speak, the man has been tried, then comes forth to be judged the master of the family! Bring forth the law of the house—Have you walked by *this* rule? What have you done for me *here*?—Nothing! Did I not assign you the government of a family: and, to qualify you for this very purpose, did I not give you a peculiar authority and influence? How have you employed them?—Anticipate the proceedings of this awful day, and “judge yourselves, that you may not be condemned with the world.”

The second is a relation of GRATITUDE. How numerous and pressing are your obligations to his kindness and his care! He has crowned your wishes, and supplied all your wants. When you were a poor, solitary, insignificant individual, he raised you into consequence, and multiplied you into a family. Behold, “thy wife like a fruitful vine, by the sides of thy house; and thy children like olive plants round about thy table.” Whose “secret has been upon thy tabernacle”? Whose providence has “blessed the

labour of thy hands”? Whose vigilance has suffered “no evil to befall thee, nor any plague to come nigh thy dwelling”? And will you basely refuse him the glory which is due unto his holy Name? Will you refuse to honour him in a family in which he has scattered so many blessings? Shall thy house, which should be the temple of his praise, be only the grave of his mercies?

The third is a relation of DEPENDENCE. For can you dispense with God in your dwellings? Are not all your schemes, your exertions, and the assistances you secure, “less than nothing, and vanity,” without his aid and his blessing? “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.” The wisest course therefore is to secure his favour, who has all events under his control, and “is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.” And is this to be done by irreligion?

Observe his promises and his threatenings. Or rather, let us observe *one* of them—“The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.” What a dreadful look has this Scripture towards a wicked family! What a benign aspect towards a righteous one! What a tremendous thing is “the curse of God!” and this does not hover over the building, does not look in at the window, does not stand at the door—but is “in the house,” spreading through every apartment, and feeding like a worm upon all the possessions. You may see the appearance of pleasure, and, as you draw

nigh, you may “hear music and dancing”—but “there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked.” Magnificence may reign there; there may be rich furniture, and a table spread with dainties—but what are nil these when the Divine anger has said, “Let their table be made a snare, a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them”? And if this be the case with their good things—what will they do in the evil day? What can be expected under their disappointments and afflictions—but impatience, and rage, and despair?

But he “blossoth the habitation of the just:” and his blessing, with bread and water, is a good portion. If they have but little, it is sanctified. Their enjoyments are relished. Their trials are alleviated. Religion opens a refuge, when every other refuge fails, and applies a remedy to evils otherwise remediable. They have a God in trouble. His grace is still I lie same. His providence is making all things work together for their good. Their walls are continually before him. The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous! This brings us,

II. To consider family religion IN REFERENCE TO YOURSELVES.

And here, in the first place, you ought to be concerned for your spiritual welfare. You ought to value that which has a tendency to restrain you from sin, and to excite you to holiness. Now it is easy to see thatt the practice we are recommending has such an influence. Can he who is going to prayer with his family swear or be obscene? He will be upon his guard, if it be only to preserve himself from the charge of hypocrisy. Another feels no such motive. He can indulge himself in bad words, and vile tempers,

without incurring the reflection of inconsistency. And because lie makes no pretensions to virtue, he may imagine himself at liberty to practise vice.

And upon this principle it is that many refuse to make a profession of religion—to come to the table of the Lord—and to adopt family worship. They reason properly enough—that in consequence of this they must become more watchful and circumspect. But what can we think of the principle? What can we think of a man who fears to be restrained from the commission of sin, and to be urged to the performance of duty?

Such a practice also will secure tranquillity of mind. The omission of this duty leaves a sting in the conscience, occasions many a bitter reflection through life, and plants a dying pillow with thorns. When you see those who were placed under your care going astray, becoming the victims of error and vice and misery, it will not be easily in your power to suppress the rising, or to soothe the painful accusation—“Ah! this might have been prevented, had you discharged your duty. Does not their destruction lie at your door?” But the man who has faithfully discharged his obligation, feels an internal composure. If indeed his efforts be not crowned with success, he will lament; but his grief differs very materially from that torture which springs from self-condemnation for a trust betrayed, for opportunities neglected, for exertions omitted. He has a satisfaction under all his distress; and his rejoicing is this, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has had his conversation with the world, and more abundantly to them-ward.

But surely you are not indifferent to your temporal circumstances. You wish to have peace and order in your dwelling. You wish to have your property secured, and your business well performed. You wish to see fidelity, diligence, submission. You wish to be honoured and obeyed. But do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Surely you cannot expect these things to be produced without principle; and what principle can so certainly and fully produce them as religion? What else can enforce them by sanctions and motives so awful, so binding, and which operate equally in all places and at all times; and thus secure the performance of duty, when you are absent as well as present? By teaching them to regard God, you teach them to regard yourselves. Piety is the firmest basis on which to build morality. To which we may add, that when religion is fairly exemplified in character, there is a majesty and a force in it: it surrounds the possessor with an awe that represses a thousand impertinences, and extorts respect. "Abraham commanded his children and his household after him"—and what a son had he in Isaac! what a servant in Eliezer!

III. Let us therefore consider this subject IN REFERENCE TO YOUR FAMILY. The members which compose it are in reality parts of yourselves: children are natural parts, and servants are civil parts of yourselves. These have therefore peculiar claims upon you; and what would people think of you were you to avow that you had no regard for them, and would do nothing that would advance their welfare? If in the cold you denied your servants warmth; if you gave them bad food and short allowance; if you turned them out of doors as soon as they were sick,

and they knew not where to lay their head—the world would execrate you. If you were to suffer your children to go naked, to beg their bread, to perish with hunger in a ditch, or take your little ones and dash them against the stones—you would be shunned as a monster. But you act a far more criminal, and a far more infamous part, by disregarding their spiritual and everlasting welfare. Doubtless Herod after killing the infants in Bethlehem was viewed and shunned with horror—but he was far less cruel than you. He only destroyed the body, you damn the soul. He only slew the children of others, but you murder your own! “If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” And can you imagine you have done this, when you have endeavoured to answer the question, “What shall they eat, and what shall they drink, and wherewithal shall they be clothed”? What is the body to the soul? What is time to eternity? You may amass for them riches, you may leave them an estate; but your house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

Under this article, let us observe, more distinctly, two things.

The first is the importance of Religion to the individuals under your care. Is it not “the one thing needful”? Is it not “profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”? You cannot deny this. Can you then be indifferent to the religion of your offspring, without being indifferent to their welfare? While you say by your practice, that it is nothing to you whether they be pious or vicious—do you not at the

same time, and in the most undeniable manner, declare—that it is nothing to you whether they be respectable or infamous? loved or abhorred of God? saved or lost for ever?

And the second is this—the probability of their becoming religious by your means. BAXTER gives it as his opinion, that if family religion was duly attended to, the public preaching of the word would not long be the common method of conversion. Without adopting this sentiment in all its extent, we may observe that there is certainly enough to encourage the heads of families to exert themselves, and to condemn them if they do not. If the crop be so valuable, who would not sow, especially if he could “sow in hope”? And who knows not the force of early impressions, and the strength of early habits? Who has not read, “Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”? In such families there has generally been a seed to serve the Lord. And this has appeared not only in children; how often have servants had reason to say, “Blessed be God that ever I entered that family. There were the eyes of my understanding opened. There were my feet turned into the way of peace”!

MASTERS and PARENTS! I have thus endeavoured to bring into a small compass the arguments for the worship of God in your families. On a subject so frequently discussed, novelty was not to be expected; but I hope that what has been said will be found sufficient to convince your judgment, and determine your practice.

I cannot conclude the Address without lamenting

that there is so little attention paid to Family Worship, in a country professedly Christian, and in a period supposed to witness an increase of godly zeal. There is no more religion in the families of some who pretend to believe the Scripture, than there would be if they were atheists. To see many attending so regularly and frequently the preaching of the Gospel would lead to a conclusion, or at least a hope, that they were the true worshippers of God; but when we follow them home to their own dwellings, we find them no better than heathens. Heathens! forgive me this wrong—I blaspheme you by the comparison. You had your household gods, which you daily worshipped, and which nothing could induce you to resign—I only ask you to be consistent. If you are Israelites, be Israelites *indeed!*

It may be asked, whether we imagine that there is any *peculiar* deficiency with regard to family devotion in *our* day? And to this we readily answer, we are persuaded there is; and it appears both in the frequent neglect, and the superficial performance of it, especially contrasted with the commonness of profession, and the frequency of public ordinances. We wish to speak freely, but without meaning to give offence. It is easy to see, in the lives of our good old forefathers, what a value they set upon the morning and evening worship of God in their houses. With them it was an object, and an object of first-rate importance: they entered upon it with seriousness and preparation; they arranged their worldly business, and their household affairs, in a subserviency to it: *public* worship did not exclude it, or drive it up into a corner. But of late years an undue stress has been laid on public exercises; and oppor-

tunities of hearing have been so multiplied, as to produce a kind of religious dissipation, so that persons of a religious character, as well as persons of a worldly, are seldom at home; there is some entertainment every evening in the week, and every hour of the Sabbath. And hence there is very little inclination or time for family duty. It is so much easier to go and lounge in a place of worship, and hear some new performer, than to retire into the closet to examine the heart, and call together a family, and endeavour to instruct and impress them, that we cannot help wondering how it was ever possible for the former to be looked upon as a greater test of piety than the latter!—God forbid that we should decry public worship, or the preaching of the word: he has commanded us “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is”—but that man is surely under a mistake, who thinks to please God by incessantly running from one public opportunity to another, while he leaves his children to run wild, to grow up in ignorance, and to profane the sabbath.

I have stated the case strongly. But where this evil does not prevail in the extreme, it operates in the degree; and I cannot help sincerely wishing that the cause of the complaint could be removed. It is very desirable that useful bodies of men should be rendered more useful; and this in the case before us could be easily done, if those who have the lead would more strenuously inculcate the importance of family religion, and regulate the length and frequency of their public services accordingly.

There is another thing which, because it has a relation to the subject before us, I notice. Of late

years a considerable number of persons not in the ministry have been stimulated to go on a Saturday evening, or a Sunday morning, into the towns and villages as occasional preachers. The motive was laudable; but it has also contributed to the effect we have deplored. Families are thus frequently bereaved of their head on the sabbath; and who knows not that the sabbath is the principal day in which men of business can be much, in a religious sense, with their families? I hardly know how to censure this; I do not in every instance. But it may be well to ask, whether God ever calls us to a course which requires us to neglect or violate those duties which he has enjoined in his word? In a general way, the ministry requires a man's whole attention. And when Providence has furnished the means of a respectable introduction to the office by institutions for improvement, it is a duty to avail ourselves of them.

But to return. Let me beseech masters of families with all imaginable importunity not to think this practice a matter of indifference, which they are at liberty to perform or neglect. It is a duty. It is a duty of unspeakable importance. Do not therefore put it off longer. Begin this very evening, and before you lie down in your beds honour God in your families.

—“But we have not time”! What time does it require? Out of four-and-twenty hours cannot you furnish a few moments for God, or rather for yourselves? Would you think that time lost which is best employed? “There is nothing got by stealing, or lost by praying.” Surely, if you have no time at present, you could redeem a little, by order, by economy, by diligence. To every thing there is

a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens.

“But I have not the capacity”! Have you ever fairly made the trial? Would not your ability increase by exercise? Is it not a want of inclination rather than of power? “Where there is a will, there is a way.” And this would be the case here; for you would find that, if incapable of leading the devotion of the family extemporaneously, you could furnish yourselves with excellent forms. And it is to be lamented that prejudice should ever preclude the use of them when it is needful.

“But I have neglected it so long, that I am ashamed to begin”! You ought to be ashamed of sin, but not of duty. You ought to be ashamed that you have lived so long without it; but you ought not to be ashamed that you are wiser and better than you once were.

Again. You say, “If”—But I will answer no more of your objections. They are only excuses: and you know—yes, you know—that they do not satisfy your own consciences now, and will avail you nothing in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

But some of you live in the habit of family worship. It will not therefore be amiss to conclude with a few words by way of direction.

Be spiritual in the performance. There is great danger of formality, where things customarily return, and with little possibility of variation. Think of God. Remember with whom you have to do, and what you have to do with him.

Do not confine family worship to prayer. Include also reading the Scripture, and if possible sing the praises of God.

Be short. A few minutes of simple and affectionate devotion is far better than eking out nearly half an hour by doubling over the name of God, telling the Supreme Being what he is, and by vain repetitions.

Be early. Do not leave it till the family are drowsy and stupid.—But here a case of conscience occurs, and such, alas! as the inconsistencies of the present day would render too common. “When should those of us have family worship, who attend public amusements; for instance—the theatre?” I answer. By all means have it *before you go!* When you return it will be late; and you may not feel yourselves quite so well affected towards it. We have known professors who have always omitted it when they came home from the playhouse! Besides, if you have it before, you can implore the Divine blessing upon it; and beseech God to assist you in redeeming time, in overcoming the world, in preparing for eternity!

Reader! You may imagine that the Author has written this with a smile! but he has written it with shame and grief. He earnestly wishes that many would adopt Family Worship. But he is free to confess that there are some of whom he should be glad to hear that they had laid it aside.

DISCOURSE I.

RETURNING FROM A JOURNEY.

“Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.” JOB v. 24.

IN the Scripture, “God hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.” There is a suitability in it to every character, and to every situation in life. It cautions youth, and it sustains age. It soothes the poor, and it humbles the rich. It is equally useful, whether we are in a state of solitude or society. It teaches us how to behave ourselves in every connexion we form, and in all the circumstances through which we pass.

The words which I have read may be considered as a promise made to a good man—with regard to his absence from home. When he goes a journey, at the call of Providence, he may leave all his concerns with the Lord whom he serves, for He will guide his steps, and suffer no evil to befall him, nor any plague to come nigh his dwelling.

The person to whom this promise is made is supposed to have A HOUSE. It is called a *tabernacle*:

and it is so named in allusion to the houses of the Easterns, which, especially in the days of Job, were principally tents or tabernacles, to enable them to move the more easily from place to place, in feeding their flocks and herds. Abraham is commended for not building a fixed mansion, but reminding himself, even by his external circumstances, that he was a stranger and a sojourner, as were all his fathers, and that there is none abiding—"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And would it not be well for us to view our abode, however pleasing and durable it may appear, as only a temporary residence—a shelter of accommodation for a traveller? "Soon shall I be called to leave this dwelling—I am going the way of all the earth—Soon shall I ascend these stairs for the last time, and in this bed I shall soon close mine eyes to sleep till the heavens be no more." David therefore calls his palace *the tabernacle of his house*.

However plain the building may be, it is a mercy to have a house to live in. To be homeless, is a condition the most pitiable. Let us think of Cain, expelled from the presence of the Lord, "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth." Let us think of those whose doom David does not implore, but foretell—"Let his children be continually vagabonds and beg; let them seek bread also out of their desolate places." Let us think of those good men who "wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth"—of the apostles, who could say, "we have

no certain dwelling-place and, above all,—of our Lord and Saviour, who, “while foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, had not where to lay his head.” Let us think of all this, and be thankful to the kindness of Providence for a *tabernacle* to which human skill has added so many conveniences and comforts. Hence springs the powerful idea of home, to which the wandering tribes in savage countries are strangers. We insensibly acquire a love to inanimate things, and derive no little pleasure even from local prejudices. Who can feel indifferent to a place where he received his birth—where he passed his days of infancy, and indulged in the diversions of youth—where his body has been so often refreshed with sleep, and screened from piercing cold and descending torrents—and where he has shared so many social joys, from conversation and books, around the friendly fire, or in the adjoining garden! Home has a thousand attractions.

But, dear as it is, we must sometimes LEAVE it. In those cases indeed we should always remember the intimation of the wise man: “As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.” Persons who have families and callings should not be too frequently, nor too long, from home. It will cherish a roving disposition, multiply expense, injure those affairs which require inspection, and produce a nameless train of evils. But sometimes journeys are necessary. Business may call a man abroad. Friends and relations may live at a distance. Health may require a change of scene. Now when God calls us abroad, he will take care of us, and we may hope to find the proverb true, The path of duty is the path of safety.

Hence he is reminded of the WELFARE of his house and family in his absence. Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle "is in peace."

Peace means PROSPERITY. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways: for thou shalt eat of the labour of thy hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee." The Lord can keep off disease. He can render business successful. He can afford every needful supply. What peace can there be while children are crying for food, and there is none to give them? But, "fear the Lord, all ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger» but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Suppose they have not so much as others—Philip Henry tells us that "the grace of God will make a little go a great way and David says, "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

Peace is HARMONY. There can be no happiness in a family, among the members of which are found reserve, suspicions, bickerings, contentions. "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." What is pomp without concord? What is abundance without union and attachment? "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife." It has been justly said, that quietness under a man's roof is a blessing only exceeded by one thing, viz. quietness in his conscience. "Oh how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"—where all move in concert, mutually attentive to serve and please,

exchanging nothing but tender affections and kind offices!

“How pleasant ’tis to see
Kindred and friends agree;
Each in their proper stations move
And each fulfil his part,
With sympathizing heart,
In all the cares of life and love!”

Peace is PRESERVATION. To how many disasters is a family exposed if God withdraws his protection! A great wind may come and smite the four corners of the house, and it may fall and bury us in the ruins. A man may start up from his bed, and hear within the noise of thieves and robbers seizing his property and threatening his person. At midnight, when deep sleep falleth upon man, he may be awakened by the cry of fire, and see the flames consuming his substance, and not leaving an avenue by which to carry off his babes—What a blessing is it to have a tabernacle in peace!

Nor shall the tabernacle only be preserved, but the OWNER too. “And thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.” It is a mercy when we go from home to come back alive and well; for though we are too little sensible of it, we always travel in jeopardy. Let us reflect—We might have been terrified and robbed by wicked and unreasonable men. We might have been left groaning under the pain of bruised limbs and broken bones. Our lives might have been spilt upon the ground; and we might have died among careless and mercenary strangers, and our friends have received the sad intelligence, broken to them by degrees,—that we were—no more.

And are no suitable RETURNS to be made to the

God of our salvation? Surely for all this he expects from us something better than *sin*. Eut a man would sin in this case, if he visited his habitation without thankfulness, and did not fall down and adore the "Preserver of men." He would sin, if his gratitude was not lively and practical, and, "by the mercies of God," he did not present his "body a living sacrifice" and resolve to walk within his "house with a perfect heart, to set no wicked thing before his eyes, to hate the work of them that turn aside"—to watch over his conversation, and to guard his temper—and to flee passion and pride, and "the love of money, which is the root of all evil"—to be satisfied with his lot, and resigned under his trials—to behave towards his servants as one that has "a Master in heaven"—to train up his "children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," ruling well his own house "after a godly sort," that God may derive a revenue of glory, not only from himself, but from his family.

He would sin also, did he not confide in Him in future more simply and firmly; for God, by these instances of his attention and proofs of his faithfulness, solicits us to trust in him, commands us to give up our fears, and says, "Cast all your care upon me, for I care for you."

Let us observe one thing more, and conclude. DOMESTIC PIETY CROWNS DOMESTIC PEACE. It should be our daily prayer, when we go out and when we come in, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." In all our employments, and in all our enjoyments, to be preserved from sin is the greatest privilege; it should therefore be our greatest concern. Sin is a dreadful thing, for it is always the attraction of wrath. "The curse of the Lord is in the

house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just. The house of the wicked shall be overthrown; but the tabernacle of the righteous shall flourish.”

Let us, therefore, keep sin out of our dwellings; and say, with Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Then neighbours, and angels, and God, will say, “The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. Peace be both to thee and to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast!” Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

GOD THE BEST OF FATHERS.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!” MATTHEW vii. 11.

The parental relation is a very familiar and a very instructive one. It is, therefore, often employed to hold forth the union between God and his people. But while it aids our conception, it cannot do justice to the subject. Man, from whom our idea of this relation is taken, is *evil*, whereas “our Father which is in heaven” is *perfect*. Defects appear in the dispositions and actions of every earthly father; but when the Supreme Being assumes the character of a parent, He fully exemplifies it. He does *much more* than was ever seen, ever heard of, in this relation before. And hence, according to our Saviour, we may learn as much from the difference, as from the resemblance, in this striking comparison.

Let us, then, see how PRE-EMINENTLY He sustains the parental office; and learn thereby the happiness of his children.

The First instance of superiority is derived from KNOWLEDGE. Men know not always what is good for their offspring. Sometimes they ignorantly yield to their wishes, and in effect give them stones instead of bread, and serpents instead of fish. Not knowing sufficiently their talents and dispositions, they may place them in a line of business which will embarrass or ensnare them, instead of one in which they would appear to advantage. From the same principle, they may advise them to form connexions which would prove their vexation through life, or hinder them from unions which would complete their happiness. They may not know how to approach their minds most successfully by instruction: to fix them, if volatile; to give them confidence, if timid. By checking, they may chill; and by indulgence, they may not only encourage, but dissipate. All these disadvantages necessarily arise from our defective knowledge.

But our Heavenly Father is the only wise God. His understanding is infinite. It is our happiness that He knows what we really need; knows when to refuse, and when to yield; and so arranges our circumstances in life, as to make "all things work together for our good."

The Second instance of superiority is derived from CORRECTION. It is thus that the Apostle distinguishes between "fathers of our flesh" and "the Father of spirits." "They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure often from whim and caprice; from fretfulness and passion; to relieve their feelings, rather than to comply with their convictions. Hence, if they did not rebuke us at the very moment of provocation, they could not do it at all: whereas,

if they had been concerned for our welfare, the reason for correction would have remained when the irritation had subsided—"But He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." There is no tyranny in God; there are no uneasy sensations in him. If he afflicts, it is—not from passion, but principle; and this principle looks only to the advantage of his children.

We may also err on the other side. We may be too soft to the faults of our offspring, and our tenderness may degenerate into foolish fondness. Eli is an awful example of this: "His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." It is said also of Adonijah, that his father David "had not displeased him at any time in saying. Why hast thou done so?" But it is cruel to connive where we should punish: "he that spareth the rod, hateth his son." And God will not sacrifice our profit to our feelings. If our welfare requires it, he will frown—or withhold the tokens of his love—or shut us up for a time—or smite us—and severely too. Nor let us think hardly of his dealings with us, since it is written, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law."

Behold a Third instance in which God surpasses every earthly parent. It arises from NEARNESS and OBSERVATION. They cannot be always with their children, so as to attend to their circumstances. They sleep, and are unable to watch over them. They are employed, and business draws them off, and occupies all their thoughts. They journey, and leave their little ones behind them with many an anxious feeling. There is an age when their children go from them: school or trade calls them away from home, and they

are no longer under the eye of their natural guardians. It was well for the little Shunamite, when seized in the field, that he had a father by: he said unto his father, "My head, my head!" Joseph would have been preserved from the rage of his brethren, in the plain of Dothan, had his venerable father been there: but in vain he looked—and called—no father was nigh.

But here it is otherwise. If we are the children of God, we are never out of his sight—"He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." He who keepeth them "never slumbers nor sleeps." Though He governs worlds, he attends as much to each individual as if nothing else engrossed his care. And wherever we go, there is He. Jeremiah found Him in the dungeon; Daniel in the lions' den; John, in the isle of Patmos; and Jonah and Paul in the deep. "Yea," says David, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Fourthly. Parents may be UNABLE to relieve their children, if with them. I pity the mother whose ears are assailed with the cries of half-fed babes, when, alas! she has no more to give them. I feel the situation of poor Hagar. Her bread consumed, and the bottle of water spent—what could she do? "She cast the child under one of the shrubs"—and "she went and sat her down over against him, a good way off, as it were a bow-shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice and wept." "By faith, Moses when he was born was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper

child." And what could they do more? They make him a little "ark of bulrushes, and daub it with slime and with pitch, and lay it in the flags by the river's brink." One thing more is possible—"his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him." And here Providence took up the business; or what had become of the poor helpless infant? We read in the Gospel of "a certain nobleman whose son was at the point to die"—and what in this case could titles and riches do for him? Nothing. He therefore goes abroad in search of aid. Oh! I sympathize with the father who hears from the physician the sad hint; Sir, I can do nothing more for the child. He enters the room—we behold him standing by the side of his expiring Isaac—but unavailing are all his tears, life quivers upon the lip, and the eye is closed—for ever.

The children of God are never in a condition in which HE cannot effectually aid them. "They are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." O blessed thought! our *Father* is *Lord* of heaven and earth. The silver and the gold are his: his "are the cattle upon a thousand hills; the world is his, and the fulness thereof." There is no enemy which he cannot vanquish; no disease which he cannot cure; no want which he cannot supply.

Fifthly. Other parents are not suffered to CONTINUE by reason of death: and thus their children become ORPHANS. It matters not how heavy the affliction may be—they are left—left perhaps uneducated, unprovided for. Incapable at present of appreciating their loss, they are to learn it by bitter experience. Behold them passing through an unfeeling world, on which they are turned adrift, to be

overreached by artifice, oppressed by injustice, injured by violence. In vain do they visit a father's tomb with the voice of joy or grief: "his sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them."

But hear David: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Hear the Church: "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." With him the relation continues for ever—he is "the everlasting Father:" and hence his children can never be destitute. In every loss they have this to comfort them—"the Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted."

Again. The LOVE of parents is far exceeded by the love of God. There is no affection perhaps more ardent and forcible than parental: hence God assumes it: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." But this marks resemblance, not equality; for the one is no more to the other than a drop to the ocean. Though the love of a father be great, it is generally and it is justly supposed that the love of a mother is more so. We see in this the wisdom and kindness of Providence, which thus makes duty a privilege, and reconciles the woman to numberless privations, and cares, and toils, in rearing the human race, from which the man is exempted: and God avails himself therefore of this relation also: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

"Can a fond mother from herself depart,
Can she forget the darling of her heart:

The little darling whom she bore and bred,
Nurs'd on her knee, and at her bosom fed;
To whom she seem'd her every thought to give,
And in whose life alone she seem'd to live

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”

Finally. Parents give good things to their offspring, HOWEVER IMPERFECTLY THEY MAKE KNOWN THEIR WANTS AND DESIRES. Behold a family of several children. Here is one who is able to come and ask for his supplies in proper language; a second begs in broken phrases; but here is a third that cannot speak at all: but he can point, he can cry. Sweet babe! thou too art a child—thou too shalt succeed—everything pleads for thee—thy dimpled cheeks, thy little hand, thy big rolling tears. And if *we* who are *evil* do this, what think we of HIM whose “tender mercies are over all his works”? Let us therefore go to Him—let us go, and ask as we are able. Let us remember that words are not necessary to inform Him who knows all things, or to move Him who is already “more willing to give than we are to receive.” He hears the voice of our *weeping*. Our

desire is before him, and our *groaning* is not hid from him.

He calls himself your Father, to teach you with what dispositions you should enter his sacred presence. It is to encourage you to approach him with holy confidence and humble boldness.

Admire him. Love him. Hope in him. Repair to him. "Pray without ceasing." "Pray, and not faint." "He who hears the young ravens that cry" will not refuse the importunity of children. He hears prayer. Thousands, millions, have sought him—and none ever sought him in vain. These successful suppliants, returning from his throne, encourage us to go forward; all saying, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

DISCOURSE III.

SATURDAY EVENING.

“To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord.”

EXOD. xvi. 23.

ANOTHER week is drawing to a close. Another period has been added to the season of God’s long-suffering patience, and to the time of your preparation for an eternal world. These hours are gone to appear before God—What can they testify in your favour? They are gone to return no more—How have you improved them? What use have you made of your trials, your mercies, your means of religious instruction and edification? On such an occasion as this, it is well to look back and review the past. But I wish you also to look forward. “To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord.” Let us consider the Sabbath as a rest, and see with what dispositions we should think of its approach.

First. The Sabbath is *a rest*.

It is so even to the BRUTE CREATION. The mercies of God are over all his works: He takes care for oxen. It is pleasing to hear him say, “that thine ox

and thine ass may rest as well as thou." If animals were endued with reason, they would bless God for the kind and tender design of a Sabbath. But, alas! in how many instances does the wickedness of man counteract and defeat the goodness of God!

The sabbath is a rest for the BODY. Those who live in ease and idleness cannot value the day as a cessation from labour: all days are nearly alike to them. But think of the condition of thousands and millions of your fellow-creatures—think of a man sitting six days at a loom, or standing six days at a forge; how inviting, how soothing, how useful, how necessary, is a period of repose! Man is impelled to labour: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But is there nothing to soften the rigour of the obligation? Who could bear everlasting drudgery and fatigue? Behold a refreshing pause; a day of relaxation. The labourer lays aside the implements of industry—changes his apparel—unbends his wearied limbs—enjoys the fresh air of heaven. The alteration of scene conduces to the preservation of health—enlivens the dull sameness of toil, and renews the waste of spirits. Who would be cruel enough and senseless enough to blot out the sabbath from the days of the year? How heavily and joylessly would time pass away without these precious intervals! How many pleasing emotions associate themselves with the idea of a sabbath! Our charming Poet therefore has not forgotten to notice the want of this in the lines supposed to have been written by Alexander Selkirk in his solitude:

“But the sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard;
Never sigh'd at the sound of a knell,
Nor *smiled* when a Sabbath appear'd.”

But it is principally designed to be a rest for the MIND—a SPIRITUAL rest. Thus it is not a day of inactivity, but of reflection and devotion—a day in which, disengaged from the concerns of time and sense, we may attend to the things which belong to our peace, examine our state and our character, inquire where we are going, and what preparation we have made for the journey. It is almost the only opportunity some of the labouring poor have to gain religious information. It is the return of this day, that reminds them that they are men, that they are heirs of immortality. It is the worship of this day, that preserves in them a sense of that dignity and importance which they are so likely to lose while groveling always in the earth, or toiling among the beasts that perish. A pious mind will overflow with joy to behold them under the sound of the Gospel, and to think of the accomplishment of these words, “Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more: but thine eyes shall see thy teachers; and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” A pious mind will love to enter the cottage, and witness the Sunday scene:—The Bible is taken down, and while one child is stationed between the knees, and the rest are sitting around, a portion is read of that blessed book which “brings glad tid-

ings to the poor," and teaches us, "in whatever state we are, therewith to be content."

The real Christian indeed does not confine his devotion to particular seasons: he will mingle piety with business, and endeavour to acknowledge God in all his ways. But still he finds week-days to be worldly days: he wants a retreat—he wants a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

When, therefore, he awakes in the morning, he can say,

"Welcome, sweet day of rest,
That saw the Lord arise;
Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes!"

Blessed be his name, he has *fed* me through the week—but

"The King himself comes near,
And *feasts* his saints to-day:
Here we may sit, and see him here.
And love, and praise, and pray."

Here is such a day as Christians want—a day entirely for their souls and their God. They feel impressed and sacred; every thing wears a new appearance. And

"With joy they hasten to the place
Where they their Saviour oft have met;
And, while they feast upon his grace,
Their burdens and their griefs forget."

This leads us, secondly, to inquire with what dispositions we should think of the approaching Sabbath. We should endeavour to FINISH ALL OUR WORLDLY AFFAIRS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE ON A SATURDAY EVENING, that we may feel free and composed. Edgar,

one of our Saxon kings, passed a law, that the Sabbath should be observed from nine o'clock on Saturday evening till Monday morning. I wish the custom, if not the law, was revived. How wrong is it for tradesmen, and masters and mistresses of families, to drive things off so as to create hurry and confusion on the very eve of the Sabbath, and to retire later, and with a mind less fitted for devotion, than on any other day in the week! Where something of this is unavoidable, persons are to be pitied.

We should expect the return of this season with THANKFULNESS. Let us bless God for an institution which shows his concern for our present and everlasting welfare, and marks his lovingkindness more than his sovereignty: for "the Sabbath was made for man." Let us bless God, that our lives are spared, and that in a few hours we hope to hear the multitude who keep holy-day saying, "Let us go into the house of the Lord let us bless him, that we are in circumstances which promise us ability to join in the sacred exercises, and that we are not by accidents and diseases doomed to pass a solitary sabbath, and impelled to take up the melancholy complaint,

"Lo! the sweet day of sacred rest returns—
 But not to me returns
 Rest with the day. Ten thousand hurrying thoughts
 Bear me away, tumultuous, far from heaven
 And heavenly work: alas! flesh drags me down
 From things celestial, and confines my sense
 To present maladies. Unhappy state!
 Where the poor spirit is subdued to feel
 Unholy idleness; a painful absence
 From God and heaven, and angels' blessed work:
 And bound to bear the agonies and woes
 That sickly flesh and shatter'd nerves impose."

We should expect the return of the day with HOLY AWE. It is a solemn thought—and we should impress it upon our minds that every sabbath, every sermon, every prayer, is a step taken, which brings us nearer heaven or hell—that the means of grace with which we are so frequently indulged will prove either “the savour of life unto life” or “of death unto death.” Yes—these are privileges which will not leave us as they find us: if they are not food, they will prove poison; if they do not cure, they will be sure to kill. They are talents, for each of which we shall be called to give the strictest account; and, unimproved, they will sink us deeper in condemnation than either Jews or heathens.

We should meet the Sabbath with nous RESOLUTION. Here is at hand a returning season of mercy—let me embrace it. By how many will it be profaned!—but, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” How many of these invaluable opportunities have I already trifled away! how many have I sinned away! O let me now awake, and be serious and diligent: let me not shorten the day by rising late; let me not lose it by inattention. Let it not be “a price in the hand of a fool.”

But what is resolution without prayer? “The preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue in man are from the Lord.” Without him, we can do nothing. Let us therefore betake ourselves to him in humble and earnest prayer. Let us beseech him to grant that we may be “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”—that his grace may be sufficient for us—that we may “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”—that we may “not be forgetful hearers, but doers of the word”—that, in waiting upon him,

our strength may be renewed—that we may mount up with wings as eagles—that we may run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.”

Such a Sabbath will leave us prepared for the duties and trials of the week. Such a Sabbath will lead us to say, “A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Such a Sabbath will be a foretaste of glory, the beginning of heaven. What is heaven? “There remaineth,” says the Apostle, “a rest for the people of God.” It is in the margin, “a keeping of Sabbath.” Such is the representation of the happiness above and, oh! how instructive, how endearing is it, to those who love Sabbaths below! By-and-by your weekdays will be over, and the Saturday evening of life will come. You will lie down—and fall asleep—and open your eyes on a Sabbath infinitely superior to any we can expect on earth. Here we worship with a few—there we shall join the general assembly—Here we often feel unsuitable frames, and our powers are always unequal to our work—there our faculties will be raised to the highest degree of perfection, and we shall “serve him day and night in his temple.” Here our Sabbaths end, and we soon go down again from communion with God into the vexing, debasing things of the world—there the Sabbath will be eternal; and we “shall go no more out.” “We shall be for ever with the Lord.” “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

But should there be in this little assembly one individual who is a stranger to the pleasures of devotion, and who dislikes the employment of God’s holy day, let me ask—Is *he* qualified for an eternal Sabbath,

who is now groaning, as he passes from duty to duty, *What a weariness is it to serve the Lord! when will the Sabbath be gone!* Can he enjoy even the thought of being for *ever* engaged in religious exercises, who at present feels *a day, an hour, a few moments*, employed in them, disagreeable and irksome? The question is awful—may the Lord help you to lay it to heart! Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE EYE OF GOD ALWAYS UPON US.

“Thou God seest me.” GEN. xvi. 13.

THESE are the words of Hagar, Sarah’s handmaid And I have read them, hoping that you will individually make the reflection your own. They can easily be remembered, because of their brevity: they should be daily thought of, because of their importance.

Let us see whether this reflection be not founded in truth; and show, by taking several views of it, how instructive and edifying it may be rendered.

Hagar was convinced that God saw *her*. Indeed he found her in the wilderness of Shur, where no human eye discerned her. By an angel he admonished her to return, and humble herself under the hand of her mistress; and predicted the character and condition of her child unborn—“He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.” On this she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, “Thou God

seest me.”—But how much more striking is this to us! We are able to compare the accomplishment with the prophecy. The descendants of this poor woman’s child are the Arabians; and they continue to this day a wandering, uncivilized multitude. They live by treachery and plunder; they are at war with all the world; no conqueror has ever subdued them; while they spread themselves over a vast country, thirteen hundred miles in length, and twelve hundred in breadth. Can any thing be hid from Him who declareth the end from the beginning, and before a babe is born can describe with unerring exactness the disposition and circumstances of his offspring for a number of ages to come?

His knowledge of all our concerns may be inferred from his universal presence. Effects prove him to be everywhere—for everywhere life is given and sustained—and this is the work of God only. Now if he be everywhere, what can be placed out of his sight? Hence we read, “Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.”

Besides, how could he judge the world in righteousness, unless he were perfectly acquainted with all our doings? He could not produce what he had never witnessed—but we know that “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” The Scripture therefore tells us that “his eyes are in every place, beholding both the evil and the good:” that “his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings:” that “there is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide them-

selves. Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Human inspection is very limited, and easily interrupted. I now see you—but place between us only a screen or a curtain, and I see you no more. I now behold you—but let the sun go down, or this candle be extinguished, and for want of a medium of vision the eye seeks you in vain. Think, then, of a Being, of whom it is said, "Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

What use then should we make of this undeniable truth?—"Thou God seest me," is a reflection very pleasing to good men—very dreadful to sinners—and very edifying to all.

First. It is VERY PLEASING TO GOOD MEN.—Hence, when David had been considering the omniscience of God as compassing his path and his lying down, and as acquainted with all his ways, he exclaims, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O Lord! how great is the sum of them!" His meditation of an all-seeing God was sweet; and therefore it was frequent. How is it with us? If we feel a satisfaction in thinking of this attribute, it is a good evidence of our sincerity. Now this is the case with the Christian—he comes to the light, and instead of shunning scrutiny, he invites it. If I am not right, says he, I wish to be set right. I know that He will discover in me much that is amiss, but he knows that I am willing to have it cured; and as he alone can heal, why should I wish to keep my physician ignorant of any part of my complaint? "Search me, O God, and know my

heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

“Thou God seest me!” This is a pleasing reflection when I fear some hidden corruption which has hindered the answer of prayer, and often deprived me of comfort, but which I cannot, after the most faithful investigation, detect. He can discern it—“Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.”

“Thou God seest me.” This is a pleasing reflection when I feel those infirmities which make me groan. He sees grace, however small; he sees the disadvantages of my situation, the influence of the body over the mind, and of sensible things over the body; he sees that the “spirit indeed is willing when the flesh is weak.” “He knoweth my frame, he remembereth that I am dust.”

“Thou God seest me.” This is a pleasing reflection with regard to prayer. I often know not what to pray for as I ought; but he always knows what to give. I cannot express myself properly in words; but words are not necessary to inform him who “knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit—my desire is before him, and my groaning is not hid from him.” “Thou God seest me.” This is a pleasing reflection when I am suffering under the suspicions of friends, or the reproaches of enemies. “Behold my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.”

“Thou God seest me.” This is a pleasing reflection when I am in trouble. He knows all my “walking through this great wilderness he knows where the burden presses; he knows how long to continue

the trial; and by what means to remove it. In no condition am I hid from my heavenly Friend. He saw Jeremiah in the dungeon, and Daniel in the lions' den. My circumstances are perplexing—"I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him—But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy."

Secondly. To the WICKED IT IS A VERY AWFUL REFLECTION. Yes: what can be more awful than the thought—that God sees you rise in the morning, goes forth with you, observes you all the day long—that you have passed under his eye from infancy to youth, and from youth to manhood—that he has beheld every plan you have formed, every bargain you have made—that he has observed not only actions but motives, not only words but thoughts, not only the evil you have committed, but the evil you wished to commit: all the filthiness of your imaginations as well as of your lives—all the difficulties you have had to overcome in pursuing a sinful course, every check of conscience, every rebuke of Providence—and has noticed not only the number but aggravations of all your crimes? And what renders all this still more dreadful is this—that he does not forget anything he has seen. *You* have forgotten many of your transgressions, but *he* remembers even the sins of your youth. Sometimes persons sin from custom and habit; and know not when they do so—for instance, they know not when they lie or swear If it were possible

to secure all their evil words, for one month, one year—and read it to them—what a surprise would they express! Well, not one of them has escaped the Divine notice: he has recorded them all in the book of his remembrance. And to complete the terror of this consideration—all he has seen he will publish before the whole world: and he will also punish all that he has seen “with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

Thirdly. The reflection will be FOUND very USEFUL to all.

Useful as a check to sin. For can a person sin while he realizes this? can he affront the Almighty to his very face?—Impossible. This would restrain us even from secret faults, and make us as pure in the closet as in the sanctuary, for God is in the one as well as in the other.

“—Oh may these thoughts possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest;
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin—for God is there.”

—Useful as a motive to virtue. The presence, the eye of one who is above us, and whom we highly esteem and reverence, elevates our minds and refines our behaviour; and we desire to act so as to gain his approbation. A servant feels this when he is before his master, and a subject when he is before the king. One of the heathen philosophers, therefore, recommended his pupils, as the best means to induce and enable them to behave worthily, to imagine that some very distinguished character was always looking upon them. But what was the eye of a Cato compared with the eye of JEHOVAH! Who would not approve

themselves unto God? "In his favour is life."—"I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies," says David; "for all my ways are before thee." finally. Useful as a reason for SIMPLICITY and GODLY SINCERITY. Oh! let it banish all dissimulation from our religious exercises; and, whether we read, or hear, or pray, or surround the table of the Lord, let us remember that "God weigheth the spirits." If we had to do with men only, a fair appearance might be sufficient; "but the Lord looketh to the heart." And can we play the hypocrite under those eyes which are as a flame of fire? What will a name to live, a form of godliness, avail us with him who is "a Spirit, and seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth"?

Let us then no longer suffer ourselves to be led by *sense*, but let us live and walk by *faith*. Let this important truth sink down into our hearts—that the eye of God is always upon us. The truth, indeed, remains the same, whether we regard it or not—but if we lay hold of it by faith, and keep it present in our thoughts by meditation, it will be found the noblest of all principles: it will preserve us from sin, it will excite us to duty; it will make us "sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

DISCOURSE V.

THE DEATH OF JESUS.

[GOOD FRIDAY.]

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” JOHN xii. 24.

DEATH—death, the most dreadful of all events, has often been rendered a blessing.

The death of a BELIEVER has been useful. It has encouraged and established those who were walking in the way to Zion with many a trembling step, and many a shivering fear how it would go with them at loot. When they have viewed a dying Christian, and have seen the grace of God, they have been glad: their courage has been revived, and they have rejoiced in hope. Why may it not be so with me?

The Lord is my helper, I will not fear.” His looks, his words, his experience, have also made an impression on the minds of the careless, which has never been erased. After turning their backs on a sermon, they have been convinced by a dying bed. There the evidence was too plain to be denied, too solemn

to be ridiculed. They have admired and resolved to follow a Master who is so good to his servants, and who does not “forsake them when their strength faileth; but is the strength of their heart and their portion for ever.”—And the death of the saint has proved the life of the sinner.

The death of a PARENT has been useful. His expiring charge has never been forgotten. The thought of separation for ever from one so loved and valued, has awakened in the son a salutary fear. Returning from a father’s grave, he has met with God, saying, “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father! thou art the guide of my youth?” and, turning into his closet, he has kneeled, and said, O thou, “in whom the fatherless findeth mercy, I am thine, save me.”—And the death of the parent has proved the life of the child.

The death of a MINISTER has been useful. Some of the servants of God have laboured faithfully without seeing the fruit of their labours. One has sown, and another has reaped. But the removal of our mercies, by showing us their value, leads us to prize them. It has been so with many a conscientious preacher. He has been little regarded while living, but when dead, his word has come with power to the conscience; his addresses, prayers, and tears, have been remembered by his people; and the expectation of meeting him at the last day has forced them to exclaim, “How shall we escape?”—And the death of the minister has proved the life of the hearer.

The death of a MARTYR has been useful. His patience and fortitude; his joy and triumph; his forgiveness of injuries, and his prayers for his persecutors, have struck beholders, rendered a religion

honourable that could produce such marvellous effects, led to an examination of its evidences; and faith and zeal have been the result of inquiry. "The wrath of man has praised God,"—"and the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church."

But where are we now? We have an example to produce infinitely greater than all these. Let us leave the disciples, the members of "the household of faith," and behold their Lord, "the author and finisher of faith." JESUS dies, and his death is the "life of the world." The death of the believer has been the life of the sinner; the death of the father has been the life of the son; the death of the preacher has been the life of the hearer; the death of the martyr has been the life of the beholder—but our Lord Jesus, as he was going to be crucified, exclaimed, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." This is the meaning of the words which I have read: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Go forth and behold the process of vegetation. Take a corn of wheat—how small, how insignificant, how useless, it appears! But it is extremely valuable, and with care may be made to stock a field, a country! But how does it thus multiply? Keep it in the granary, and it remains the same. It must be sown, to fructify and increase. Let it be buried under the clods, and perish as to its present form and appearance—and, lo! it springs up, and brings forth, in some places "thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred fold." And behold the mystery of the cross, around which we are this day assembled! It was equally necessary for our Saviour to suffer and die. In death he becomes the

principle of our life. By tins he fills heaven with praise, the Church with blessings, the world with followers. This is the "fruit" which by dying he "brings forth"—an immense number of Christians.

For, you know, a grain of corn multiplies by yielding other grains like itself. "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." If therefore Jesus be compared to seed, and he be sown to multiply, he will produce others like himself. If barley be sown, barley comes up; if wheat be sown, wheat appears; if Christ be sown, Christians are brought forth.—This is a very striking and a very useful thought. For it may be asked. What are Christians? And the answer is. What was Christ? They are predestinated to be conformed to him; and as they "have borne the image of the earthy, they must also bear the image of the heavenly." Here, indeed, the likeness is not complete—but it will be perfect in due time: they "shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is"—as entirely like him as one grain of corn resembles another, from which it was derived, in substance and in figure. But let us remember that the likeness is now begun, and must be advancing, according to the words of the Apostle, "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—He was "not of the world;" and Christians "are not of the world." It was his "meat to do the will of him that sent him;" and they

also can say, "his commandments are not grievous." "He went about doing good;" and they are endeavouring to "serve their generation according to the will of God." He "was meek and lowly in heart;" and they "are learning of him." "The world knoweth them not, for it knew him not."—A Christian springs from Christ; and he is like him.

There is one thing here which we should not overlook, for it will afford the benevolent mind a delicious pleasure; I mean, the largeness of the crop—This corn of wheat, by dying, bringeth forth "much fruit." "Are there few that shall be saved?" This question was once proposed to our Saviour, and it is observable that he made no reply to the inquirer; but he did say to those that heard him, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for I say unto *you*, many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." And by this he has taught us that it is wiser to endeavour to secure our salvation individually, than curiously to inquire after or controvert the number of the saved. If, however, the question were asked properly, we could answer—No. He is leading "many sons unto glory;" and when he has collected them all together, they will be lound "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues." Of him whose soul was made an offering for sin, it is said, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his bimd:" "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." And will a little good, a little success, satisfy the vastness of his benevolence? Oh! how many must be delivered from misery, and restored in happiness, before *he* will say, "Father, stay thy hand. It is enough; I am fully repaid for the anguish I endured in the garden and on the cross"!

Now all those who will be saved owe their spiritual being and blessedness to his death. This is fully expressed. Had he not died, he would have “remained alone”—and, accordingly, while *alive*, he *was* comparatively alone. He had some followers; but they were few in number, and of one nation only: the Gentiles were not addressed. But, lo! when he *dies*, he brings forth much fruit. He becomes considerable, and renowned as a leader. Three thousand were called under one sermon; “and the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” “Mightily grew the word of the Lord, and prevailed.” It spread from city to city, from province to province, till it soon reached the boundaries of the Homan empire. Now this was adapted and designed to show that his sufferings were to precede his glory; and that by dying he was to have a numerous “seed to serve him, which should be accounted to the Lord for a generation.”

And does not everything that enlivens us, and conforms us to our Lord and Saviour, derive its existence and its efficacy from his death?

Is the influence of the Holy Ghost needful to convince us of sin, and renew us in the spirit of our minds? This is the purchase, the reward, the consequence of his death. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written. Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Is deliverance from our spiritual enemies necessary to our “serving him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.”

Here “he spoils principalities and powers, and makes a show of them openly. Now is the judgment of his world, now is the prince of this world cast out.”

Is it necessary for us to feel a “lively hope” by which we “draw nigh to God”? The cross inspires it. “Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrow: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. 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?”

Has gratitude an influence in forming the Christian character? Here, here it is inflamed. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Finally. Is an example of holiness indispensable? Here we behold a representation of all the graces and the duties he recommended. Here we see an entire obedience and submission to the will of his heavenly Father—humility the most profound—patience the most astonishing—fornbearance the most free from revenge—the love of relations and friends the most exquisitely tender. “He suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.” And thus all the principles and assistances of the Christian life are furnished by the death of the Saviour.—Let in conclude by three reflections.

And First. Let us render the works of Nature in-

structive and edifying. Let us not be of the number of those of whom the prophet speaks, when he says, "seeing many things they observe not." Nor let us contemplate the creation with the eye of a naturalist only. Let us go over it as Christians. Let us hold communion with "things unseen and eternal," by means of those "which are seen and temporal." Thus our Saviour has taught us to find the influence of the Gospel in the leaven hid in the meal; the agency and comforts of the Holy Ghost in the blowing of the wind, and in rivers of living water; and the efficacy, utility, and necessity of his death in the sowing, corruption, and the revival of corn.

Secondly. "God is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." "His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways." The enemy supposed he had completely succeeded when our Lord was crucified—"Now," says he, "his cause is crushed, his followers will be dispersed and annihilated, and his name will be heard no more." But all this was "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Death was the road to life, and shame to renown. They were sowing him, to make him fruitful. In falling a victim, he conquered; and from the cross he passed to the possession of a throne, in which he now reigns king of saints, and will soon reign king of nations.

Thirdly. What think ye of "Christ crucified?" I know what prophets and apostles thought of the cross. I know the importance his death occupies in the Scriptures of truth. I know that when Moses and Elias appeared in glory, "they spake of the decease which he would accomplish at Jerusalem." I know an ordinance is expressly appointed to "show forth his

death that the preaching of the Gospel is called "the preaching of the cross and that the praises of heaven are ascribed to him as "the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us unto God by his blood." But what are your views of this interesting 'subject? "To the Jews" it was "a stumblingblock;" to "the Greeks, foolishness and to thousands now it is a thing of nought. Is it to you "the wisdom of God" and the "power of God"? Our creed and our experience will be found very defective, unless they have much of the sufferings and death of Christ in them.

Spirit of grace and truth! take of the things of Jesus, and show them unto us. May we "know the fellowship of his sufferings." May we "be made conformable unto his death." May we be enabled individually to say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

DISCOURSE VI.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD COMPOSING THE MIND.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” ISAIAH xxvi. 3.

IN many things people differ widely from each other, but in one thing they are agreed—they all wish for repose; they all desire inward tranquillity. And indeed what is everything else without this? What is ease of circumstances, and even health of body, if the *mind* be perplexed, distracted, tormented? “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?”

Now Isaiah tells us how we may obtain and preserve a blessed composure in a miserable world. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” These words require some explanatory remarks, and will furnish us with some practical reflections.

In explaining these words, it may be necessary to inquire.

First, What we are to understand by *staying the mind on God*. And to this we answer, that it simply

means, relying upon him or trusting in him. Man is an indigent, and a dependent creature. He is not equal to his own happiness: he feels a thousand necessities which he cannot supply from his own stores; he therefore goes abroad for succour, and looks after something to lean on,—and as the world always stands nearest, upon this he always leans first. And though he finds it to be a “broken reed,” which disappoints his hope, and “pierces him through with many sorrows,” he returns to this miserable dependence again and again, till Divine grace brings him to his proper rest, and enables him to say—“Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.” And thus are fulfilled the words of the prophet: “It shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote him; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.”

Now that which, in these cases, we stay the mind upon, is the word of God—consisting of information and promises—revealing his goodness and his all-sufficiency—offering himself as our portion, and even commanding us to depend upon him. Accordingly it is said, “Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Here is a foundation that will not give way, a resource that cannot fail. And here we learn what is our duty: it is—not to hesitate, not to wait for fresh evidence and assurance—but to believe what God has spoken, to take him at his word, and to venture upon his

engagements. In doing this, we run no risk: his word is called "the faithful word." It is said also to be "a tried word and those who have tried it most, have the firmest persuasion of its truth.

Now this *staying* of the mind on God, Secondly, "keeps it in peace." It does this, not only as it insures the Divine blessing—for God will honour them that honour him, and by nothing is he so much glorified as by our reliance upon him—but also by a natural influence and tendency. Let us specify a few instances in which this confidence tranquillizes the mind.

This alone can calm the mind when convinced of sin, and searching in dreadful distress for pardon. "We which have believed," says the Apostle, "do enter into rest." "I am guilty," cries the awakened sinner; "but my condition is not desperate." "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." I hear a voice, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Here is something to stay the mind upon, lie "died for the ungodly;" and such am I. Yea more, he invites "all that labour and are heavy-laden to come to him," and promises to give them "rest"—and "*mine* iniquities are a burden too heavy for me to bear," and I sigh and groan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Sometimes this confidence is very feeble; it scarcely amounts to a probability—it is merely a kind of perndventure—"who can tell?"—I *may* succeed. But even this is attended with some effect. Like a twig to a sinking man, it serves to keep his head above

water, until something else can be brought strong enough to help him ashore. Or, to vary from the image, it will keep him from giving up in despair the use of means and of prayer. "I will hang upon him till he shakes me off. If he drives me back, it is nothing more than I deserve—but I will not go back. If he is pleased to kill me, I shall have no right to complain—but I will not be my own murderer. 'If I perish, I perish;' but here I will die." In other cases, this confidence rises higher; and, however unworthy and helpless the man feels himself to be, he is persuaded that God will receive him graciously, and in due time appear to his joy. In consequence of this, agitation and terror subside, and he "both hopes and quietly waits for the salvation of the Lord."

This confidence also calms the mind under delays. To pray, and receive no answer; to stand knocking—not, like other beggars, for a few moments, but from day to day, and from week to week, and see no opening—this is truly discouraging—and the danger is, lest we should withdraw, saying, with the unbelieving nobleman, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" But "he that believeth maketh not haste." He will say—God is a sovereign—I have no claims upon him—a delay is no refusal—perhaps he has answered me already, and I have a substitute for the blessing implored—however this may be, of one thing I am certain, I must succeed at last: "He never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain."—Hence springs "the patience of hope."

This confidence composes the mind in the events of life—and this is the thing principally intended. We live in a world of changes and uncertainties. Dis-

order and confusion seem everywhere to reign. Vice is often triumphant, and virtue oppressed. And, with regard to ourselves, our wisest schemes are frequently thwarted, our fairest hopes destroyed, our choicest comforts laid waste. Thus we are liable to be perpetually ruffled and dismayed; and there is only one principle that can sustain and solace the mind—it is, holy confidence in God. Nothing occurs by chance—God governs the world—if we could see what God sees, we should do precisely what God does—his people are his care—nothing can essentially injure them—yea, “all things are working together for their good.” These are reasons for repose. Here the mind fixes, and feels peace: the peace of a child, who has only to mind his book; the Father will manage and provide: the peace of a traveller, who has one with him to order all the journey, and to bear all the expense. It is a peace that flows from the absence of anxiety: the believer casts all his care upon the Lord, who careth for him; he reclines his head on the soft bosom of Providence, and falls asleep. This peace peculiarly regards intricate dispensations; for these are the most apt to perplex and discompose the mind. But when the mind is stayed on God, the believer is satisfied and serene, even in darkness. Though I know not whither I am going, I know with whom—my Guide is infallible. I will not “charge him foolishly,” but confide in his skill: “what he does I know not now, but I shall know hereafter.” I see much wisdom in what is clear, but there is much more in what is obscure; it is the depth that makes it profound, and that renders it so difficult to fathom. This tranquillity is commonly preceded by many a struggle with self-will and self-conceit.

We naturally wish to have things according to our mind, and make various attempts to govern our own affairs. But by degrees we are convinced that "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." After repeated deceptions, both on the side of our hopes and fears; after many embarrassments into which our folly and rashness had plunged us, or to which they had exposed us; we begin to say, in earnest, "The Lord shall choose our inheritance for us. I have now done. Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child."

But the peace that flows from this trust in God is, Thirdly, said to be *perfect*. It is not indeed absolutely so, as if it were incapable of addition—but it is so. First, comparatively. What is every other peace to this? What is the delusion of the Pharisee, the stupidity and carelessness of the sinner, the corn and wine of the worldling—what is everything else, compared with this peace? What can be so desirable, so excellent? It is "a continual feast."

It is so, Secondly, in relation to this confidence. It is true, this peace rises and falls; but it is only because this confidence varies. All the disquietudes which a Christian feels spring from the weakness or the want of faith in God. It is not from outward things. These are often blamed, and these may be very trying. But it is not the water *without* the vessel that sinks it, but that which gets in. The primitive Christians could say, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; sorrowful, yet always

rejoicing." It is very possible therefore to have this peace within, while in the world we have tribulation; and Christians are so accessible to fear, so preyed upon by anxiety, so depressed by afflictions of various kinds, because they do not sufficiently rely on God: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." It is therefore true, that, *in proportion* as the mind is stayed on God, he keeps it in *perfect* peace.

Let us apply the passage thus explained to some practical purposes.

First. *How safe and how happy are real believers!* The people of the world are exceedingly mistaken respecting them. They imagine their life to be a sad, heavy, gloomy thing; whereas it is the most free, and cheerful, and placid. While others are struggling in their own strength, and managing all their concerns themselves, fretful when they meet with untoward events, and always dissatisfied even when they succeed, the Christian "casts his burden upon the Lord, and he sustains him." He leaves his affairs with God, and goes on, assured that He will order them aright. His concern is only to please and glorify God in the circumstances in which he is placed; events are the Lord's. "He is careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, he makes his requests known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps his heart and mind through Christ Jesus." "I hope in him for eternal life, and it would be shameful not to trust in him for every present supply. 'He who spared not his own Son,' will 'withhold no good thing' from me. It is comparatively a matter of little con-

sequence what befalls me here; I am only 'a stranger and a pilgrim; my God ruleth over all;' and he has promised that 'he will never leave me nor forsake me.' 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear.'"

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Tell him, his substance is destroyed: No, says he, my "inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for me." Tell him, such a friend or relation is dead: but, says he, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." And you yourself are decaying and dying: Yes, says he, I am sent for, and am going home. With regard to public calamities, he feels, and in some respects he feels more than others. Divine grace produces sensibility, and excites a public spirit. He knows the desert of sin, and the indications of approaching wrath make him shudder: "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." But, strange as it may appear, there is a firmness and a composure of mind blended with all these feelings. He knows that "the Lord reigneth;" that he is "doing all things," and doing all things "well;" that, whatever becomes of other empires, the Gospel *shall* spread, the Church *is* safe: and these are the most important interests—these render the world valuable. He can therefore join with Luther, who said, whenever he heard of any alarming intelligence, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm—' God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. God is in

the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.”

Secondly, *Let us seek after this blessed condition of the godly.* Till the mind be stayed on God, it has no resting-place. It is union with God that gives the mind solidity. How light is it, detached from God! it is blown about easier than the down of a thistle in the wind. Out of him, as the sanctuary of the soul, every storm annoys, every trifle disquiets: and “man at his best estate is altogether vanity.” If any thing could add force to these reflections, it would be the nature of the times in which we live. We behold a “cloudy and dark day.” The revolutions which have taken place, and the general aspect of things at present, are dreadful to those who have no God. Oh let a sense of our danger endear the only refuge, and the vanity of this world induce us to seek after the real happiness of another! Let us abandon the practice of sin, and no longer “lay up for ourselves treasure upon earth,” which only serves to debase the soul and fill it with perpetual alarms—and let us ask for God “our Maker, who giveth songs in the night.” Let us depend upon him, cleave to him, live in him.

On what else can we rely, that will not, instead of settling the mind, discompose it the more? Is it honour? What so precarious and variable as the praise of man! Is it affluence? “The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit.” But does not every day’s observation, in well as Scripture, cry, “Trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God?” Is it Moral Philosophy; a strength of reasoning? There are circumstances in which the calmest reflections and the noblest

resolutions will be only as stubble before the wind. In the time of trial, all other supports will fail: the storm increasing, will drive us from our holdings: there is only one "anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast"—It is, a Scriptural hope in God. This will prepare a man for all the vicissitudes of time; this will help him to go on his way rejoicing through all the troubles of life; and this will finally enable him to look "the king of terrors" out of countenance, and to exult with the apostle, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

DISCOURSE VII.

SPRING.

“Thou renewest the face of the earth.” PSALM civ. 30.

ALL nature is a book, and the various parts of it are so many multiplied pages in which we may read and consider “the wonderful works of God.” The Seasons of the year are every way interesting. They are necessary for the production of our food, and the preservation of our health. Their succession adds to the beauty of creation. Their revolutions furnish us with subjects of reflection, and lessons of importance.

The season is arrived in which we behold the renovation of nature. Let us endeavour to render it profitable.

David was an attentive observer of the works of creation. Many a fine evening did he employ in “considering the heavens, the works of God’s finger; the moon and the stars which he has ordained.” He rose early, and beheld the “sun as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong limit to run a race.” He looked abroad in winter,

and exclaimed, "He sendeth abroad his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold?" He rejoiced when more favourable weather encouraged him to walk abroad: he observed "the birds building their nests, the springs running among the valleys, the grass growing for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man," and, hailing the revival of a faded world, lifted up his eyes and said, "Thou renewest the face of the earth."

There are few real lovers of nature; there are few who so behold its scenes as to pause and admire, till they have imbibed a sympathy with them; till they feel themselves at home in them; till they are detached from every thing human, and little, and debasing. Let us go forth into the field to meditate: meditation is often better than books. Our own thoughts will do us much more good than the opinions of others. Wisdom and truth are shy in the world; but here they are easily discovered and secured. Danger often attends our perusal of the works of men; but there is no hazard in pursuing knowledge among the works of God. People complain of the world, and confess, whenever they return from its companies and diversions, that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit"—why will they not come forth and refresh themselves here? Why will they not leave the wilderness, and enter this garden of the Lord? Here I live in a world of my own—here I feel my independence and my freedom—here I can learn how I have been overcome, and where I must place a watch and a guard—here the good thoughts, which were scattered and weak before, are collected into a powerful motive, and bear down all opposition to duty—what was wavering before, is now decided—what was timid,

grows courageous. When I go into the field, I enter my closet; I shut the door about me; I admit what company I please; I exclude the vicious who would pollute, and the trifling who would interrupt; I hear not the folly of the vain, nor the slander of the malicious—that world of iniquity which drops from the tongue; “I pray to my Father which is in secret; mine eye poureth out tears unto God;” I have an emblem of final repose—“here the wicked cease from troubling, and here the weary are at rest.”

“God made the country, and man made the town.”

Nevertheless, how many are there who leave the works of the Creator to bury themselves among those of the creature; and while professing to admire the beautiful and the marvellous, disregard the wonders that are perpetually springing up around them! They will go any distance, or incur any expense, to see a piece of mechanism, sculpture, painting; while in their way they pass by productions infinitely more curious and finished. They are struck with a fine oho; but never contemplate a lily: *and yet* “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of those.” When a man of fame announces a design to perform anything, thousands flock around him; while God, working day by day the most astonishing effects, unnoticed; and no one is drawn forth to attend to *him*, though he has said, “I will that men magnify my works which they behold.”

II. It becomes us not only to observe nature, but in observe it devotionally, and as Christians. There is a difference between viewing and improving these things: there is a difference between our studying them as mere admirers and Philosophers, and applying

them as men formed by divine grace for a life of communion with God. It is the command of the Apostle—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

See a Christian among the works of nature. He looks after God in all—for he needs him in all: and he is enabled to find him. Though familiar with the effect, he does not disregard the cause. With him, common instrumentality does not conceal divine agency. He maintains in his mind a connexion between the author and the work; and the one reminds him of the other. He walks with him in the ways of his Providence as well as in his goings in the sanctuary; adores him in the field as well as in the temple; and acknowledges him in the ordinary course of nature, as well as in the extraordinary displays of his power, and wisdom, and goodness.

He also makes them images to remind him of better things. The rising sun brings to his thoughts "the Sun of righteousness arising with healing under his wings;" a flowing spring, the influence of the Holy Ghost; the rain and the dew, the doctrine of the Gospel. Thus, by a holy chemistry, he extracts heaven from earth.

From these scenes he also derives motives to devotion, and encouragements to confidence. For instance: does he view a proof of Divine wisdom, he cries, "Oh how able is this God to teach me, to manage all my concerns—how wonderful in counsel, how excellent in working!" Does he contemplate a display of Divine power, "How able is this God to preserve, sustain, deliver me! 'Is any thing too hard for the Lord?'" Does he observe instances of his

bounty, he asks—"Can 'he who hears the ravens that cry,' refuse supplies to his children?"

Nor does he partake of the bounties of nature like a brute, only concerned to gratify his animal appetite, mid entirely regardless of him from whom every indulgence comes. He receives them from the hand of his heavenly Father; he tastes his love in them; he cries, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Bless the Lord, O my soul—who giveth me all things richly to enjoy,' and who provides, not only for my relief, but my delight. I will live *to* him who lives in so many ways *for* me; and by 'his mercies I will present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is my reasonable service.'"

III. Let us observe and adore this wonder-working God in *renewing the face of the earth*. How many times has he done this since the creation! He does it every year. The change is equally remarkable and pleasing. See the winter drawing off his army of winds, and frosts, and snow, and hail—and spring succeeding the monarch of desolation. Under his soft and gentle reign, all begins to smile: life in a thousand ways breaks forth: all is verdure, and fragrance, and beauty; all is joyous. What variety of colours, what harmony of sounds! "The valleys stand thick with rising com, and the little hills rejoice mi every side," while a voice from the fields and meadows calls—"Arise, and come away; for, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

Let us remember, that He who renews the face of

the earth, can renew the *Church*. Think of any particular cause—however depressed, he can revive it; however small, he can increase it. When his influences descend, “his word comes down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth;” and his people are “filled with all the fruits of righteousness”—the congregation is “like a field which the Lord has blessed.” Or think of his cause at large. He can drive away errors, and superstition, and animosities, from the nations of the globe, and bless the world with the Gospel of peace, and the means of salvation—and the “wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.”

He can also renew the *soul*. The Fall has reduced our spiritual powers to a state of desolation the most deplorable. Now when a sinner is led to see and feel this, he prays, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” And we read of the “renewing of the Holy Ghost and of being “renewed in the spirit of our minds.” Thus “God beautifies the meek with salvation;” and the change in nature is an imperfect representation of the change made in the soul by divine grace. This can illuminate the darkest understanding, and soften the most rebellious will; this can tranquillize the most troubled conscience, and sanctify the most depraved affections.—After conversion, the people of God may have a winter season: their growth may be checked; every thing may appear to be dead; they may feel

the chilling absence of the "Sun of righteousness," and sigh, "Oh when wilt thou come unto me?" But when He returns, all revives. Then the believer is quickened; then he expands, and buds, and brings forth "much fruit." "He has life, and he has it more abundantly."

Again. He can renew the *body*. Has sickness invaded thy frame—art thou "made to possess months of vanity, and are wearisome nights appointed unto thee"—art thou saying, "my purposes are broken oil"—"mine eye shall no more see good"?—Remember, "He killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and raiseth up." Every disease is under his control, and goes at his bidding. He can recolor thy cheeks, "strengthen thy weak hands, and confirm thy feeble knees, so that thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's." Let the body die—even I ben we are not hopeless—he shall renew it. "So is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body." "According to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "And God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

To conclude. The Seasons of the year have often been considered as emblems of human life.—*Youth* is the *Spring*. Yes, my young friends, yours is the season of which nature, lovely nature, now reminds us. Think of this in all your walks. How pleasing

and how beautiful is Spring! But how short, how fading! Yet how important! On this all the year depends. If no blossoms now appear, or if these blossoms be destroyed, no glory in summer, no abundance in autumn, no provision in winter.

My young friends, you are now forming your future destiny, and giving a character to your future years. O seize these valuable hours for purposes the most momentous—The improvement of your understanding—the correction of your tempers—the formation of your habits—the enlargement of your capacity to serve God and your generation—and, above all, diligence in “working out your salvation with fear and trembling.”

And, O thou God of all grace, hear our prayer! “Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children, and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it: that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” Amen.

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE HAPPY FAMILY.

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”

JOHN xi. 5,

THE Scripture is not filled with the creations of worlds, the revolutions of empires, the palaces of kings, the intrigues of politicians, the exploits of heroes. In perusing it we are often led into common and private life, and are called upon largely to observe individuals who made no splendid figure in the eyes of mankind. But a character may be important and interesting without secular honours. He that is born of God is truly great, and he that is beloved of the Saviour is truly happy. Many persons of distinction who once lived in Judea are now forgotten; their names, their places of abode, their connexions, have all perished from the earth; but there is one family transmitted down to our own times with peculiar marks of regard, and which will be had “in everlasting remembrance.” It resided at Bethany, and consisted of a brother and two sisters. These three happy individuals lived together in harmony and in

piety—and what crowned the whole was this—“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” Let us consider—The OBJECTS of this love—the NATURE of it—and the MANNER in which it was EXPRESSED.

I. The OBJECTS of this love were Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

It is worthy of our observation, that several of our Lord's immediate followers were related to each other. Peter and Andrew were brothers; John and James were brothers; so also were James and Jude. The ruler whose son our Lord cured “believed, and his whole house.” And here our Saviour had three disciples in one dwelling, when perhaps the whole village scarcely produced a fourth.

I pity the family where there is *no one* beloved of Jesus—no friend to attract the Saviour's regards—no protector to stand in the breach and keep back invading judgments—no intercessor to draw down the blessing of Heaven—no good example to reprove, encourage, stimulate. What does an angel think when he passes by such an irreligious dwelling!

It is a mercy to find even *one* pious individual in a house. And whoever that distinguished character be, I would say to him—Be thankful; be circumspect: remember, every eye observes you; and every tongue is asking, “What do you more than others?” Labour to be the happy instrument of the conversion of the rest. Bender your religion amiable: “whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report, think on these things. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”

But how happy is that family “where two or three can gather together in his Name,” and know that he is “in the midst of them where the whole number “are of one heart and of one soul where all are connected together by claims more endearing than those of nature—by ties which death cannot dissolve, nor eternity impair! And such was this family.

But though these three were all beloved of our Lord, they appear to have differed from each other very considerably. Of Lazarus indeed much is not said. He seems to have been a serious, solid, established professor of religion. But the two sisters are more strongly marked; more minutely characterized. Mary, it is probable, had been lately called. She was full of those pleasing but often transient emotions which generally accompany the beginning of the Christian life. Wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, “she sat at the feet of Jesus.” Of a devotional taste, a contemplative turn of mind, she was disposed to give more time and attention to her favourite exercises than perhaps prudence would justify. The reverse of this was the defect of Martha. She was anxious, and eager. She was susceptible of domestic vanity; and therefore too fond of parade and expensive entertainment—“cumbered about much serving.” She was also fretful, and by the loss of temper betrayed into such indiscretion as to break in upon our Lord’s discourse, and petulantly to require him to send Mary to her assistance, and thus drew upon herself the rebuke of the Saviour: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.” But our Lord

loved Martha as well as Mary. He knew her frame; he saw kindness reigned in her heart, and that she was no less attached to him than her sister, though she had mistaken the best way of showing her esteem. And hence we should do well to observe two things.

First. That the real followers of Jesus may have their peculiarities, their mistakes, their imperfections. Christians are new creatures. They really differ from others, and the general tenor of their lives shows that they "have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God." But they feel infirmities; and too frequently give proof to those around them that they are renewed but in part. We do not mean to plead for sin: but it is obvious from the history of the first disciples of our Lord and Saviour, that while the grace of God has a holy influence, it seldom if ever changes the constitutional complexion; and that, while it sanctifies the powers of human nature, it does not give us new ones. It renders the possessor open to conviction, and makes him willing to retract what he has done amiss; but it does not lay him under an impossibility of doing wrong. Hence a diversity of character in the Church of God. Hence a variety of degrees in the spiritual life. Hence blemishes mixed with excellences, and defects rendered the more observable by the neighbourhood of some very praiseworthy qualities in the same individual. And hence, while religion appears to be divine in its origin and its tendency, we can easily discern that it is human in its residence and its exercise.

Secondly. We should learn to esteem and value imperfect goodness. Yea, an old divine goes further,

and says, "We should love one another, not as saints but as sinners." Not that we are to love sin, or cease to reprove it. This is not his meaning: but he would intimate, that we are to be tender and pitiful; that we are to consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted; that we are not to be indiscriminate in our censures, but to praise as far as we can; and that the strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves. "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Behold "the Shepherd of Israel! he gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young." Behold "the Lord mighty in battle! a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Behold the Sufferer in the garden of Gethsemane! he compassionately apologises for the infirmities of his followers: "What! could ye not watch with me one hour? the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." "Be ye followers of him as dear children." Remember, "he loved Martha, as well as Mary and Lazarus."

But, II. How did he love them? I answer; An a FRIEND—and as a SAVIOUR.

First. Love is a passion of human nature. It shone forth in our Saviour with peculiar partiality. This HI to be accounted for in the congeniality peculiar to certain dispositions, by which they immediately attract each other and unite. Though the humanity of our Lord was real, it was also sinless; and, as his mind was perfectly free from every improper bias, doubtless nothing engaged the preference of his regard but what was virtuous and of good report. The vicious, the sceptical, the worldly-minded, we may be as-

sured, had no charms for him, whatever were their accomplishments. There is one thing we may learn from this part of his example—it is, to justify the partiality of friendship. He would not have us to shut up our bowels of compassion against any of our fellow-creatures; for we are to do good as we have opportunity unto all men; but he teaches us by his own practice, that we are not bound to take every one into our bosom. We are at liberty to choose and select. Our Lord regarded all the Apostles; but John is called “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He was kind to all his followers; but it is said, “now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” But to “know Christ after the flesh,” and to enjoy his peculiar affection under the advantage of his human nature, was a privilege confined to few.

There is, therefore, Secondly, another sense in which he loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, and in which also he has loved us. It is, with the Divine love of a Saviour; a love which existed long before we had a being; a love which sprang from no excellency in us, but was entirely self-derived; a love not only the most undeserved, but the most costly and powerful. It led him to undertake our cause, to assume our nature, to suffer and die for us. “He bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends but he has discovered a greater: he laid down his life for his enemies; he “died for the ungodly: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The same love gave us the Gospel, called us by his grace, and pardoned all our sins, for his

Name's sake. And the same love will perform all our reasonable desires; make "all things work together for our good and "keep us by his power, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." But this leads us—

III. To observe the manner in which he expressed his love to these three favoured individuals. Everything is not recorded; but several circumstances are noticed, which will prove instructive and useful.

First. He visited them. This interview was doubtless often refreshing to our Lord himself. While "foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of man had not where to lay his head;" he had no house nor room of his own: and we have reason to believe, that sometimes at least, after preaching much, and journeying far, he was destitute of accommodations. Once we read that "he went up into a mountain, and continued there all night in prayer to God." In another instance, we find him so wearied as to be able to "sleep in the hinder part" of a fishing vessel, even in "a storm!" But some knew his value, and ministered to him of their substance. At the house of Martha he was always welcome. And we may be ensured that he was a guest that always paid for his entertainment. He honoured them more than they could mildly favour him. Who can imagine the happiness of Lazarus and his sisters when they received the Lord of life and glory under their roof! Oh! to have heard him bless the food—to have heard him perform family worship—to have heard him discourse! He was "fairer than the children of men; grace was poured into his lips. Never man spake

like this man." With what joy would Martha and her sister and Lazarus think of such visits in prospect! how long would they furnish matter for conversation and remark afterwards! How unwilling would they be to lose him! how earnestly would they press his stay!—Though removed from this world, as to his bodily presence, he will be with his people, essentially, spiritually, peculiarly, to the end of time. He visits them now. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Say not, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" *Judas*—not *Iscariot*—once asked him this question: and "he answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Secondly. His love admitted of their suffering affliction. Disease invades the family—"Lazarus is sick." The sickness of the brother is the distress of the sisters; they are filled with anguish, anxiety, and alarm. His love could have hindered all this; and probably we should have thought that it *would* have done it—"Surely he will exempt friends he so highly regards from everything trying and disagreeable." But his thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are his ways as our ways. His love is wise; it seeks our everlasting welfare; it does not take pleasure in our pain, but it does in our profit: and though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are

exercised thereby." You may therefore share in his affection and be severely tried, relatively, or in your own persons. A Lazarus beloved of Jesus sickens and dies. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

But, Thirdly. His love suffered him in their distress to treat them with apparent neglect. As soon as Lazarus was seized, "his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Yet, instead of sending an answer, or repairing instantly to Bethany, it is said, "when he heard therefore that he was sick, *he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*" And before he sets off, Lazarus is dead! A friend is born for adversity; then we peculiarly need his presence, his assistance, his counsel, his sympathy: and Jesus was their friend. I low then is this indifference to be accounted for? It was *not* indifference. So indeed it appeared to Martha and Mary; and no doubt it was very discouraging and perplexing; it gave rise to many unkind thoughts—"What can be the reason of this! surely he has relinquished his regard; we have presumed too much upon his friendship."—But he was not indifferent, he was only "waiting to be gracious." His delay was no refusal. Everything is beautiful in its season, he knew that "his time was not yet come." Our extremity is his opportunity. No! *He* indifferent to their case! all the time he was thinking of them, and curing for them. He entered into all their feelings, and,

Fourthly, said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Let us go unto him." Before he approaches the be-

reaved house he comes to the grave—"Then, when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him. Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping, which came with her, he groaned in spirit, and was troubled, and said. Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come, and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said. Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Again he groaned in himself. At length, giving way to his compassion, he produced an undeniable proof of his affection, as well as of his power—"Lazarus, come forth!"—And he walks home between his sisters, who were filled with joy and gratitude. Thus all was overruled, not only for the glory of God, but for the good of Lazarus, the good of his sisters, the good of the disciples, the good of many, who, in consequence of the miracle, believed. And thus we learn that he can do us and our connexions much more service by the permission and continuance of our trials, than by preventing or immediately removing them. He "does all things well. His work is perfect, his ways are judgment." Let us then, satisfied that he has our welfare in view, leave the means by which it is to be promoted to himself. Let us ascertain an interest in his love, and say, "Behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good to him."

Ah! some of you are ready to exclaim, This is what above all things I want to determine. Happy Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus! Jesus loved you!—Oh that he loved *me*. This would be the cordial of affliction,

and the consolation of death. Loved of *him*, I could bear reproach; I could endure all things. A fellow-creature may love me, and be unable in a thousand cases to succour me; but *his* love passeth knowledge, and is attended by the exercise of infinite perfections. There is no enemy which he cannot conquer, no wound which he cannot heal, no hope which he cannot realize. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Does he love me? Can I know this? Yes; and the case is more easily decided than you imagine. The very solicitude you express shows that your indifference towards him is destroyed. And he has said, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

"*I love them that love me.*"—And do you not love him? Do you not esteem him above all, for the excellences of his nature and the blessings of his goodness? Do you not most earnestly implore his favour, his image, his presence? Are you not willing to live lit his disposal; to obey him; to ask, daily, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Now, if you love him, be assured that he loves you. But, O blessed Saviour, what a difference, what a disproportion, is t here between our love and thine!

"*Our love so faint, so cold, to thee,
And thine to us so great!*

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quick'ning pow'rs;
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
And that shall kindle ours."

"*And they that seek me early shall find me.*" For I here are some, who cannot say, with confidence, "I do love him." But their "desire is to the Lord, and

to the remembrance of his name." They mourn for sin. They hunger and thirst after righteousness. They go on praying—"Oh that I may win Christ!" These are earnestly seeking him; and they shall find him—find him as "the pearl of great price"—find him, to pardon, and sanctify, and keep—find him *here* in all the supplies of grace, and *hereafter* in all the treasures of glory.

But, O ye young! the promise has the most favourable reference to you. You can seek him *early*; not only, as it implies, earnestly, but, as it more naturally means, betimes. And though all who seek him shall find, *you* shall find him *peculiarly*. It is better to have a guide at the beginning, than after we have long gone astray, and lost much of our time and strength for the journey. If invaluable privileges attend religion, the sooner they are embraced the more advantage shall we derive from them. The Saviour is peculiarly pleased with your early devotedness to him. He considers himself more honoured by these voluntary offerings of the first-fruits, than by the constrained services of worn-out age: and "them that honour him, he will honour." In every future period of life, in every distress, in every danger, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, he will say—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth."

DISCOURSE IX.

THE SIGHT OF CHRISTIAN FRIENDS ENLIVENING.

“And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and the three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.”
ACTS xxviii. 15.

THE case was this. From the malice of his countrymen, Paul had “appealed unto Cæsar.” He was therefore under the necessity of going to Rome. In his voyage he was shipwrecked on the island of Melita, now called Malta, and which has been of late, as well as in earlier times, so famous. After continuing there three months, he renewed his voyage, landed at Puteoli, not far from Naples, and went towards Rome. At Rome there were *brethren*; and when they heard of his approach, they went down to “meet him as far as Appii forum and the three taverns.” This did them honour; it marked their zeal and their kindness. But observe the effect of the interview on the mind of the Apostle—“Whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.”

This teaches us, First, THAT CHARACTERS THE MOST DISTINGUISHED IN THE CHURCH OF GOD MAY SOMETIMES NEED ENCOURAGEMENT. What made the Apostle now droop, we cannot determine. Perhaps he had heard what a tiger Nero had lately become; perhaps he began to feel some melancholy thoughts respecting the result of his trial. To appear before the emperor of the world, in the presence of a thousand spectators, was enough to make nature shudder—and there is nature as well as grace, and there are animal spirits as well as religious principles, in the best.

Whatever was the cause, it seems the Apostle was now depressed and desponding—even *he*, who, in his epistle to the Romans, could say, “if God be for us, who can be against us? nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us”—even *he* discovers a dejection of mind, and a failure of courage.

People often imagine that the saints recorded in the Scripture were a race of men entirely different from modern Christians. This is a mistake. Even *they* found themselves in an enemy’s country; *they* travelled also through a vale of tears, pierced with thorns and briers—without were fightings and within were fears. Our case therefore is not peculiar—we neither sigh nor tremble alone. Where are the hands which never hang down, the knees which never become feeble? Zion said, “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.” Asaph said, “My soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.” David said, “My soul cleaveth to the dust.” And

Paul exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" If such was the experience of characters so pre-eminent, what wonder that we are liable to the same exercises?

Secondly. LET US OBSERVE THE BENEFIT THAT IS TO BE DERIVED FROM INTERCOURSE WITH CHRISTIAN FRIENDS. When Paul saw these brethren, he was inspired with new life; he dropped his melancholy gloom, and marched forward with confidence and joy—he "*took courage.*" "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. Iron sharpeneth iron: so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

In no condition is it "good for man to be alone." Religion, instead of destroying the social principle, refines and strengthens it. Our Saviour has promised that, "where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them." To cheer and animate each other, "he sent forth his disciples two and two before his face." "Two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up."

Have you ever been in distress? How soothing was the presence of a tender and a pious friend! Such a person was "a ministering spirit"—an expositor of the promise: "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." Have you ever been in spiritual darkness and perplexity?—you sighed, "No one was ever like me!" But a Christian related his experience, and announced the same feelings, and you were set at liberty. Or have you, in a scorching

day, been ready to perish for thirst? Like another angel, in the case of Hagar, “he opened your eyes and shewed you a well”—and you “*went on your way rejoicing.*” God of all grace! whatever thou art pleased to deny us while in this world, withhold not from us a Christian friend—one who will counsel us in our doubts, comfort us in our sorrows, animate us by his example, and encourage us by his confidence.

How pleasing is it, when travelling to heaven, to overtake those who will be “our companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ”! How overjoyed is a Christian to find some followers of the Lamb, when he has entered a town or a village; saying, with Abraham, “Surely the fear of God is not in this place!” It has enlivened him, and he has exclaimed, “Well, there are more that love and serve my Lord and Saviour than I imagined.” What a glow of satisfaction does a man, called by Divine grace, diffuse in a church when he enters to ask for communion and fellowship with them—“They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in thy word”! How desirable is the Lord’s day, and the Lord’s house, in which we see so many of our brethren!

“Lord, how delightful ’tis to see
 A whole assembly worship Thee!
 At once they sing, at once they pray;
 They hear of heaven and learn the way!”

How charming will heaven be, where we shall see “a multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb,

clothed with white robes, and palms in their minds”!

Thirdly. Let us remark, THAT WE MAY BE EDIFIED BY THOSE WHO ARE BELOW US IN STATION, IN TALENTS, AND IN GRACE. Thus these private Christians helped an inspired Apostle—“When he saw Ilicm, he thanked God and took courage.” Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures; but he was “taught the way of the Lord more perfectly,” by two of his hearers, Priscilla and Aquila. Naaman the Syrian was a mighty man; but he was indebted for his cure to a little maid. She had been taken captive in war, and waited upon Naaman’s wife, and “she said unto her mistress, Would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.” “The King is served by the labour of the field.”

Let us learn then that there is no such thing as independence—that there is a connexion among men which embraces all ranks and degrees—and a dependence founded upon it; so that no being is above tin; want of assistance, and no being is useless or unimportant. It is in the world, and it is in the Cl mich, as it is in the human frame. “God hath ne I the members every one of them in the body, as it lintli pleased him—and the eye cannot say unto the liitud, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you—that there should lie no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

Lastly. ALL THE COMFORT AND ADVANTAGE WE DERIVE FROM CREATURES SHOULD AWAKEN GRATITUDE to God.—It is said, “*he thanked God.*” Doubtless the Apostle was sensible of his obligations to

these brethren, and thanked *them* for their civility and tenderness in coming, unasked, so far to meet him. But says Paul; Who made these Christian friends? Who inclined them to favour me? Who rendered them the means of restoring my soul? "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom he glory for ever. Amen."

"Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He uses channels to convey blessings to us, but all our springs are in him. The heathen made gods of every thing that afforded them pleasure, and we are too prone to do the same. Instruments sometimes intercept the praise that is going to be offered to God; and when this is the case, he often lays them aside or renders them useless—for the Divine jealousy will not endure a rival.

And here is the difference between a carnal and a spiritual mind. The man who possesses the former, lives without God in the world. Though the Divine perfections surround him, and a thousand voices continually address him, he walks on, all careless and insensible. Whereas the Christian is disposed to acknowledge God in all his ways. The stream leads him to the fountain. The gift reminds him of the giver: the instrument, of the agent. He holds communion with God in common things. He is thankful for common mercies. He sees and adores him in the springing of the earth, in the rain and fruitful showers, in the refreshments of sleep, and in the pleasures of friendship. He grieves, with Archbishop Leighton, that a world so full of his mercy should be so

empty of his praise. He cries, with David, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! lilcss the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul!" Which of these characters do we resemble?

DISCOURSE X.

THE CHRISTIAN INDEED!

[BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER.]

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” GAL. ii. 20

It has been said by an old divine, that “if religion be any thing, it is every thing; if it be important at all, it is all important.” And indeed if it be impartially considered, with regard to prosperity or adversity, life or death, time or eternity, it will appear to be, in the eye of reason, as well as in the testimony of Scripture, “*the one thing needful.*” Hence it becomes necessary to know wherein it consists—to examine its qualities—and to trace its effects.

A fuller representation of genuine religion was perhaps never given than we have in the words before us. For you will observe that the inspired writer does not here speak of himself as an Apostle, but as a Christian, and therefore, that what he describes as his own experience, will apply to all the subjects of

divine grace. It leads us to consider—the TRUE CHARACTERS—the GRAND PRINCIPLE—and the ALLOWED CONFIDENCE of real religion.

I. Let us attentively observe the SEVERAL CHARACTERS here given us of true godliness, and see whether we have anything like them in ourselves. Says Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

It has then a character of MYSTERY, of wonder, or (shall I say?) paradox. How strange is it to see “a bush burning with fire and unconsumed”! How marvellous is it to find that the poor only are rich, the sick only are well, and that a broken heart is the greatest blessing we can possess! How surprising is it to hear persons saying, We are “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; having nothing, and yet possessing all things: as dying, and, behold, we live”—to hear a man say, “I am crucified,” though he has the use of all his limbs—crucified with Christ, though Christ had been crucified on Calvary long before—and to add, “nevertheless I live”—then with the same breath to check himself, and deny this—“yet not I”—and, to crown the whole, “Christ liveth in me,” though he was then in heaven! What unintelligible jargon is all this to the carnal mind! “For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” A Christian is “*a wonder unto many.*” How absurd and ridiculous did all this once appear to us!—but it is our mercy that the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth—that we begin to perceive beauty and harmony and worth, where once nothing struck us but confusion and discord and in-

significance—that we can say, with the man in the Gospel, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.”

It has a character of MORTIFICATION.—“I am crucified with Christ.” The grace of God has to pull up, as well as sow; to destroy, as well as build. It has much to slay in us—it has to slay our vain confidence, our self-righteous hopes, our pride, our depraved affections. It finds us alive to the world and, to sin, and it leaves us dead to both. To die to anything, in the language of Scripture, is to have no more connexion with it, no more attachment to it. “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” If we were alive to it, we might be enticed: but what are allurements presented to a dead corpse? “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin: for he that is dead is freed from sin.” It has no more dominion over him; he loves it no longer.

But to crucify, is not only to destroy; it signifies a peculiar kind of death—a violent, unnatural death: and sin never dies of its own accord, nor from weakness, nor from age; it must be put to death by force. It signifies a painful death—think of a body fastened to a tree, suspended in torture, nails driven through the hands and feet, (parts so susceptible of pain, by reason of the concurrence of nerves and sinews)—who was ever crucified without anguish? Who ever was a Christian without difficulty, self-denial, sacrifices, and groans, and tears? Though crucifixion was a sure death, it was a slow and a lingering one. And our corruptions, though doomed to be destroyed, are not despatched at once. We shall have to mor-

tify the deeds of the body as long as we are here: but sin is nailed to the cross, and shall never gain an ascendancy over us again;—its death is inevitable.

It has a character of LIFE.—“Nevertheless I live.” And life brings evidence along with it. “I compare,” says the believer, “my present with my former dispositions. I was once dead to a certain class of objects; for they could no more affect me than natural things can impress a dead body: but now, for the very same reason, I know that I am alive—because they do impress me; they do interest me; they do excite in me hopes and fears; I am susceptible of spiritual joys and sorrows. I live, for I breathe prayer and praise; I live, for I feel the pulse of sacred passions; I live, for I have appetites, and do hunger and thirst after righteousness; I live, for I walk and I work; and though all my efforts betray weakness, they prove life—I live.” A real Christian is not a picture—a picture may accurately resemble an original, but it wants life: it has eyes, but it sees not; lips, but it speaks not. A Christian is not a figure: you may take materials and make up the figure of a man, and give it the various parts of the human body, and even make them move, by wires; but a Christian is not moved in religion by machinery, but life—nothing is forced and artificial.

Why is religion so burdensome to many? The reason is, they have nothing in them to render these things like the functions of life, natural and easy. Hence they drudge and toil on, often exclaiming. What a weariness it is to serve the Lord!—and drop one thing after another, till they give up the whole. But where there is spiritual life, there is an inward propensity to holiness, there is a savouring the things

which be of God: there is nothing of that ignoble and slavish devotion which springs from custom, or is impelled by external motives only—they find his service to be perfect freedom; his yoke easy, and his burden light—such a burden as a pair of wings to a bird: they would be awkward, and troublesome, and useless, if tied on; but, as living parts of his body, they are graceful and pleasing, and the instruments of flight towards heaven.

It has a character of HUMILITY.—“Yet not I”—This is the unvarying strain of the Apostle. “Not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world. By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content: I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need—I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me.”

Compare with this language the sentiments of the Pagan philosophers. Take one as a specimen of the rest. Cicero says, “We are justly applauded for virtue, and in virtue we rightly glory; which would not be the case if we had virtue as the gift of God, and not from ourselves. Did any person ever give thanks to God that he was a good man? No, but we thank him that we are rich, that we are honourable, that we are in health and safety.” Now this argues not only the most dreadful pride, but the grossest ignorance, and it would be easy to prove that goodness is much less from ourselves than any thing

else. The material creation has not such degrees of dependence upon God as the animal; the animal world has not such degrees of dependence upon God as the rational; and rational beings have not such degrees of dependence upon God as pure and holy beings—beings reconciled from rebellion, renewed from depravity, and preserved, all weakness as they are, in the midst of temptation. Penetrate heaven—there “*they cast their crowns at the feet*” of their deliverer, and acknowledge that if they reign at all, it is by mere favour. This disposition must enter us before we can enter heaven. “*He that abaseth himself shall be exalted; but he that exalteth himself shall be abased.*” Dependence is the only proper condition of a creature, especially of a fallen creature; and the Gospel is designed and adapted to produce self-annihilation, that “no flesh should glory in His presence, but that, according as it is written, *he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*”

Finally, it has a CHRISTIAN character.—“But Christ liveth in me.” This life is indeed formally in me: I am the subject of it, but not the agent. It is not self-derived, nor self-maintained; but it comes from him, and is so perfectly sustained by him, that it seems better to say—not “I live,” but “Christ liveth in me.”

He has a sovereign empire of grace, founded in his death, and he quickens whom he will. He is our life—not only as he procures it by redemption, but also as he produces it by regeneration; and he liveth in us as the sun lives in the garden, by his influence calling forth fragrance and fruits; or as the soul lives in the body, actuating every limb, and penetrating every particle with feeling.

II. Let us consider the GRAND INFLUENCING PRINCIPLE of this religion—“It is the faith of the Son of

God." "If you ask," says the Christian, "how it is that I live so different from others, and so different from my former self, here is the secret. There is a faith which has immediately and entirely to do with the Son of God: of this faith I have been made the happy partaker, and in proportion as I can exercise this, I do well. This brings me supplies from his boundless fulness. This places me in the strong-hold. This invigorates duty. This alleviates affliction. This purifies the heart. This overcomes the world. This does all. By faith I stand; by faith I walk; by faith I live—'and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.'"

To explain this, it will be necessary to observe, that the communication of grace from Christ, to maintain the Divine life, depends on union with him, and that of this union faith is the medium. Let me make this plain. It is well known that the animal spirits and nervous juices are derived from the head to the body; but then it is only to that particular body which is united to it. And the same may be said of the vine: the vine conveys a prolific sap, but it is exclusively to its own branches. It matters not how near you place the branches to the stock: if they are not *in it*, they may as well be a thousand miles off; they cannot be enlivened or fructified by it. "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can we except we abide in him; for without him we can do nothing." Now he is the head, and we are the members: he is the vine, we are the branches.

And this union from which this influence flows, is accomplished by faith only: "*he dwells in our hearts by faith.*" If faith be an eye, it is only by this we can

see him: if faith be a hand, it is only by this we can lay hold of him.

He is the food of our souls; but it is by faith that this food is converted into aliment: they are his own words; "he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Place all the motives of Christianity around a man—if he does not believe them, they cannot touch him; this is the *only* medium by which they can operate. How can the threatenings of our Lord produce fear—how can the promises which he has given excite hope—but by being believed? By this the various parts of the whole system are brought to bear upon the conscience, and the practice. Therefore says the Apostle, "the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

III. This brings us to notice the confidence, THE APPROPRIATION, which this religion allows. Now what we mean to establish here is, not that every real Christian can use this language as boldly as the apostle Paul. Then we should make some "*sad*,"—some whom God has commanded us to make "*merry*." There are degrees in grace; and there is weak faith as well as strong faith.

But I would intimate, first, that genuine religion always produces a concern for this appropriation. It will not suffer a man to rest in distant speculations and loose generalities, but will make him anxious to bring things home to himself, and to know how they affect *him*. With regard to duty, he will say, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?" When he hears of promises and privileges, he will ask, Am *I* interested in these? may *I* claim them?—"Say unto my soul, I am *thy* salvation."

I mean also to intimate, secondly, that a Christian may attain this confidence, and draw this conclusion. Let him take Cod at his word, and, from the general language of the Gospel, make out a particular inference.—He loved sinners, and gave himself for the ungodly. Let those who have no need of a Saviour stand and debate: I need him; and I see he is come to save sinners, and I am one: to die for the ungodly, and this is my character. I see also that the Master calls me, and invites me by name, or, which is much safer and better, by description. I am oppressed with a load; and I am tired, struggling to get free; and he says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

To enable you to decide this business, let me ask you—Have you not had a view of your lost condition by nature, and so of your absolute need of Christ?—Have you not discovered his grace and his glory, in living and dying for you, so as to feel your soul powerfully drawn towards him? Under this attraction, have you not been led to apply to him, throwing yourself down at his feet, “Here is a blind sinner—be thou my wisdom; a guilty sinner—be thou my righteousness; a polluted sinner—be thou my sanctification; an enslaved, miserable sinner—be thou my redemption.” And do you not feel something good as the consequence of this? Is not your mind so filled, so fixed, that you no longer rove after the world? do you not melt in godly sorrow for sin? are you not constrained by holy love to the Saviour to say, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth and to “live not unto yourselves, but to him that, died for you and rose again”? Where these things are wholly wanting, there is no real faith; where they are found,

a person can be guilty of nothing like presumption, in saying, "he loved me, and gave himself for me."

Thirdly, we would intimate that nothing can exceed the blessedness which results from such an appropriation of the Saviour in his love, and in his death. All evangelical consolation is wrapped up in it. Could each of you make it your own, how would eternity be disarmed of its dread! With what composure would you look forward to death! How cheerfully would you bear your trials! How pleasant would all your worship prove! With what lively and suitable feelings would you approach this morning the table of the Lord, where a dying Jesus is not only presented to your faith, but to your very sight, "evidently set forth, crucified, among you!"

"*He loved me, and gave himself for me!*" O my soul, think of these words. The Son of God, higher than the kings of the earth, the Lord of all, he has condescended to remember me in my low estate—He has *loved* me—and, oh! how marvellous the expression of this love!—he gave—nothing less than *himself*—to be my teacher and example only? No, but to be my substitute, my ransom.; to bear my "sins in his own body on the tree." And all this goodness regards unworthy, unlovely *me!*

Did he love me, and shall I not love him? Has he given himself for me, "an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweetsmelling savour"—and shall I be unwilling to give myself to him, "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is my reasonable service"?

And, O my soul, rejoice in him. What may I not expect from his hands—what will he deny, who did not withhold himself!

DISCOURSE XI.

THE FINAL CHANGE.

[EASTER.]

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” 1 COR. XV. 51, 52.

HERE a scene opens upon us, in comparison with which everything else becomes worthless, little, uninteresting. And let me tell you—

It is a transaction in which you will be, not merely spectators, but parties concerned.

It is an event the most certain.

It is a solemnity that is continually drawing near. For while I speak, you die—and “*after death the judgment!*” Does not this subject therefore deserve, as well as demand, your most serious attention?

The chapter before us regards the resurrection. But those only can be raised who *die*—what shall become of those who at this awful period shall be alive? “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall

not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Here we may observe the union there is among the followers of the Redeemer. Christians, however distinguished from each other, are inhabitants of one country, brethren of one family, members of one body. They are influenced by the same Spirit, and are travelling the same road. Diversity of circumstances, peculiarity of religious discipline, remoteness of situation, distance of time, do not affect the relation that unites them all together. The Apostle looks forward to the end of all things, and says, *we* who are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them who are asleep—"Then *we*, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. *We* shall not all sleep, but *we* shall all be changed."

Of the number of this universal Church, some *die*, but the representation that is given us of their death is very pleasing—"they sleep." Death is often an alarming subject, even to Christians. To reduce this dread, they would do well to endeavour to view it under those images by which the Scripture has expressed it—a departure—a going home—a sleep. Man is called to labour: he goes forth in the morning; toils, with some little intermission, all the day; and in the evening retires, and lays himself down to sleep—and "the sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much." And such is every Christian. They have much to do; and they must do it "while it is day: for the night cometh wherein

no man can work." Death brings them repose: "They rest from their labours." Sleep is a state from which you may be easily awakened. You look at the babe in the cradle: he neither sees you nor hears you; but you feel no uneasiness on this account; by-and-by the senses will be unlocked, and he will be taken up, smiling and refreshed. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," says the Saviour; "but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." And he called, "Lazarus, come forth!" and, though he had been dead four days, he heard and came. From his throne in glory, Jesus, the resurrection and the life, looks down upon the mansions of the dead, and at the appointed time he will say to the heavenly hosts. Our friends are sleeping in the dust—attend—I go to awake them out of sleep: and, lo! "all that are in their graves hear his voice, and come forth."

Thus far the laws of mortality prevail. Death "is the way of all the earth and of all the righteous too: and this will continue to be the case to the end—but then many will be found *alive*. The language of the Apostle is instructive. The present system is unquestionably to be destroyed; but it will not wax old and perish through corruption. All the productions of the earth will be as fair as ever. The inhabitants of the earth will not be gradually consumed till none are left: the world will be full; and all the common concerns of life will be pursued with the same eagerness as before. And, "as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." Many of the Lord's

people too will be found alive; and perhaps they will be much more numerous, than at any former period. Now in what manner will these be disposed of? This is what the Apostle professes to teach.

“Behold,” says he, “I show you a mystery.” He means, a secret: something unknown before; unknown to the Corinthians, and it is likely unknown to himself. But, probably, while reflecting upon this subject, and thinking what would be the destiny of those that should reach the end of time, he was informed, by inspiration, that they should not die, but be transformed.

“We shall all be *changed*.” We are always varying now. We never continue in one stay: what vicissitudes do we experience in the lapse of a few years in our conditions, in our connexions, in our very frame! But what a change is here—a change from time to eternity, from earth to heaven, from the company of the wicked to the presence of the blessed God; from ignorance to knowledge; from painful infirmities to be “presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy!” But the change principally refers to the body: “for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” Enoch and Elias carried their bodies along with them to heaven: but though they did not die, they passed through a change equivalent to death. The same change which will be produced in the dead by the resurrection, will be accomplished in the bodies of the living by this transformation; and of this we have the clearest assurance: “So is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in

glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Further; observe the ease and despatch with which all this will be performed—“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” What a view does this give us of the dominion and power of God! Think of the numbers that will be alive!—Think of the inhabitants of one city—of one country—of all the nations of the globe—all these metamorphosed in one instant; immortal even in body, and capable of endless misery or happiness! And “why should it be thought a thing incredible?” Who said, “Let there be light; and there was light”? Who “spake, and it was done; commanded, and it stood fast”? “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” Let the work be—what it really is—the greatest of all miracles; we have an Agent more than equal to the execution of it: “He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

Finally, observe the signal: “At the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed!” When the Lord came down on Horeb to publish the Law, “the voice of the trumpet waxed exceeding loud.” By the sound of the trumpet the approach of kings has been announced. Trumpets are used in war. Judges in our country enter the place of assize preceded by the same shrill sound. And those who have witnessed the procession well know what an awe it impresses, and what sentiments it excites.

All feel: even those who are not to be tried catch a powerful sympathy. But think of the condition of the poor prisoners, whose fate hangs in suspense, and is now going to be decided! What are their agitations, and forebodings, when they hear the judge is entering! But here is a trumpet whose clangour will be heard for thousands of miles—louder than a million thunders—which will awaken all the dead, and change all the living—cause heaven and earth to flee away—and leave us all before the Judge of the universe!

And what says Peter in reference to all this?—“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” Can you be indifferent to any of your actions, when they are recorded in the book of his remembrance, and will be published before an assembled world? What you are doing now you are doing for ever. It is a light thing to know how you are to be disposed of for a few months or a few years—What is to become of you when you go hence, and are seen no more? It signifies very little whether you class with the rich or the poor, the learned or the illiterate, the honourable or the despised. The question is—In what rank will you be found, when “before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats”? Will that trumpet call you to “lamentation, and mourning, and woe”? or will its language be, “Lift up your heads with joy, for your redemption draweth nigh”?

He who will then be the Judge, is now the Saviour. He will then say to the wicked, “*Depart*”

but, blessed be his Name, he does not say so now to any—His language is, “*Come.*” “Come,” says he, “come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”

And this reminds me of another trumpet, of which Isaiah speaks in these striking words: “It shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” *This* trumpet you *have* heard. But, alas! how have you heard it? Has this “grace of God which bringeth salvation” taught you “to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in the present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”? O let the Judgment-trumpet awaken your attention to the Gospel-trumpet; and may the latter prepare you for the former! Amen.

DISCOURSE XII.

RELIGIOUS THINGS, PLEASANT THINGS.

[LORD'S DAY EVENING.]

“Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.” ISAIAH lxiv. 11.

THUS spake these pious Jews. And we may consider the words either as expressing an affliction, or as discovering a disposition.

The captivity had destroyed all their civil and sacred institutions. The temple was a magnificent building, endeared by a thousand claims; but now it exhibited to the passing eye only a scene of ruins—their “holy and beautiful house” was burnt with fire. One circumstance could not fail to touch and impress their minds—it was the place “where their fathers praised him.” What a veneration does an edifice acquire that has stood for ages the sanctuary of devotion, and in which successive generations have worshipped God! What a solemn thought is it, that we occupy seats once filled by those who have gone “the way of all the earth! The fathers, where are

they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" And we are "accomplishing, as an hireling, our day," and are making room for our children. Here they heard his word, called upon his name, sung his praise, offered up prayers and vows for us! Their example reproves and alarms us. *They* were alive in his service. Does *our* devotion discover any degree of seriousness and fervour? Are we "followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises"? Shall we one day join our pious ancestors, "and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God"? Again: "All their pleasant things were laid waste"—the sacred utensils employed in the service of God; the ministers of the sanctuary; the altar, the table of shew-bread, the ark, the pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, the cloud of glory, their new moons and sabbaths, the callings of assemblies. This, to the pious among the Israelites, was a far greater affliction than the loss of all their temporal privileges. Their country was dear to them, but Jerusalem was dearer; and they "loved the gates of Zion better than all the dwelling-places of Jacob."

This affliction, blessed be God, is not ours. Our civil and religious privileges are still continued, and, we hope, will pass down unimpaired to the latest posterity. But the words discover a disposition which will be found to harmonize with the feelings of all the people of God. I refer to the manner in which they speak of the service of God, and the exercises of devotion: "Our pleasant things." Hence, we observe, that the means of grace, the ordinances of religion, are, to the Israel of God, PLEASANT THINGS.

And, First, what are they?

In the number of their pleasant things, they include the sanctuary. To them the temple is not a prison, a place of confinement and correction; but it is the house of their heavenly Father, their "holy and beautiful house and *beautiful* because *holy*. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"

In the number of their "pleasant things," they include sabbaths. To many indeed God's holy day is uninviting, and even irksome: they therefore cry out, "What a weariness it is to serve the Lord! when will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat!" pursuing their gain, or finding their own pleasures. But the Christian "calls the Sabbath a delight, and considers the holy of the Lord honourable." To him it is a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; a weekly jubilee: and, wearied with the toils, and follies, and vexations of the world, he hails a day of seclusion from it; a day that "brings him to God's holy mountain, and makes him joyful in his house of prayer—This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

And are not the Scriptures some of their "pleasant things"? Job could say, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." David could say, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Jeremiah could say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and

they were unto me the joy und rejoicing of my heart." It is the character of a good man, and the pledge of his blessedness: "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night; and he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

This too will apply to the preaching of the word. The Christian does not wish to be always hearing sermons, for he knows that everything is beautiful in its season, and the claims of duty are numerous and various—but he values opportunities of hearing the glad tidings of salvation; he welcomes the message and the messenger, and exclaims, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" And though their trials be many, "and the Lord gives them the bread of adversity, and the waters of affliction," yet they find an ample compensation and relief in this—that "their eyes behold their teachers, and their ears hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when they turn to the right hand, and when they turn to the left."

They find it a pleasant thing to approach God in prayer, and to "come before his presence with singing"—a pleasant thing to surround his table, and to refresh their minds with the memorials of a Saviour's dying love—a pleasant thing to be in the circle of pious friends, and to hear from their lips "what God has done for their souls." These are some of their "pleasant things."

Let us inquire, Secondly, how they become so

POWERFULLY ATTRACTIVE. For it is certain that they are not so universally: by numbers they are not only neglected, but despised. Whence then do real Christians find them so pleasing?

First, there is in them a suitableness to their dispositions. Thus we know music charms those who have an ear for it. Money is a pleasant thing to the covetous; honour to the ambitious; scandal to the slanderous. In all these instances there is something that meets the taste; and that which gratifies always delights. So it is here. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The pleasure of the Christian does not depend upon persuasion—but inclination: he is not merely told that the provisions of the Gospel are good, but he has a spiritual relish. Since he is a "new creature," he has new appetites, and "hungers and thirsts after righteousness."

Experience, however, is another source of this pleasure. We are attached to books which have afforded us peculiar satisfaction. The kindnesses of friends endear them. A spring, which, in a scorching day, and when we were ready to expire, yielded us a refreshing supply, will be thought of with pleasure. The new-born babe is at first urged by a natural instinct, but afterwards it cries for the breast, not only from a sense of want, but a sense of enjoyment. So it is with the Christian. He has found these things to be good for him. Having "tasted that the Lord is gracious," his language is, "Evermore give us this bread!" Many do not know what

it is to enjoy God in the means of grace; they are not attached to ordinances, because they have derived no profit from them. But Christians have striking proofs of their beneficial influence in their own experience: they know that in keeping them there is great reward: they remember how they have been owned of God—at one time, by delivering their souls from the power of temptation—at another, by filling them with “all joy and peace in believing.” Some seasons and exercises they can review with singular feeling. In these they were “abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house they were made to “drink of the river of his pleasures. In his light they saw light.” And the memory of these peculiar communications and discoveries makes them long with David, “to see his power and his glory as they have seen him in the sanctuary!”

Continual need also renders them pleasant things. Though the Christian hopes the good work is begun in him, he feels how far it is from being complete. His deficiencies are great and many. Something is lacking to his faith, his hope, his knowledge. Sometimes also he feels decays. His zeal cools into indifference. Earthly things sensualize his mind. He wants to have his convictions renewed; his impressions regenerated. And how are these deficiencies to be filled up; these decays to be repaired? Read the promise—“In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.” Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

Let us review what we have said—and learn,

First, TO JUSTIFY RELIGION FROM THE REPROACHES OF THE WORLD. The world pretends that the services which religion demands of us are all slavery and gloom; and they spread this evil report of the good land to check inquirers, especially the young. But if you are willing to enter in, “let no man’s heart fail him.” The Scripture assures us that “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” And “wisdom is justified of all her children.” Those who have tried (and these are the only competent witnesses), instead of complaining of bondage, find the Saviour’s service to be perfect freedom, and own—especially compared with the yoke of their old master—that “his commandments are *not* grievous.”

Secondly. Let US TRY OURSELVES BY THIS RULE. A man may want assurance, and still be in a state of safety; but if he be habitually a stranger to pleasure in divine things, and can pass through all the services of religion as a mere formalist, it is an awful proof that “he has no part nor lot in the matter; his heart is not right in the sight of God.” A number of speculative opinions, cold ceremonies, cheap moralities, in which the affections have no share, can never be a substitute for real devotion. “The Lord looketh to the heart.” He does not value those exercises which are performed from necessity; unwillingly, grudgingly. He abhors the sacrifices of those who are glad of excuses to keep them from his worship; who would be thankful were he entirely to dispense with their services; who feel him as a task-master while they are performing the drudgery of his work. The question is—Are spiritual things *your* “pleasant

things"? If not, you are destitute of the mark of a real Christian, and you have a poor prospect before you in eternity. God will not force you into heaven to make you miserable; but miserable you would be, even in heaven, in your present state. The nature and duration of its employments—an eternal sabbath—a temple, in which you shall serve him day and night—an intercourse only with those who are perfectly pure and holy—all this would be intolerable to an unrenewed mind, who is "saying to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Thirdly. What an *affliction* do Christians sustain when they are DEPRIVED OF THEIR "PLEASANT THINGS"! This may be done two ways. First, by the removal of these privileges from them. Thus persecution has sometimes forbidden them to assemble together, and has silenced their preachers, destroyed their sanctuaries, and banished all religious ordinances from a neighbourhood. God sometimes inflicts his judgments upon a place for neglect and abuse of Gospel privileges. He can send a more dreadful dearth than a "famine of bread," even "a famine of hearing the word of the Lord." He can as easily convey an evangelical ministry from one country to another, as we can carry a candle from one room into another:—I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Or, secondly, by removing Christians from these privileges. Thus business may call them away from a favoured situation, accidents or sickness may detain them prisoners from the courts of the Lord. And though, in these cases, he does not leave them comfortless, still they feel their loss, and can say, "When I remember these

things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.”

Let us, Fourthly, be very THANKFUL THAT THESE “PLEASANT THINGS” ARE WITHIN OUR REACH—that we have been so long favoured with them—that we have them in so rich an abundance—that we have liberty to partake of them—and strength to go forth and enjoy them:—surely “the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage. Let us enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise.”

And, Finally, LET US RAISE OUR THOUGHTS AND DESIRES AFTER THE “PLEASANT THINGS” OF HEAVEN. Philip Henry often said, when he had finished the delightful exercises of the Sabbath, “Well, if this be not the way to heaven, I know not what is.” Yes, these are introductory to the glory that shall be revealed: they are foretastes to endear it, and earnest to insure it. And when you come to die—if you can say, in sincerity, “Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwelleth”—you may plead, with confidence, “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.” No: he will not gather you, in eternity, with those you never loved in time. Being let go, you shall join your own company, and be for “ever with the Lord.”—And if the streams be so sweet, what will the fountain be! “In his presence *there is fulness of joy*, and at his right hand *there are pleasures for evermore!*” Let us sing—

“These are the joys he lets us know
In fields und villages below;
Gives us a relish of his love,
But keeps his noblest feast above.

“In paradise, within the gates,
A higher entertainment waits:
Fruits new and old, laid up in store,
Where we shall feed, but thirst no more.

DISCOURSE XIII.

NEARNESS TO THE CROSS.

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. JOHN xix. 25–27.

THIS is one of the most remarkable passages in the history of our Saviour’s passion. The language is peculiarly simple and affecting. The scene is exquisitely tender. The characters are in the highest degree interesting; and the circumstances in which they are placed, altogether new and wonderful. Oh for a class of feelings becoming the subject!—Let us fix our minds on three things. I. THE SITUATION OF THE MOTHER. II. The ADDRESS OF THE SAVIOUR. III. THE OBEDIENCE OF THE DISCIPLE.

Women are more than once brought forward in the Gospel, and the notice taken of them is always to their honour. Thus, while others have forsaken him and fled, we here find three females rising above the

fears of their sex, braving the horrors of the execution, piercing through the crowd, and approaching the foot' of the cross—there to testify their sympathy with their suffering Lord—to show how willing they are to die with him—to admire his patience and his meekness—and to secure his dying words. “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.” What were the feelings of these three Marys! But—

I. THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD IN THIS SITUATION demands a larger share of our notice. I admire in her the efficacy of Divine grace. She is able to *stand* near the cross; she does not faint away and drop down. She keeps her feelings within due bounds. Here are no outrageous exclamations, no bitter complaints flung at Heaven for not avenging him of his adversaries, no imprecations on his murderers, no rending of garments, no wringing of hands, no plucking of the hair! She feels as a mother, she endures as a Christian; and, submitting to the mysterious designs of Providence, suffers with all the dignity of an angel.

The people of God know not what they can bear, till they are tried. When the “time of need” comes, then comes “the grace to help,” and it is always found to be sufficient for them. I shall never despair of the support of a Christian, in any situation, however distressing, after beholding Mary standing near the cross of her dying son. Ye tender mothers, who may be called to part with beloved children! remember, religion allows you to feel, but forbids you to faint. You are not to be swallowed up of over-much sorrow, but to preserve a calm of mind favourable to

the exercises of reason and of grace. You are to endeavour to say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Think of Mary, and say—"What can my affliction be, compared with hers!"

For who can adequately imagine her anguish! When old Simeon saw the infant Messiah, he said to his mother, "Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." And now the prediction is accomplished.—Oh! to see her son enduring *such* a death! Suspended in torture! Oh! how would she agonize when she saw the nails driven through his hands and feet! And then for *such a son* to endure all this extreme of anguish!—a child foretold by prophets, announced by angels—all goodness, excellency, perfection!—who had never displeased her, but endeared himself by every word, by every action!—A child, the glory of her house, the consolation of her age!—for, to crown all, she was now a widow. Joseph her husband was dead—but Jesus her son was yet alive, and in his power and kindness she was sure to find a resource. But now her remaining prop is struck away, and her "only coal in Israel is quenched!" And she is to be thrown out, a bereaved, exposed, helpless, penniless widow, upon a selfish, unfeeling, cruel world!

II. In such a condition, and with such prospects, she attracts the eye of our Lord: and HE SPEAKS. He addresses her in a manner suited to her trying circumstances. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother. Woman, behold thy son!" Though I die, there is one who will discharge the filial office,

who will guard, and nourish, and provide for thee—*Behold thy son!* Then saith he to the disciple—“Behold thy mother! Receive her—not as a pauper, or a mere pensioner on thy bounty; but regard her, as you would the tenderest of all connexions—*Behold thy mother!*”

This is very instructive. It reminds us, first, of the indigence of our Lord and Saviour. Many talk of poverty, but he *was* poor. In ordinary cases he was sustained by alms; in extraordinary ones, by miracles. When he came to die, he had no personal property, no landed estate to leave. All he had to bequeath was his wearing-apparel; and even this never came to his mother. “They parted his raiment among them, and for his vesture did they cast lots: these things therefore the soldiers did.”

What becomes then of riches? Are we such fools as to fall down and worship this idol of general adoration? Does money produce—does it imply—worth? A man may be an apostle, and be moneyless. “Silver and gold have I none,” says Peter. “Poxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head”—yet he was “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person!” But, alas! all this will not keep numbers from thinking money the essence of all excellency. Money can add charms to ugliness: money can transform wrinkles into youth: money can fill brainless heads with wisdom, and render nonsense oracular: money can turn meanness into virtue; and, falling like snow, can cover a dunghill, and give it the appearance of whiteness and innocence!

Behold, secondly, an instance of the Divine good-

ness, which ought to encourage the poor and needy. When one comfort is withdrawn, another is furnished. When Jesus is removed, John is raised up. A Christian should never despair. Our heavenly Father has more than one way of providing for his children. His resources are innumerable and inexhaustible. "Oh, fear the Lord, all ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him: the young lions, do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Let those who are dying without wealth, and have nothing to leave behind them, hear him saying, "Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive: and let thy widows trust in me." Let those who fear that by bereavement they shall be reduced and impoverished say, with David, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. In him the fatherless findeth mercy."

Thirdly, we learn that we should endeavour to be useful, not only living, but dying. We see the Saviour attentive to the duty of every season, and every circumstance. Never so occupied, even by his sufferings, as to forget others: he dies as he had lived; and not only when "going about," but even when nailed to the cross, we behold him—"doing good!"

A Christian, if he has not done it before, should now "set his house in order." He should arrange his affairs, and dispose of his effects, and secure guardians for his children, so as not to occasion perplexity and discord after his decease. He should also be attentive to the spiritual improvement of those around him. If able to speak, he should recommend the Saviour, and speak well of his ways.

Dying words are impressive. This is the last time you can do any tiling for your generation. "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." "Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself." Mr. Bolton said to his children, who stood around his dying bed, "See that none of you meet me in an unconverted state at the day of judgment." Dr. Rivet said, in his last illness, "Let all who come to inquire after my welfare be allowed to see me: I ought to be an example in death as well as in life."

Fourthly. A lesson of filial piety is clearly deducible from this subject. Children are under an obligation to succour and relieve their parents according to their ability. And this is not to be considered as charity, so much as common justice. The Apostle therefore calls it a requiting:—"Let them requite their parents." I admire the disposition of David, who, when wandering from place to place, seemed regardless of himself, if he could provide a safe and comfortable situation for his father and mother: "He went to Mezpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth and be with you, till I know what God will do for me." I admire still

more David's Son and David's Lord, who, even in the agony of crucifixion, commends his poor mother to the care of the beloved disciple.

And here you ask; But why did he this? Could he not have provided for her himself? He who turned water into wine, and made a few loaves sufficient to feed a whole multitude—could not he have furnished means for the subsistence of a destitute mother? Behold, in answer to this, another reflection. He does not needlessly work miracles. The manna which followed the Israelites in the wilderness ceased as soon as they could provide themselves with the corn of the land. He generally fulfils his kind designs by common means, and in the established course of things. His care extends to the poor as well as to the rich. He has made the rich stewards, but not proprietors: he has given them an abundance, not to hoard up, but to expend and to administer. And the poor and distressed are as much consigned by Providence to the care of the affluent, as Mary was charged upon John. None of God's benefits terminate wholly on the possessor: they are means as well as mercies, talents as well as endowments. If we are enlightened, we are to "arise and shine if converted, we are to "strengthen our brethren if comforted, we are to "comfort others with those comforts wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God if we have "all things richly to enjoy," we are to be "ready to communicate, willing to distribute."

Suppose a master should call into his presence a servant, and say to him, "Take this money, and go, carry it to such a poor family and suppose the servant, as soon as he had gotten possession of it,

should, resolve to keep it, or lay it out on some finery or amusement; what would you think? Would you blame the master, as wanting in generosity? No—but you would say, “O thou wicked servant!” And what would the master himself say?—Surely he would punish him; and he would well deserve it: for he would be at once guilty of unfaithfulness and cruelty. Such a master indeed may never find out this villany. But the rich are going to appear before a God who “cannot be mocked,” to give an account of the application of the property which he committed to their trust, for certain purposes which his word clearly specifies. It was given them to teach the ignorant, to clothe the naked, to “make the widow’s heart to sing for joy”—Woe! woe be to them if they shall be found to have frustrated the kindness of his designs, either by not using, or by wasting his goods!

Once more. John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved he had a peculiar friendship for him—and how does he express it? Not by diminishing his care, but by enlarging the claims of his duty; not by increasing his estate, but by giving him a consumer—consigning to him an aged female for life. You may deem this a strange proof of his affection—a strange way of honouring him! But, if you view the matter aright, you will see that there is nothing unaccountable in it. To be employed by him and for him is a dignity and a privilege. If he pleased, he could well dispense with our poor services: but he engages us—to improve our graces, and to reward our exertions. And, in proportion as we are in a good frame of mind, we shall long to be instruments in the Saviour’s hands, and, bringing ourselves daily to his footstool,

we shall ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" John, therefore,

III. EXECUTES THE ORDERS OF HIS DYING LORD. "From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." He does not stand weighing things: "Can I afford to do it? Shall I not entail upon myself expenses for life? and not only so, but trouble also—yea, and reproach and suspicion, by accommodating the mother of one who was executed as a malefactor—an enemy to Caesar?—He obeys cheerfully, instantly, implicitly.

And let us remember, that true obedience is prompt; and will lead us to "do all things without murmuring and disputing." This is peculiarly the case with regard to charity. Real benevolence, if I may so express it, is not too longsighted and thoughtful; it will not suffer the fine impulse to cool, by indulging hesitations: when an obligation strikes us, it will not allow of our eluding it by giving us either inclination or time to bring forward the hardness of the times, the slackness of trade, the increase of family, the multiplicity of cases. While we stop to investigate every particular, to make comparisons, to collect evidences, and to take great pains not to be deceived—the opportunity is gone: our neighbour may not be alive a few days hence, or we may not—and thus, by cautious and delayed beneficence, he will lose the relief, and we the honour of the action. Therefore, says Solomon, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee."

To return. Let us now follow the mother of our

Lord to her new residence. Venerable woman, whom all generations have blessed, we rejoice in thy comfort! Thou hast "a certain dwelling-place," thou shalt not want!—With what kindness would John treat the charge of his departed Lord! With what tenderness would he nourish her! How many evenings would they pass together in discoursing of the Saviour ascended to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God! How would they dwell upon his sermons, his miracles, his sufferings! We meet once more with this distinguished woman in the sacred history. In the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, we find the twelve returning from the place of his ascension, and in an upper room; and it is said, "They continued with one accord, in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus." After this she disappears, and we hear of her no more. But we shall by-and-by see her, and derive from her all the interesting particulars relative to the birth, the infancy, the youth of the child Jesus, over which, for wise purposes, a veil is now thrown.

Let me conclude by calling upon you to choose for yourselves the *situation* of these three women—they were "standing *by the cross* of Jesus." *There*, by reading the Scripture, by meditation, by the exercises of faith, by the memorials of his death—*there* you may fix yourselves. It is a blessed station: take it, and "determine to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Do you wish to contemplate whatever is grand and sublime? Take this station. Behold him on the cross—See "the Sun of righteousness," as he sets, gilding the heavens with glory. See him, as

he dies, exercising every grace, displaying every perfection!

Does the world prevail over thee? Take this station. Exclaim, with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

"His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er his body on the tree:
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me."

Do you feel trials and afflictions? Take this station, Behold a suffering Saviour. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

"Thousands have found the bless'd effect;
Nor longer mourn their lot:
While on his sorrows they reflect,
Their own are all forgot."

Are you oppressed with a sense of guilt? Take this station. Bruised by sin, remember him who was bruised for it. Be of good cheer. "Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed."

Do you wish for an example? Take this station. Behold here not only your sacrifice, but your pattern. While he atones, he instructs "He suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow— his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed him-

self to him that judgeth righteously”—who, full of forgiveness, prayed for his enemies, and said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”—who, all affection and concern for his relations, said, “Woman, behold thy son!” Son, behold thy mother! Ye children, admire him. Admire him, ye friends. Admire him, ye disciples, who wear his honoured Name—“nor stop at wonder,—imitate and live.” May we “be planted together in the likeness of his death, that we may be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE THRONE OF GRACE.

“Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

HEB. iv. 16.

PRAYER is of so much importance; it is such an honour, such a privilege, such a means of sanctifying, relieving, enriching the soul; that he who teaches us to pray is our best friend: and there is nothing we should more highly prize than those instructions which are designed to regulate and encourage our addresses to God.

And such is the design of the Apostle in the words which I have read. He tells us of a throne of grace, and informs us in what manner, and for what purpose, we are to approach it:—“Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The language is metaphorical. When God enacts laws, he is on a throne of legislation; when he administers these laws, he is on a throne of government; when he tries his creatures by these laws, he is on a

throne of judgment; and when he receives petitions and dispenses favours, he is on a "*throne of grace*" The idea of a throne inspires awe, bordering on terror. It repels rather than invites. Few of us could approach it without trembling. But what is the throne of an earthly monarch, the greatest earthly monarch that ever swayed a sceptre? The God we address is "the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." In his eye, an Alexander is a worm; yea, "all nations before him are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. Heaven is his throne, and this earth is only his footstool." How can we enter his presence, or approach his infinite Majesty?—Blessed be his Name, he fills "the mercy-seat;" he is on a "throne of grace and we are allowed, and even commanded, to come to it *boldly*. But,

I. IT IS NECESSARY FOR US TO KNOW WHAT THIS BOLDNESS IS.

And we may be assured that it is not audacity, rudeness, or a trifling freedom. We have sometimes heard persons address God, in a manner which they would not dare to use, I will not say to a superior, but even to a fellow-creature of their own level. Such persons would do well to compare Scripture with Scripture. For what is the language of the Bible in other places? "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear. For our God is

a consuming fire." They would also do well to remember the nature of the business in which they are engaged; for if we are imploring "mercy and grace," common sense will tell us, that the boldness we are allowed to indulge can be only the boldness of a penitent and a suppliant. Now an encouragement to beg, is not surely a licence to offend. Prayer and insolence ill accord together.

This boldness, then, arises from nothing in ourselves, but purely from the goodness of the Being we address: mid it consists principally in a persuasion that we are freely authorized to come, and may confidently hope to succeed.

What a change is made in the view and feelings of a person by conviction of sin! Sin was once nothing in his view; but now, awakened to consider, and enlightened to perceive its nature and consequences, he feels it to be the greatest evil: as before he could not be made to fear, he can scarcely now be induced to hope. Knowing his desert, and judging under the influence of human and guilty feelings, he finds it difficult to believe that God will receive him—But till he *does* believe this, he will not, he cannot come to him aright. God has therefore made provision to excite and sustain the confidence of self-condemned sinners.

He has revealed himself, not as implacable, but as full of pity and compassion, as "the Lord God gracious and merciful." He has "commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The conclusion is not more justly drawn, than it is infinitely encouraging: "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? Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrow, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." His blood "cleanseth us from all sin. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." He "suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God." I mention this the more fully, because we "come unto God by him:" and in proportion to our knowledge of the Mediator, and our reliance upon him, will be our enlargement and consolation in duty. It is here that our hopes take their rise: it is here that we are "filled with all joy and peace in believing." "In whom, [speaking of Christ, says the Apostle,] we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. And again: having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

We have also "exceeding great and precious promises"—such as these: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the

heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

To illustrate these promises, and to banish every fear, that, springing from unworthiness and guilt, would hinder our application to him, he has been pleased to add a succession of examples. Some of these are derived from characters the most vile: but vile as they once were, “they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Among men, the chief offenders are always made examples of justice—but here they have frequently been made the examples of mercy. Civil governors are afraid to pardon the most criminal lest they should operate encouragements—but here they are designed to I a precedents: “for this cause I obtained mercy, I Imt in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering as a pattern to them that should believe on him to life everlasting.” By these instances In has said—“Never despair.—See what I can do. Learn that neither the number nor the heinousness of our sins shall destroy you, if you are willing ‘to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ.’”

In time also, the believer’s own experience much aids his confidence. Though he has no more dependence upon himself than he once had, he learns to I rust more simply and firmly in him who has never “turned away his prayer,” but has been “a very present help in every time of trouble.”

This boldness takes in not only a confidence of success, but also “a holy liberty in our addresses to in, expressive of intimacy and privilege.” Are we Christians? We come not as strangers and foreigners,

but as fellow-citizens with the saints, and of "the household of God." "We have received, not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" Other monarchs can be approached only at certain seasons; and in certain cases; and with certain formalities. But you may call upon him at "all times;" and in all "circumstances." You may "in every thing make known your requests unto God." You may go and inform him of all that perplexes, all that alarms, all that distresses you. He deems nothing too little for you to spread before him. You may tell him what you can tell no earthly friend. And you are not required to keep at a distance, but allowed to come "even to his seat—to order your cause before him—to fill your mouth with arguments—to put him in remembrance—to plead with him"—to persevere, and not "let him go except he bless you."

II. Having considered the manner in which, let us observe THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH WE ARE TO COME TO THE THRONE OF GRACE. They are these—to "*obtain mercy*" and to "*find grace*." These blessings are wisely connected together by the Apostle, because there are too many people who try to separate them. They would be saved from hell, but not from sin. They wish to be pardoned, but not renewed. They would have mercy, but not grace.

But be not deceived. Whom God forgives he sanctifies and prepares for his service. And both these blessings are equally important and necessary to our salvation. Let us therefore pray for both.

First pray for *mercy*. And pray like those who know they greatly need it. You are verily guilty. You are charged with innumerable transgressions,

and your consciences tell you that many of them are attended with circumstances of peculiar aggravation. Till these are pardoned, you are in a state of condemnation; and what a doom is that which is denounced upon you by the law which you have broken! Think of "the wrath of God." Think of the "worm that dieth not, and the fire that is never to be quenched. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

And you are continually liable to the execution of this sentence. You *must* die soon, you *may* die this very night; this very hour: and then it will be too late to cry for mercy. Be prevailed upon therefore to seek it immediately and earnestly—"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

But we shall need the exercise of mercy as long as we are in the body. We often contract fresh guilt. Our most holy things are defiled. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean; I am pure from sin?" Archbishop Usher often said, he hoped to die with the language of the publican in his mouth; and his biographer tells us his wish was fulfilled—he died, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." What an exalted character is given us of Onesiphorus! Yet, says the Apostle, "the Lord grant unto him, that *he* may find"—not justice—but "*mercy* of the Lord in that day." He would need mercy till then, and then he would need it more than ever. And when we all come to appear before his righteous tribunal, to have our actions and our motives tried—"should he mark iniquity, who could stand?" Let us therefore say with Job, "Though I

were righteous, yet would I not answer him; but I would make supplication to my Judge.”

Secondly. Let us pray for “grace to help in time of need.” But is not every time a time of need with us? It is. And there is not a moment in our existence in which we can live as we ought, independently of Divine grace. We need this grace, to mortify our corruptions; to sanctify our affections; to resist temptations; to overcome the world. It is this, and this alone, that can enable us to pursue our journey; to run our race; to accomplish our warfare; to “endure to the end.” We cannot pray, or sing, or hear, or read, as we ought, without the assistance of this grace helping our infirmities. “We cannot,” says Bishop Hopkins, “stand one moment longer than God holds us; or walk one step farther than God leads us.” For a thing constantly necessary, the Apostle would teach us to pray constantly.

But there are some seasons in which we peculiarly require the aid of Divine grace. Two or three of these it may be proper to mention.

Prosperity is a time of need. Few “know how to abound.” It is no easy thing to be full, and not deny God. Worldly fame and affluence have often had a baneful effect on the minds of good men; have attached them too strongly to earth, and slackened their diligence in seeking “a better, even a heavenly country.” They have had less dependence upon God, and less communion with him. They have grown highminded and illiberal; and exhibited far less of the Christian in their advancement than in their poverty. Others have lost their religion entirely in passing from a cottage to a mansion. “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” Let us there-

fore be wise, and remember, that the wisdom which I alone preserve us consists in our fearing always, in a diffidence of ourselves; in our praying, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." He indeed can keep us from falling, even in slippery places. Thus he guarded Joseph and Daniel, in situations equally high and dangerous.

Affliction is a time of need. It matters not from what quarter the trouble springs: it is a trying season: and the Christian is concerned to "come forth us gold." He not only wants support and comfort, so that he may not "faint," but he wants strength and preservation, so that he may not sin. He is concerned to be secured from impatience; from distrust of Providence; from quarrelling with instruments. He wishes to glorify God in the fires; and to derive advantages from his crosses, so as to be able to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." For all this he seeks the Lord; and what the Lord said to Paul he may apply unto himself: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Death is a time of need. And it is an unavoidable one—other times of need *may* come, but this *will* come. It is indeed the last time of need—but it is also the greatest. It is new and untried. It settles everything for ever. It is awful to let go our hold of earth, to give up the soul into the hand of God, to enter eternity. The enemy also now uses all his force to distress—for there are two seasons in which he is peculiarly busy: when we are coming to Christ for grace—and when we are going to him for glory. Now others may endeavour to banish this subject from their minds; but the Christian *must*

think of it. And he will be concerned to die safely—as to consequences; honourably—as to religion; comfortably—as to himself; and usefully—as to others. And what can be done here without grace to help—to help in this time of need? If many Christians, who are now cast down, were but assured that their sun would set without a cloud, they would be filled with strong consolation, bear cheerfully their trials, and look forward to every future scene with pleasure. Well, grace *can* do this, and *has* done it for many; and even for many who were “once walking mournfully before the Lord.” When the time of need came, then came the grace—suffering grace for a suffering hour—and dying grace for a dying hour.

Now if this be our errand in prayer—if we are to pray—“that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,” does it not follow, as a fair inference from the subject, that a prayerless person is destitute both of the mercy and grace of God? This is an awful truth; and it leads me, before I conclude, seriously to ask you—

First. Have you come to this throne? Have you ever prayed? Perhaps you have sometimes dragged through the duty as a task—but did you ever feel it to be your privilege and your pleasure? Perhaps you have engaged in it occasionally—but has it been your habitual employment? Perhaps you have called upon God in the hour of sickness and danger—but, as health returned, have you not discontinued prayer by little and little, till you have lived entirely without him in the world? You have frequently attended public worship—do you pray much in your closet; or in the duties of your calling, do you send up many a desire to God, saying, “Lord, help me”?

You are fond of hearing sermons—but while you so often hear from God, does God ever hear from you?

Secondly. Do you design to come? or have you resolved to “restrain prayer before him”?

Do you imagine you can acquire these blessings in any other way than by prayer? This is impossible: “For all these things,” says God, “will I be inquired of:” “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Or do you imagine these blessings are not worthy of your pursuit? Alas! strange as it may appear, I suspect that this is the case. You are not prepared to estimate these advantages. You do not feel your need of mercy and grace; otherwise surely you would deem them worth asking for. If you could gain a fortune by prayer—would you not pray? Or health would you not pray? But what are these to mercy and grace? These comprise every other blessing—and nothing else can be a blessing without them.

Or do you imagine they are not to be gained? There is no ground for such despair: he “waiteth to be gracious; and is exalted to have mercy.” “Come, for all things are now ready.” None are excluded. All are welcome.

Yet if one class of petitioners could be more welcome and successful than another, it would be—the YOUNG: “I love them that love me; and they that seek me *early* shall find me.”

DISCOURSE XV.

SUMMER AND HARVEST.

“He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.” PROV. X. 5.

WHAT a scene of desolation was presented to the eye of Noah when he opened the door of the ark! No human face appeared. The earth was stripped of all its beauty; and no trees, no plants, no grass, were to be seen. The effects of the Deluge were everywhere awfully visible; and every cloud, every wind, excited alarm. In this condition he offered a sacrifice. God accepted it—and, to dissipate his fears, and to draw forth his confidence, he said, “While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.”

Each of these periods is not only useful, but instructive. We cheerfully part with the dreary hours of winter, to embrace the reviving spring; and as readily resign the growing hours of spring, to welcome the joyful harvest. When, under Divine Providence, this season arrives, “the year is crowned with his goodness; the earth is full of his riches;”

and the husbandman is called forth to secure the golden produce. He is reasonably expected to make every concern give place to this, and to exert all his diligence to improve the short, but all-important period. Hence the reflection of Solomon: "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame."

Common sense readily acquiesces in this truth. But let us accommodate the subject to moral and spiritual purposes. Let us represent YOUR HARVEST SEASON; and enforce upon you the NECESSITY OF DILIGENCE IN USING IT.

I. God affords you OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOOD. He favours you with seasons which may be considered as your harvest.

In this view we may regard the whole period of life. While you are continued in this world, you have "space for repentance; and the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation."

You are blessed with a season of Gospel grace. While many are sitting in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death, upon you "hath the light shined, to guide your feet into the way of peace." You not only live in a country where there is a written revelation, but your "eyes see your teachers, and your ears hear a voice behind you, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn aside to the right hand, or to the left." Though the preaching of the word is neglected by some, and despised by others, it is an invaluable privilege. By this, the Scripture is explained to the mind, and enforced on the conscience: by this, you are warned of your danger, and encouraged to flee for refuge; you are called upon to draw nigh, and assured that "all things are now

ready." "Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing, by the word of God."

And this reminds us that you have a season of civil and religious liberty. You have the Bible in your hands, and are not fined for reading it. You may assemble together in public, and hear the word of life without danger. Your devotions are sanctioned by law, and you may sit under your own vine, and under your own fig-tree, and none make you afraid." What advantages do we possess, above many of our ancestors who suffered for conscience' sake! They laboured, and we have entered into their labours. "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, werp slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins: being destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth."

Some are living in a religious family, where they have the benefit of instruction, prayer, and example. Some, like Timothy, have been trained up by a mother and a grandmother, of unfeigned faith, and, "from a child, have known the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation."

Who, in passing through a vale of tears, has not experienced a day of trouble? From such a period, many have had to date their saving acquaintance with Divine things. Affliction is favourable to religion: it abstracts, it softens, it awes the mind: it strips the world of its attractions, and starves us out of the creature into God.

Where is the person, who does not know what we mean by a season of conviction? Conscience has sometimes forced you to a stand. Like Felix, you have trembled under the power of the world to come. You have sometimes been pleasingly affected: you have wept, and prayed, and sighed—"Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee."

But can I forget another season? Can I forget to urge the admonition of wisdom and friendship—"Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy *youth*, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"—Never, never, my young friends, will you have a season in which your hindrances are so few, or your helps so many. Everything now invites; everything constrains you. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

II. I would enforce upon you the NECESSITY OF DILIGENCE TO IMPROVE YOUR REAPING SEASON.

And first. Consider how much you have to accomplish. You have the work of a husbandman in harvest—Will this allow you to be drowsy and idle? Does it not require you to rise early, and be active all the day? To seize every moment, and secure every assistance? The salvation of the soul is a great and arduous concern; and many things are required of you. For though you are not left to yourselves, nor called to act in your own strength, yet religion is a race, and you must run; it is a warfare, and you must fight. The blessings of the Gospel are free, but they are to be sought and gained. It is God that "worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure but we are commanded, notwithstanding this, yea, because of this, to "work out our salvation with fear

and trembling." Spring, then, from the bed of sloth; shake off every impediment: you have sins to be pardoned, passions to be subdued, graces to be exercised, duties to be performed—a harvest to gather in!

Secondly. Consider the worth of the blessings that demand your attention. The advantages held forth by the prospect of harvest animate the husbandman to diligence, and reconcile him to exertion; but what are the blessings of the field compared with the blessings of salvation? The one is perishable, the other is eternal: the one is for the body only, the other is for the soul. What is an earthly portion in a barn, to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us"? I would address you as rational creatures. Is it not desirable to be redeemed from the curse of the law? to be justified freely from every charge brought against us at the bar of God? to be delivered from the tyranny and rage of vicious appetites and passions?

Great is the happiness of those that belong to God here; but who can describe the exalted glory and joy that await them hereafter? Do you not wish to enter in with those who shall be for ever with the Lord? "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Will not this indemnify you for every sacrifice, and abundantly recompense all your toil?

Thirdly. Remember that your labour will not be

in vain in the Lord. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due time you shall reap if you faint not." The husbandman has many uncertainties to contend with—insects, blights, droughts, and storms; but *probability* stimulates *him*,—how much more should actual *certainty* encourage *you*! "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Fourthly. Remember that your season for action is limited and short. Harvest does not last long. Your time in the whole compass of it is but "a few days and how little of it deserves the name of life, or can be applied to any important services! When infancy, sleep, business, recreations, have engrossed their share—is the remainder, think you, too long a period to acquire the kingdom of God and his righteousness? But your time is uncertain as well as short. The present only is yours—you know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. The fool in the Gospel talked of "goods laid up for many years," when he had but a few moments left: God put his finger upon his conscience, and said, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." "Man knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time when it falleth suddenly upon them." Youth is no certain protection from the grave. Death does not go by age, nor does it always wait till it has sent a warning. Your time is always in motion: if you are idle, time is not; but hurrying you forwards. If you do not perceive your progress, every hour, every moment, brings you nearer to your end. And your

time once gone cannot be recalled. God has plainly told you that there is a season when he will not be found: "therefore seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." In vain those who despised the warnings of Noah clung to the sides of the ark when the door was shut: it was then too late. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not, whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

Therefore, finally. Reflect upon the consequences of negligence. Is a man blamed for sleeping in harvest? Does every one reproach him as a fool? Does he deserve to suffer famine? You act a part far more absurd and fatal who "neglect this great salvation," and will not embrace "in this your day the things that belong to your peace before they are hid from your eyes." Having made no provision for futurity—for eternity, your ruin is unavoidable. It will also be insupportable. "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you." For a strict account will then be required of all your talents and opportunities: and

what can you answer? O the feelings of sinners in hell who have perished under the means of grace! How will their consciences upbraid and condemn them! O the anguish and despair of sinners, when, dropping from time into eternity, they exclaim, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!"

Let us conclude, First, by blessing God for the harvest with which he has again favoured our country. We went forth with anxious hope: we saw "first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear." We lifted up our eyes and saw "the fields already white unto harvest," and with tears of joy said, "Thou hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor." We only wanted "the appointed weeks of harvest"—and lo! the weather is favourable; and the precious treasure will soon be secured! "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine and oil; and they shall hear Jezreel." However numerous the means and the second causes are which concur to enrich us with plenteousness, God is the original mover, and to him our praise is to be addressed. Without his blessing the ox would have ploughed, and the husbandman would have sowed, in vain. How easily could he have shrivelled up the grain by heat, drowned it by showers, destroyed it by insects! By his permission an enemy might have invaded our borders, and war have spoiled "the finest of the wheat." Everything is full of God: he lives through all life; and, while seeming to do nothing, is doing all. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down

from the Father of lights." To him let our praise ascend in a perpetual flow of affection and obedience. While we live upon Divine goodness, shall we never acknowledge it, or acknowledge it in word only? Is this our kindness to our Friend? O that our insensible hearts may be affected, and that "the goodness of God may lead us to repentance! O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

But let us remember, that "man liveth not by bread alone;" nor is he to "live here always." He has a soul within him, and an eternity before him; and he would be worse than a brute were he only concerned to provide for the inferior part of his nature, and the shortest period of his existence. What will these things be to us when we come to die? What are they now? We feel far greater wants now than any of these things are able to supply. We want "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

And, blessed be God, they are attainable. Let us therefore improve this season by making it a religious monitor. As we walk in the fields, or reflect while at home on the process of harvest, let us say, "O my soul, thou too hast thy season; and everything forbids thee to be slothful. See 'the children of this world;' how wise they are 'in their generation'! And shall they labour so eagerly for 'the meat that perisheth,' and I be all indifference to acquire that 'meat which endureth unto everlasting life'? 'I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.'"

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE FUNERAL OF A YOUTH.

“Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and who was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.” LUKE vii. 12—15.

As we follow our Saviour in the evangelical history, we verify the words of the Apostle, when he says of him—“he went about doing good.” This character marks his diligence, and the cause in which it was employed. His life was one continued career of goodness. He did good to the soul and to the body, He did good by preaching, and by miracles.

Every thing recorded of him is worthy of our attention; but the narrative before us is beautiful and impressive in the highest degree. We behold grandeur blended with simplicity, and omnipotence with compassion. The circumstances progressively rise in importance; the mind is at last powerfully attracted to a single point, and all the passions re-

main in awful suspense, till the joyful event relieves us by a flood of tears.

The miracle requires a few REMARKS and a few REFLECTIONS.

The first thing we behold is a FUNERAL PROCESSION. This is a scene which we have all witnessed; a scene by no means unusual—but, alas! owing to its frequency and familiarity, it fails to impress. It is however an occurrence unspeakably interesting in itself, and it ought to rouse our attention. How many lessons, were we disposed to learn, would a funeral supply!

Place yourselves under a tree in a meadow, along which lies the pathway to the lonely churchyard. You say within yourself, “Here it comes, in slow and silent sadness. See! every one has some importance. Who could bear to die unmourned? What a loss is the death of some! See those who walk nearest to the corpse—these are the bereaved. The rest are friends and neighbours, and a heedless rabble drawn by the spectacle. ‘Man goeth to his long home.’ ‘It is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to heart.’ Soon the like services will be performed for me. When carried along myself, how insensible shall I be to all those things which now agitate and perplex me! Of what importance will it then be, whether I have been poor or rich, honourable or despised?—‘But one thing is needful.’ Oh! may I ‘choose that good part which shall not be taken away from me.’—‘Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.’”

But let us draw near, and contemplate this funeral solemnity. It was the funeral of a *young man*. We are not informed whether he died by disease or

accident, slowly or suddenly; but he was carried off in the prime of life. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." "What is our life? It is even a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away!" What is beauty, strength, youth? "Verily, every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity." Think of this, ye young. Remember, the old are not the only victims of death. Enter churchyards: measure graves: read inscriptions:

"—What pathos in the date!

—Few doctors preach so well!"

He was the "only son of his mother." There is an ocean of love in the hearts of parents towards their children. Witness the reluctance and exclamation of Jacob—"Me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away I—All these things are against me." Witness the mourning of David, even over a bad, a rebellious son—"The king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and us he went, thus he said: O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom I would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" But this parental affection is stronger on the side of the female, than of the male. Not only has the mother more natural sensibility and tenderness than the father, but the child, if I may so express it, is much more hers than his; it is hers by months of anxiety, and pangs of

anguish; it is hers by a thousand nightly watchings and daily cares; it is hers by numberless pleasures given and received, in which neither stranger nor friend intermeddles with her joy. Thus the performance of duty is secured and sweetened. But that which renders duty a privilege, in the very same proportion increases the fear of loss, and the anguish of separation. What then were the feelings of this mother—deprived of her *only* son? Had he been one of many, the loss would have been partial, and the affliction more easily endured—but he was the only pledge of virtuous affection, the only hope of future years—her life was entirely bound up in his. Mourning for an only son is mentioned in the Scripture as the extreme of grief. “O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.”

But what closes the melancholy tale of this woman is—that she was a *widow*! A widow is always an affecting character, as she is liable to injustice and oppression, from those fiends who take advantage of weakness and distress; as she is deprived of the companion of her journey, and compelled to travel alone; as her anxieties are doubled, and there is none to share them with her. In this state, a child may seem an addition to her difficulties—but if he excites care, he diverts grief: he is some company in her solitary hours; in him something of the husband remains; in his face the father’s image is admired. He will render himself serviceable by dutiful attentions; he will place on her the regard which he owed the deceased, and love her with a double affec-

tion. He will also plead her cause, and become her protector and her refuge. But—such is no longer the condition of this poor widow. None is now left to support her tottering age; her last leaf is shaken down; her “last coal in Israel is quenched.” And she is now, it is probable, going to bury her only son, in the same grave with his father. The opening of a husband’s tomb would make her wounds bleed afresh—What would be her agony, when she would turn round, and leave the sepulchre—“There have I buried all my earthly happiness and hope—O for the day when I shall come hither too—and be gathered to my kindred dust!”

Sorrowful as the occasion was, she attended the funeral herself. And we commend her. It was following her only son as far as she could go; it was deriving from the scene all the instruction it could afford, and all the impression it could produce. But, in our age of improvement, and refinement, and feeling, friends and relations seldom accompany the funeral of their connexions. A minister often buries a child, when he has no other audience to address than the few individuals who carry it to the grave! Yea, we are told—and we only wish to know some things by hearsay—that, in genteel life, as soon as the patient has expired, they withdraw from the very house, and leave the dead to mercenaries—so that the minister can only meet the undertaker and his company, whose profit is entirely of another kind! Whither are these things tending? And have people now, more sensibility than formerly? No—but they have more affectation; they have more love to the world; they have more aversion to every thing serious. But are men determined to banish and to

keep from their minds every intimation of their mortality? With what surprise and horror will death come upon those who never think of it! Are persons afraid of sorrow? "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of mirth. By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." What advantages did this widow derive from her personal attendance in such trying circumstances!

—She was not alone—"Much people of the city was with her." This showed the esteem in which the family was held. But though numbers of the friends and neighbours of the widow attended her on this mournful occasion, sympathising with her under the heavy affliction and wishing to comfort her, little relief could *they* afford. They kindly commiserate her case, but cannot restore her son. Submission and patience were the only lessons they could preach or she could learn. But here comes advancing towards them another company, *the Leader of which can "save to the uttermost."* The two parties join in the suburbs of the city.—Observe our Lord and Saviour.

First, he knew all the particulars of the case. Those who were with him could only see, as they were passing by, a funeral—but he knew the corpse stretched upon the bier; he knew that it was a young man; that it was the only son of his mother; and that she was a widow!

Secondly. He did not wait to be implored. Some of his miracles were wrought in answer to the supplications of the individuals themselves; for he never refused any who applied to him—and this should teach us to pray for *ourselves*. Some of his miracles also were performed in consequence of the inter-

cession of others: thus we find neighbours and relations were than once honoured by obtaining a cure for their connexions—and this should encourage us to pray for *others*. But of several he could say, “I am found of them that sought me not.” Sometimes, before we call he answers: such a very present help is in trouble. In the case before us, the relief was entirely spontaneous and self-moved.

Thirdly. When he saw her, he had “compassion on her.” By nothing was our Saviour more distinguished than by pity and tenderness—He was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” His eye affected his heart. He made all the miseries he beheld his own, under the influence of this compassion.

Fourthly, he “said unto her, Weep not.” How unavailing, not to say impertinent, would this have been from any other lips! Were you officiously to advance, and breaking the silence of the funeral train, to say to the chief mourner, “Woman, be happy; weep no more;” would it not be deemed equally singular and vain? And it is more than probable that, in the case before us, the language of our Saviour would excite surprise, especially in the widow herself. Holding back her veil—she would look to see what stranger passing by thus interested himself in her grief, and gave her advice so easy to offer, and so impossible to take. When, lo!

Fifthly, Jesus, without any ostentatious ceremony, “went and touched the bier—and they that bare it stood still;” all amazement and expectation! Every eye is fixed upon him. What a moment of suspense and eagerness! At length, in a tone of uncontrollable authority, “he said to the young man.

I say unto thee. Arise!" He does this in his own name. He claims a power which controls even the dead. And the event justifies the pretension. He never spake in vain. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the blood begins to liquefy and flow through the veins and arteries; the lungs heave again; the eyes open—he "that was dead sat up and began to speak"—my soul, what did he say?

Finally, observe the application, the delicacy—what shall I call it?—of the miracle: and "he delivered him to his mother!" He did not say. Go, preach the Gospel; or, Come, follow me. It was a prodigy of "lovingkindness of "tender mercy." He would comfort her, and therefore he prefers *her* satisfaction to the honour *he* would have gained by the attendance of such a disciple on himself. What a present was here! "He delivered him to his mother!"

How striking the whole scene! To see a man instantly called back—from the invisible world! What awe would it produce; what wonder would it excite! Some would be ready to flee from him—but the mother—she would embrace him after this second birth, and "remember no more again her anguish, for joy that a man is born again into the world." But would the son engross all her attention? Would she not think of Jesus? this friend in trouble; this restorer of her happiness? I see her kneel and adore.

Let us conclude by three general reflections.

I. WHAT A VALE OF TEARS IS THIS WORLD! How various and numerous are the evils to which human life is exposed! "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble!" "Surely every man walketh in a vain show, surely they are dis-

quieted in vain! he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them." His pains are great, his disappointments frequent, his cares corroding. His possessions generate alarms: and in proportion to his affections are his afflictions: his roses grow on thorns, and his honey wears a sting. Here we see a fellow creature pining with sickness. There we hear a voice saying, "I sit, and am alone as a sparrow upon the house-top. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." It is impossible to walk the street, or pass along the road, without being assailed by sights and sounds of distress. And how peculiarly lamentable are some of these!—But,

II. LET THE AFFLICTED REMEMBER THAT THEY ARE NOT LEFT WITHOUT RESOURCE. Let them learn where to flee in the day of trouble. It is to the Friend of sinners. Why, is the Saviour any longer on earth that we may apply to him? Unquestionably how else could he fulfil his promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"? His bodily presence was not necessary to his assistance "in the days of his flesh:" he could speak a cure at a distance. He is now essentially and spiritually near—near enough to hear all your complaints, and to afford you succour. He knows and observes all your distresses, and he has the same tenderness, and the same power as of old. Is your condition very trying and alarming? You have no cause for despair. "At even-tide it may be light." Little did this poor woman expect to meet with such a glorious change in her circumstances at the funeral of her last comfort. "When the Lord turned again her captivity, she was like

them that dream!" But he was pleased to bring her thus low before he helped her, to teach us never to think our case desperate, or suppose that his interference can come too late.

But he does not deliver me!—The time and the manner of relief are his own. There are cases in which he can do us more good by the continuance than by the speedy removal of our sorrows. But of this we may be assured, that he will not suffer us to call upon him in vain.

Let us apply this to a particular case. You say—"I share in this woman's affliction, but not in her joy. My child is dead—but no Jesus says to me, *Weep not.*" Yes, Rachel—"Thus saith the Lord; refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." But he will not raise my child to this fond embrace? Yes—He who said to the young man, "Arise!" is "the resurrection and the life." Thy child shall rise again, and be delivered unto thee all over glorious; and no fear of separation shall damp the joy of your re-union.

III. WHAT THINK YOU OF CHRIST? Does not his character combine every excellency and attraction? And is the relation of all this given us merely to gratify our curiosity? Are we to peruse the life of our Lord and Saviour as we would read the history of a Cyrus or Alexander? No—it is not written for our amusement, but for our profit. And then we peruse it properly, when we admire him—love him above all—depend wholly upon him—and feel the transform-

ing efficacy of every view we take of his character, “changing us into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Let us therefore “be followers of him as dear children.” Let us cultivate benevolence, and do all the good we can, especially to the fatherless and widows. These he has peculiarly recommended to our attention, not only by his example, but by his word. “Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If I thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.” We know you cannot work miracles—but you can show mercy. Go—“visit the widow in her affliction.” We know you cannot raise her dead son—but you can preserve her living one. Go—and administer healing medicines and wholesome food; go and clothe his naked body, and inform his ignorant mind; go and endeavour to snatch him from ruin, and render him the staff of his poor widowed mother’s age. Go—go, and enjoy all the luxury of doing good. “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.”

DISCOURSE XVII.

FEARS REMOVED.

“And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.” JUDGES xiii. 22, 23.

SAMSON is the last of the Israelitish Deliverers recorded in this book. He differs very much from all his predecessors; for we never find him presiding over the council, or commanding in the army; but he was a tremendous scourge to the enemies of his country in his own person.

His history is full of wonders. An angel ushers him into the world. This angel first appeared to his mother, and foretold his birth. He soon after discovered himself also to his father, in company with his mother. His father immediately provided an entertainment for him—but the angel commanded him to offer it in sacrifice to the Lord. He did so—the angel ascended in the flame, and they saw him no more. By this they knew that he was a divine messenger, and in consequence of this apprehension,

“Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would he at this time have told us such things as these.”

And what does this passage teach us? I. WHAT PECULIAR IMPRESSIONS DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS MAKE UPON THE MIND. II. THE DIFFERENCE THERE IS IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE. III. THE PROFIT THAT IS TO BE DERIVED FROM A PIOUS COMPANION. IV. HOW MUCH THERE IS IN THE LORD'S DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE TO ENCOURAGE THEM AT ALL TIMES, IF THEY HAVE SKILL ENOUGH TO DISCERN IT.

I. See the *peculiar impressions which Divine manifestations make upon the mind*. To a certain degree these impressions are proper. Such manifestations ought to strike our minds, to humble us, to produce reverence and godly fear. If an earthly king were to call upon us, we should be filled with awe as soon as he discovered himself—how much more should this be the case, when *He* approaches us, who is “*King of kings, and Lord of lords!*” Hence Jacob exclaimed, “How dreadful is this place: this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” Job said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Isaiah also, in like manner, cries out, “Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of

hosts." Thus awfully were these good men impressed, as soon as they apprehended the presence and glory of God.

But impressions, good in themselves, may become excessive; and the cause producing them may be misunderstood, and even deprecated. Thus Manoah reasons: "We shall surely die, for we have seen God!" This was a common apprehension of old, and it is easy to account for it. Ever since man became a sinner, an enemy to God, every approach of the Deity has awakened in him terror and confusion, Our consciences naturally tell us that we deserve nothing but heavy tidings from the invisible world: we therefore dread every messenger thence. And even when God comes to us in mercy, the same sentiment occurs, and sometimes leads us, like Manoah, to mistake his design, and draw a fearful conclusion from it.

Thus, when he comes to convince us of sin, and to humble the pride of our hearts, we imagine that we shall now die—But we are mistaken; he is only come to prepare us for the proofs of his love. He impresses us with a sense of our danger, that we may flee for refuge; with a sense of our pollution, that we may wash, and be clean, in the fountain which he has provided. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

Thus, when he comes in providence, and destroys our schemes, and visits us with breach upon breach; here again we imagine we are going to be undone! But we shall presently see that he came as a friend, though disguised, and only used means to wean us from the world, and bring us more entirely to himself us our exceeding joy.

Let us, II. Remark *the difference there is in the knowledge and experience of the Lord's people*. What surprises and terrifies one, is both plain and pleasing to another. What opposite conclusions do Manoah and his wife draw from the same event! He infers wrath; she, mercy. The former looks for destruction; the latter, for salvation. Thus, there are degrees in grace. There is *hope*, and the *full assurance of hope*. Some have *little faith*; others are "strong in faith," "rich in faith." In the Church there are *babes*; and there are those "*of full age, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*"

And this difference is not always to be judged of by the order of nature, or external advantages. "There are first that shall be last, and there are last that shall be first." We find here the weaker vessel the stronger believer. Nor is this a solitary instance. They were women, yea widows, who ministered to our Lord of their substance. The three Marys approached the foot of the cross, when the disciples forsook him and fled. These also appeared first at the sepulchre. Nothing is said of the father of Timothy, but the Apostle celebrates the "unfeigned faith of his mother and his grandmother." He also speaks honourably to the Philippians of "those women that had laboured with him in the Gospel."

Neither does this difference in their attainments affect the reality of their religion, or the safety of their state. The infant is no less a child than the young man. Our Saviour does not despise "the day of small things." "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."

Nevertheless, it is very desirable to be matured

and established Christians—not only to be alive in religion, but lively; not only to be fruitful, but to bring forth much fruit; and to be “filled with *all* joy and peace in believing,” that we may not only have hope, but “*abound in hope*, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” And this is important, not only as the glory of God, and the comfort of your own minds, depend much upon it, but also as it prepares for usefulness, and enables you the better to “serve your generation,” and the more easily to “speak a word in season to him that is weary.”

This leads us to notice, III. *The profit that is to be derived from a pious companion.* “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward of their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth: for he hath not another to lift him up.” Man is formed for society, and religion indulges and sanctifies the social principle. And if a man be concerned for his spiritual welfare, he will be glad to meet with those who are travelling the same road, and are partakers of the same hopes and fears: he will be thankful to have one near him who will watch over him, and admonish him; who by seasonable counsel will fix him when wavering, embolden him when timid, and comfort him when cast down. And it is to be observed, that in spiritual distress we are often suspicious of our own reasonings and conclusions: we know the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and are afraid lest while they encourage they should ensnare. We can depend with more confidence upon the declarations of our fellow-Christians. Only let them relate their own experience, recal to our minds some forgotten truth, apply some promise, or give a new

turn to a particular circumstance—and we are relieved, and delivered.

And happy is the man who has such a friend and helper in "*the desire of his eyes.*" In various instances, the importance of the female character to the welfare of man appears. She will aid Manoah in bringing up their children: and the earlier parts of education devolve almost exclusively upon her. She will assist him in the management of his estate: "the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of his life. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." "No man ever prospered in the world without the consent and co-operation of his wife." She will also help him in the preservation of his character, of his health, of his peace of mind. Her soothing voice can charm away "the evil spirit her soft hand can smooth the wrinkles of an anxious brow, and wipe off the mildew of an unwholesome evening. But she is found, in the noblest sense, "a help-meet for him," in aiding his piety; in adding flame to his devotion; in furnishing motive to his zeal. By prayer, by example, by conversation, she can encourage his resolutions, disperse his doubts, and "help his unbelief." Such was the happiness of Manoah: he had one who was an "heir with him of the grace of life." "But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."

Whence, IV. We take occasion to observe, that

there is always enough in the Lord's dealings with his *people to encourage them, if they have wisdom enough to discern it.* How well did this woman reason! How naturally, yet how forcibly! "Nay—let us not turn that against us, which is really for us. We shall not die, unless God he pleased to kill us; and surely the tokens of his favour are not the pledges of his wrath."

Her conclusion is drawn from two things. First, the acceptance of their sacrifice: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands." It is not his manner to accept the offering, and reject the person: "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." Secondly, the secrets with which he had favoured them—"Neither would he have shown us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." This regards the birth of their son, his education, his deliverance of their country—If the accomplishment of this be certain, our destruction is impossible.

Let us leave Manoah and his wife, and think of ourselves. It is a dreadful thing for God to kill us. What is the loss of property, of health, or even of life, to the loss of the soul? Men can "kill the body," but there "is no more that they can do; but God is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Hence it becomes unspeakably important to know how he means to deal with us. And, blessed be his Name, there are satisfactory evidences that he is not our enemy, but our friend, and concerned for our

welfare. Some of these are more general; others are more peculiar.

He has not left himself without witness "in that he has done us good, and given us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

He has borne with our provocations; and though he could easily and righteously have destroyed us, we are still in the land of the living, and we ought to "account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance."

Had he desired the death of the sinner, would he have provided and accepted the grand sacrifice which Jesus made upon the cross for us?—But we know he provided it; we know he accepted it; we know that it was an "offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

If he were pleased to kill us, would he have given us such exceeding great and precious promises—promises so rich, so general, so free? Would he have said, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Resolved on your destruction, would he have favoured you with such affecting discoveries? Like the man in the Gospel, though unable to tell every circumstance attending the operation, cannot you say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see"? Has he not "called you out of darkness into

his marvellous light”? Are you not filled with wonder—does not everything appear new? Have you not seen an evil in sin which has rendered it odious and burdensome—a depravity in yourselves, which has led you ever since to exclaim, Behold, I am vile—and such a glory in the Saviour as makes you willing to follow him whithersoever he goeth? “Flesh and blood have not revealed this unto thee, but our Father who is in heaven.”

Had his aim been your ruin, would he have produced in you such sentiments and dispositions?—So that the heart of stone is removed: you *mourn* for sin, and for the sins of others, as well as your own. You “*hunger and thirst after righteousness;*” and as much long to be sanctified as to be pardoned; and pray as much to obtain purity as peace. You love the sceptre, as well as glory in the Cross; and your dependence upon the Saviour’s death is accompanied by endeavours to imitate his example; and you can never be perfectly reconciled to yourselves, till “the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” If he smiles, you are satisfied to bear the frowns of the world; and can say, as you advance in duty and reproach, “If this be to be vile, I will yet be more vile.”

And under your greatest discouragements, under every temptation to go back, have you not been enabled to persevere in the use of means? Though you have been strangers to comfort and freedom in duty, you have not restrained prayer before him; but, through many a benighted season, you have waited for him “more than they that watch for the morning.” On the very verge of despair, something has afresh excited hope: “then I said, I am cast out

of thy sight: yet—will I look again toward thy holy temple.” You have had a degree of confidence—not only that you *shall* not seek him in vain—but that you *have* not sought him in vain: “I said, in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication, when I cried unto thee.” And thus, while powerfully drawing you, he has been secretly sustaining you; as in the case of David, who said—“My soul followeth hard after thee—thy right hand upholdeth me.”

Now all this is really his work. By the grace of God, you are what you are: it is “he that has made you thus to differ” from others, and from yourselves. And if “the Lord had a mind to kill you,” why should he have done all this? The conclusion is as obvious as it is encouraging. He could have destroyed you without these exertions in your favour. Surely, he does not excite expectations to disappoint us; or desires, to torment us. Surely, he does not produce a new taste, a new appetite, without meaning to indulge, to relieve it. Besides—as he does nothing in vain, so he does nothing imperfect. What he begins, he is able to finish; and when he begins, he designs to finish. With regard to other agents, we cannot certainly infer the completion from the beginning: their views alter; they meet with unexpected difficulties; their purposes are frequently broken off—but it is otherwise here. The foundation of God standeth sure, and the “top stone shall be brought forth with shoutings—Grace, grace, unto it!” It shall never be said of the God of our salvation—“He began to build, but was not able to finish.” “We are confident,” says the Apostle, “of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good

work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

May you likewise be humbly confident of the same truth. May you be enabled to say, with David, “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the work of thine own hands.”

And, “when you are converted” from your doubts, and fears, and dejections, “strengthen your brethren. Comfort the feebleminded. Support the weak. Be patient towards all men. Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.”

DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE PROFANE EXCHANGE.

“Lost there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meal sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”
HEB. xii. 16, 17.

THE history of the wicked, as well as of the righteous, is useful. By their crimes we are cautioned; and we are warned by their miseries. And as the Israelites fled from the tents of Korah, when “the ground clave asunder and swallowed them up,” saying, “lest the earth swallow us up also”—so should we abandon the course of the ungodly world, lest we share in their tremendous ruin.

Anxious for our welfare, the Scripture addresses our fear as well as our hope, and holds forth instances of divine vengeance, as well as proofs of divine mercy. Hence the command of our Lord: “Remember Lot’s wife.” And hence the admonition of the Apostle: “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have

inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

And what is all this to us? "Much every way." I compare your privileges with his privileges—your sin with his sin—and your doom with his doom.

I. Let us view Esau in his original state—and COMPARE YOUR PRIVILEGES WITH HIS PRIVILEGES. To stand supreme in the house of the patriarch Isaac, was no trifling prerogative: his house was "the house of God, and the gate of heaven." In this family, Jehovah revealed himself; and there he was adored and served, while idolatry prevailed over all the other nations of the globe. And such was once the condition of this unhappy character. Accordingly he possessed the birthright, and stood in a fair way to obtain all the advantages flowing from it. And these were great and numerous.

To the birthright belonged pre-eminence over the other branches of the family. To the birthright appertained a double portion of the paternal inheritance. To the birthright was attached the land of Canaan, with all its sacred distinctions. To the birthright was given the promise of being the ancestor of the Messiah—the "firstborn among many brethren"—the Saviour "in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed." And to the birthright was added the honour of receiving first, from the mouth of the father, a peculiar benediction, which, proceeding from the spirit of prophecy, was never pronounced in vain.—Such were the prospects of Esau.

And what are yours? It is true, you were not born in the house of Isaac; but you have been brought forth in a Christian country, in a "land the Lord

careth for," where "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." You have the Bible; you have Sabbaths; you have sanctuaries; you have ordinances; you have ministers; you have the throne of grace; you have the promise of the Holy-Ghost: and *all things* appertaining to your everlasting happiness *are now ready*. You possess much; but all your present advantages are not to be compared with those glorious hopes to which you are called by the Gospel. You have the prospect of becoming a "kind of first-fruits of his creatures," of joining "the general assembly and the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven"—a primogeniture whose privileges far surpass those of the son of Isaac: a birth-right which comprehends a "better country" than Canaan, even heaven, where we shall reign "kings and priests unto God," where "the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore." But this pearl is not for the swine, who, ignorant of its value, tramples it under foot; but for those who, conscious of its incomparable worth, prefer it to every thing else, and, like the wise merchant, are willing to sell all to buy it. These high advantages may be sacrificed.

II. Let us therefore view Esau in the surrender of his privileges, and COMPARE YOUR SIN WITH HIS SIN. —"*For one morsel of meat he sold his birthright.*" It is obvious that the loss was *voluntary* and *base*. First, it was voluntary. No one forced it from him—he *sold* it. He was indeed tempted to part with it by the sensation of hunger, and the sight of pottage when lie- was faint: an object was before him which promised the immediate gratification of his sensual appetite. But he could very soon have obtained food upon far easier terms. And surely the birthright

could not have a rival in a mess of meat! Where was reason? Does the man yield to the brutes?—No: he was not compelled to sacrifice his claims. And who compels *you* to abandon your hopes of heaven? Who forces you into perdition? You say that you live in a world full of enticing objects; that the dominion of sense is strong; that it is not very easy to resist the impulse of the moment. But is it impossible to resist? Have not many overcome, though placed in the same circumstances, and possessed of the same nature with you? What is goodness untried? Have you not reason as well as appetite? Is not grace attainable by you? Is it, not sufficient for you? And remember, that you can never have so strong a motive to commit sin as to avoid it. The greatest difficulties therefore which you have to overcome, are those which are placed to keep you from hell. What is the applause of a fellow-creature to the frown of the Almighty? What is a momentary pleasure to endless pain? And you *know* you act freely: you know that all the men in the world cannot force you to will: you know that the tempter can do nothing more than propose—the determination rests with you. You cannot justify yourselves even now to your own consciences; and hereafter, unable to allege one excuse, *you will be speechless!* Here is the true cause of your ruin—“ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” “Ye have loved idols, and after them ye will go.”

Secondly, it was equally base. For what is the price of the birthright? An empire? A crown?—A crown sparkles in the eye of ambition: a throne is the highest pinnacle of human pride:—Nothing like it—but a despicable trifle, “one morsel of meat”

“a mess of pottage”—the dearest dish, says Bishop Hall, that was ever purchased, except the forbidden fruit. But I feel ready to dispute this. Arc not you more than like him? Do not you surpass him in folly? For what do you sell the treasures of the soul and eternity—but a thing of nought, a fleeting indulgence, a false point of honour, an imaginary interest? Here is your eternal infamy and disgrace! “Ye have sold yourselves,” says the prophet, “for nought.” For what proportion is there between the things which you thus exchange? Duly consider the “unsearchable riches of Christ think what it is to be “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places what it is to live in pleasure, to die in hope, to obtain “*glory, honour, and immortality.*” These are the blessings you give up. And what do you gain by the surrender? Solomon tells you, “*vanity and vexation of spirit.*” Worldly things are less than the soul, and cannot fill it; worse than the soul, and cannot satisfy it. They have no relation to our grand wants, or our best interests. They please, only to poison; they elevate, only to depress. They “perish in the using.” You can carry nothing of them with you. You are not certain of holding them for life; and if you were, “what is your life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” View them in the light of Scripture: view them under the anguish of conscience; view them from the borders of the grave; view them from the vastness of eternity,—and they are nothing. Nevertheless for these—and often without obtaining them—you sin away your everlasting portion. “What is a man profited if he should *gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*” If the

whole cannot indemnify him—can a part—a particle? “O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity and seek after leasing?—Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?”

Let us CONSIDER ESAU IN HIS MISERY, AND COMPARE YOUR DOOM WITH HIS DOOM. “For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” Read the relation in the book of Genesis. Nothing could be more affecting than his expostulations, and his bitter cries—but to no purpose does he urge his petition or press his father to retract: the benediction is pronounced, and Isaac acquiesces in the decision of Heaven. For repentance here refers to Isaac, not to Esau: the meaning is, not that Esau humbled himself in vain for his sin, and could not obtain forgiveness—but that he could not prevail upon Isaac to change his mind, and reverse what he had spoken: that, with regard therefore to the birth-right which he had sold, his loss was irretrievable.

And did God thus by his righteous judgment exclude from all his claims the profane Esau because he had despised them—“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? 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?” Are you disposed to pity him? Yea, rather, weep for yourselves. Your loss is inestimably greater than his loss. After all his disappointments he had something left, and could entertain himself with the diversions of the

field: but your condition will be destitute of all resources. And, with no business to engage, no amusements to beguile,

“Say, ye gay dreamers of gay dreams,
How will ye weather an eternal night,
Where such expedients fail?”

Then your application will be useless. You may supplicate: but you will be rejected; and no place will be found for repentance in the mind of your Judge, though you “seek it carefully with tears.”

Hence we see what a difference there is between the origin and the issue of an irreligious course. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.” The wise will always judge of things by their end. It is the end that crowns the action. Sin is never profitable; but its beginnings are flattering. “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant—but he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue: though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth: yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him.” “What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.”

Again. Sin unavoidably brings a man sooner or later to lamentation and regret. “Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith

the Lord God of hosts." And hence, if we studied our true comfort, we should never sin: we should reason thus: "If ever I am saved, I must be brought to repentance, and every sin I now commit will then give me pain: and if I have not that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life, what will be the self-condemnation and anguish of a dying bed and a judgment-day? Sin, like Ezekiel's roll, is written, 'within and without, with lamentation and mourning and woe.'"

Let us also remark, that there is a repentance which is unavailing. Paul tells us of a "sorrow of the world which worketh death." Some are fretting because every one will not submit to their humours. Some grieve over their temporal losses, and never ask "Where is God my maker, that giveth songs in the night?" Every remorse of conscience is not the effect of saving grace. Judas "repented, and went and hanged himself." The eyes which sin closes, eternity will open. But then grief comes too late. The blessing once lost, cannot be recovered.

I know that many unguarded things have been said of the loss of a day of grace. The subject is alarming. I do not pretend to do justice to it, or to answer any curious questions which may arise from it. What I think I am authorized to say from the Scripture is this. First. That, while there is life, there is hope; nor can we imagine that God would prolong existence but to afford us space for repentance. This indeed he has assigned as the reason. God "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." Secondly. It is always dangerous to delay

the work of repentance; since, by repeated acts, habits are formed, and dispositions rendered more and more unfavourable. The disease neglected, becomes inveterate; and the shrub suffered to stand, grows into a deep-rooted tree. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also learn to do good who are accustomed to do evil." But we should not only consider repentance as a work to be performed by us, and the delay of which multiplies difficulties; but also—and without this our repentance cannot be saving—as a blessing and an influence to be imparted from God. Now your criminal delay in seeking this renders it less probable that you will ever find it: for though you cannot deserve grace, you may grieve it: and after so many invitations scorned—what wonder if he should say, "None of them that were bidden shall taste of my supper"! Thirdly. There are cases and circumstances in every man's life more friendly to religion than others. On these much seems to turn; and these may be lost even in this life. I have no doubt but that when Felix trembled, he felt as he never did before, and never did again. But he wilfully strove to do away the impression. And have not some of you had convictions which have for the time filled you with fear? Have you not had such relishes of good things as have led you to "call the sabbath a delight," and to "hear the word with joy"? Have not your closets occasionally seen a bended knee? Have not your walks witnessed your tears and vows? Your earthly hopes withered, and your comforts removed—have you not been constrained to turn aside from the world, deploring its emptiness, and sighing for a nobler good? Now when he *draws*, we should *run*; when he *knocks*,

we should *open*. Fourthly. Death, it is certain, ends all your opportunities. After this, no pardon will be offered; no motives will be urged. Time is for sowing, and eternity for reaping; and “what a man soweth that shall he also reap.” Hence the distinction always maintained in the Scripture between this world and another: the one is a state of probation, the other of decision. Hence the importance of life. Hence the wisdom of complying with the admonition, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” For there is a season when, if you “call upon him, he will not answer, and if you seek him early, you will not find him.” And how soon you may be in this unalterable state it is impossible to determine. We know your breath is in your nostrils; you are exposed to a thousand accidents and diseases.

But your harvest is not yet past, your summer is not yet ended. Still he bears with you. Once more he invites you. It is time, it is high time, and, blessed be his Name, it is not too late, to seek him. I see him now standing with the door wide open, beseeching you as you love your souls to enter in—You refuse—and he shuts to the door, saying, “*O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace—but now they are hid from thine eyes!*”

DISCOURSE XIX.

NATHANAEL.

“And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.”

JOHN i. 46–50.

MUCH of the excellency of the Scripture lies in this that it does not state things in general representations, but descends to particulars—that it does not place them before us in speculative notions, but in practical effects—that it does not describe them only, but exemplifies—so that we see them alive and in motion.

The passage of Scripture which is now to engage our attention is peculiarly interesting and instructive. It is a narrative of the interview between our Lord and Nathanael. It leads us,

First, to observe The ADVANTAGES OF OCCASIONAL SOLITUDE.—What was Nathanael doing under the fig-tree? We are not informed. Perhaps he was reading the Scripture—perhaps he was engaged in meditation—perhaps he was praying—perhaps he was joining himself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, saying “Lord, I am thine, save me: and manifest thyself to me.” Some purpose had allured him there which our Saviour noticed and approved; he saw him “*in secret*,” and he now “*rewards him openly*.” Does he see us? Are we strangers to retirement? Surely, if we are Christians, and concerned for the welfare of our souls, we shall often retire, and find that we have much to do alone. I pity the man whose life is full of action, and void of thought. I pity the professor who lives only in public; who is always hearing sermons; who pays very little attention to the duties of the family, and none to those of the closet.

It is alone that we disengage ourselves from the dominion of the world. The world conquers us in a crowd. When our senses are dazzled, and our minds amused, we are too much occupied to find out the cheat; but when we are drawn back from it, when we calmly consider it as an object of lonely contemplation, oh! how is its importance diminished, how is its influence reduced! It is then we sigh—“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” It is alone that conscience operates, that motives impress, that truth is examined and applied. It is alone that we obtain a knowledge of ourselves; it is there we can examine our condition, investigate our characters, discover our follies and our weaknesses. Alone, we can be familiar with God, and divulge to him secrets which

we could not communicate to the dearest friend, or express in any public or social exercises of religion.

I love the fig-tree. I love to go forth from among the works of man to enjoy the creation of God: to enter a wood—to walk through a field of standing corn—to follow the windings of a river—to view the playfulness of the lambs—to listen to the varied melody of the birds. Here is nothing to vex, nothing to pollute. What an innocency, what a softness, does it spread over the mind! How disposed is the heart to welcome and cherish every devotional sentiment!

“O sacred solitude! divine retreat!
 Choice of the prudent, envy of the great—
 There, from the ways of men laid safe ashore,
 We smile to hear the distant tempest roar:
 There bless'd with health, with business unperplex.
 This life we cherish, and insure the next.”

Secondly. Let us remark HOW PERFECTLY ACQUAINTED OUR SAVIOUR IS WITH OUR MOST PRIVATE CONCERNS. “*Whence knowest thou me?*” asks Nathanael, when our Saviour had, in few words, developed his character. Jesus answered—“*When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee.*” This good man imagined himself alone there: he supposed no eye saw him. No wonder therefore he was surprised to hear a person, who appeared only a man like himself, announcing the whole affair: no wonder he was immediately convinced of his Messiahship, and exclaimed, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.” To know all persons and things infallibly is the prerogative of God only. He therefore claims it, in distinction from all creatures: “The

heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." And what says our Lord, in his address to John? "The churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." In the days of his flesh, actions were not necessary to inform him, nor did he derive additional discovery from the declarations of others: "he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man."

Let us remember, therefore, that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding both the evil and the good." Of this he will give proof hereafter, when "he shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." It will be in vain for the sinner then to say—when his wickedness is published to the world—"Whence knowest thou this?"—I saw thee, says the Judge, devising mischief upon thy bed; I saw thee walking in a way that was not good; I saw thee endeavouring to stifle every conviction of conscience, and to banish every serious reflection from the mind; thou hast always stood in my presence, thou hast always sinned under mine eye. I beheld all thy actions, I heard all thy words, all thy thoughts were open to my view—and here they all are ——

But let the righteous rejoice. He sees their situations, their trials, their dangers, their fears, their desires. He has "engraven them upon the palms of his hands, their walls are continually before him."

Let the broken-hearted penitent be encouraged. Godly sorrow affects loneliness. Into many a corner you retire to pour out tears unto God. Well, thither his eye follows you—"To this man will he look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word." "And the Lord said unto Ananias, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold! he prayeth."

Thirdly. SINCERITY IN RELIGION IS A QUALITY WHICH OUR SAVIOUR CALLS UPON US TO OBSERVE AND ADMIRE. What an honourable character, as he approaches him, does he give Nathanael! "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is *no guile*." By calling him an "Israelite," he distinguishes him from other nations; and by calling him an "Israelite *indeed*" he distinguishes him from his own. For all "were not Israel, who were of Israel." From the beginning, "he was not a Jew who was one outwardly; neither was that circumcision which was outward in the flesh: but he was a Jew, who was one inwardly; and circumcision was that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise was not of men, but of God." Now Nathanael was one of these true Israelites; he was in reality, as well as by profession, one of the people of God. And the evidence he gave of this was, his freedom from guile. But our Saviour does not say, he has no guilt—a man may be freckled, or have spots, and not be painted. A Christian is not sinlessly pure; he has many unhallowed and bewailed infirmities; but guile he has not: he is no hypocrite. He does not, in religion, ascend a stage to assume a character which does not belong to him. He *is* what

he appears to be. There is a correspondence between his professions and actions; his meaning and his words. He is upright in his dealings with himself—in his dealings with his fellow-creatures—and in his dealings with his God. He is all of a piece. He is the same alone as in company: the same in his own house as in the house of God: the same in prosperity as in adversity.

This is the character that stands fair with his own conscience. This is the character that enthrones himself in the esteem of others. This is the character that the King of glory delights to honour. “The prayer of the upright is his delight.” “Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.” “The upright shall dwell in thy presence.” “The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “Hast thou,” said he to Satan, “hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” And, placing such a character before us, in a situation the most sublime and awful, he says, “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.” There are two reasons why he calls upon us to admire a Nathanael. The one is. THE RARENESS OF THE CHARACTER. It is not to be seen every day. Many make no pretensions to religion; and many have only “a form of godliness,” while “they deny the power thereof.”

“Broad is the road that leads to death,
 And thousands walk together there;
 But wisdom shows a narrower path,
 With here and there a traveller.”

The other is, THE EXCELLENCY OF THE CHARACTER. It is indispensably necessary, in all religious concerns—nothing can be a substitute for this integrity—nothing that we can say, nothing that we can do, nothing that we can suffer. Without this, everything else will only render us the more vile and abominable. Judas is called—a devil. On the other hand, where this is found, and God sees that a man acts conscientiously, and from a sincere desire to please and glorify him, he will pass by mistakes, pardon imperfections, and accept him, “according to what he has, and not according to what he has not.”

And this leads us to a Fourth remark. THERE MAY BE TRUE GRACE, WHERE THERE IS AT PRESENT VERY LITTLE LIGHT. This was the case with Nathanael. His knowledge as yet was small; his mind was contracted; and he laboured under low prejudices. He had no apprehension of a Messiah distinguished by poverty and suffering. And because Nazareth was a wicked place, and a place of obscurity, he concluded nothing good or great could originate thence. Nevertheless he was open to conviction—he complied with the invitation, “Come and see”—he immediately “believed with the heart, and confessed with the tongue”—and our Saviour, pleased with his proficiency, promises to “lead him into all truth.”

Now this may be the case with others. And indeed, so far am I from supposing it necessary, to evidence the reality of a man’s conversion, that he should in every thing see clearly at first, that I commonly suspect those who are all at once so ripe in knowledge, and so high in doctrine. These disproportionated notionalists remind me of those unhappy children,

whoso heads grow so much faster than their bodies—the effect of disease, or weakness of constitution, not of health and vigour. I love to see knowledge, experience, and practice advancing together “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” That which comes up in a night may wither in a night—we dislike mushroom piety. If we look into nature, we shall find things slower in their growth in proportion to their excellency. How rapidly nettles, and thistles, and reeds, and osiers, spring up to maturity! but the oak is as much slower in attaining its perfection, as it is more firm in its grain, more durable in continuance, more important in its use.

Let us not then conclude that a man is a stranger to divine grace, because he is unable, at present, to go all our lengths in sentiment. It is not possible for us to determine, in certain disadvantageous circumstances, with how much ignorance in the judgment true grace in the heart may be connected. How little of the plan of salvation did Peter know, when our Saviour said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” As the sanctification of the soul, so the illumination of the mind, is gradual; and surely intellectual defects are no more wonderful than moral ones.

Nor let us be anxious to force upon him doctrines which at present he is not prepared to receive. Our Saviour said to his disciples, “I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now.” Where the heart is right with God, a growing experience in divine things will, after a while, make room for the admission of every important truth.

And therefore, we remark, finally, THAT WHERE GRACE IS REAL, IT WILL IN DUE TIME BE ATTENDED WITH CLEARER LIGHT. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these." Grace is an active principle, and leads us to use what we have—and "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." It disposes us to go on: "and then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." It inspires reverence and humility, and a dependence on Divine teaching—and "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant: the meek will he guide in judgement, and the meek will he teach his way." Let not thy deficiencies therefore cast thee down. You are under the care of One who will "not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, till he esnd forth judgment unto victory." He has your welfare at heart. The convictions and desires which he has produced in you are tokens for good. He will never leave nor forsake you. "till he has done all that, which he has spoken to you of: he will perfect that which concerneth you." It is now only the dawn; but the dawn is the pledge and the beginning of noon. "And the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And, whatever discoveries he has already made, remember, you shall see "greater things than these"—

First, greater in this world; more of himself, of his word, of his grace, of his providence. He can enable us to see divine things more clearly; more impressively; with more confidence, and with more appropriation. Let us not limit our desires or our hopes.

Secondly, greater in another world. After all our attainments, this earth is only a land of obscurities. But heaven is everlasting light. In those happy regions there is “no darkness at all.”—“Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we are known. And when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Then he will fully reveal himself. “We know that Messiah who is called Christ shall come; and when he is come, he will tell us all things.”

DISCOURSE XX.

THE CHARACTERS OF SIN.

“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.”

ROMANS vi. 21.

IT is of the greatest importance to entertain proper apprehensions of the evil of sin. Hence the Scriptures are so large and particular in describing it. They place it before us in every quality, and express it under every allusion that can rouse our indignation, or awaken our fear and our flight. Witness the language of the Apostle: “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.”

Behold the enemy. Sin is here arraigned and condemned in all the periods of time: the past, the present, and the future. For the past—here is unprofitableness; for the present—here is disgrace; and for the future—here is perdition. Let us, then, consider sin under these three characters. I. AS UNFRUITFUL. II. AS SHAMEFUL. III. AS DESTRUCTIVE.

And I. The Apostle asks, “What fruit had ye

in those things?" The question implies an undeniable negative, and suggests that sin yields no real benefit, no solid satisfaction. It should be otherwise. Sin ought to produce something: for it costs much. It requires the sinner to wage war with himself, to overcome innumerable difficulties, to make the most expensive sacrifices. Now, for a man to labour and toil, to give up all the advantages of religion, to sacrifice his soul, his God, his everlasting welfare, and plunge into "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone"—for nothing! is hard indeed!

And is not this the case? Read the history of wicked nations, families, individuals. What does the sinner ever gain or enjoy? What that is valuable and satisfactory?—What that deserves the name of "fruit"? What that even corresponds with his own expectation?—The enemy told Adam and Eve that they should "be as gods," when his design was to degrade them "below the beasts that perish." And thus we read of "*the deceitfulness of sin:*" it attracts by flattery; it destroys by delusion. It looks on with blandishing smiles, but conceals the cloven foot; it presents the bait, but hides the hook; it talks of liberty and indulgence, but this is only to favour its inroads; once admitted, slavery and desolation spread all around. It promises much, but how does it perform? "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth: yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him." Sinful gratifications continue no longer than the actions themselves: for then, consequences begin to be thought of: reason ascends the throne, and scourges;

conscience awakes, and condemns. Nor is it easy for the sinner to creep along to the commission of his crimes unseen by reason, unobserved by conscience, and, oh! when they are lookers on!—how, by their warnings and reproaches, do they imbitter his enjoyment! He finds nothing of that contentment and pleasure which he looked for. As he returns home, with the stain and sting of sin, he sighs inwardly—“And is this all? If this deserves the name of pleasure, how shortlived, how worthless, how mean! O that I had hearkened to the voice of wisdom and kindness, which said, ‘Turn ye not aside from following the Lord—turn ye not aside: for then should he go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain.’”

Suppose now a sinner was compelled to rise and answer this question truly—How has sin advanced your well-being? What has it done for you? What has it done for your connexions, for your bodies, for your souls, for your property, for your reputation? Suppose the swearer was to tell us what he has gained by his oaths; the drunkard by his cups; the sensualist by his uncleanness; the prodigal by his extravagance, his idleness, his evil company; yea, the proud, the envious, the malicious, by indulging their vile tempers—suppose the sinner was to sum up his expenses and his savings; to balance his accounts at the end of a year, of a week, of a day—surely he must find that his gains do not counterbalance his loss, his wages do not reward him for his drudgery, his pleasures do not make him amends for his pains even in the *lowest* degree.

Let any one as a man of reason consider his weary steps; his mean condescensions and compliances; his

corroding anxieties and suspicions; his restless desires and tormenting fears, when under the dominion of some lust or passion—to gain a fancy or a feather; to acquire the opinion of some poor worm; to pick up a little shining dust, to enjoy some light, unsatisfying, and low indulgence—and will he not confess that these things are more than unprofitable and vain? Above all, what does a Christian think when he reviews these wicked courses? He is able now to judge between sin and holiness. He now clearly sees what the practice of sin obliged him to forego, and compelled him to endure. He now clearly sees that it constrained him to live a stranger to his true interest; that it never allowed him one taste of real joy, or one moment of real peace; that it enslaved him; stripped him; starved him. Since he has served God, he looks back with painful regret upon every hour he spent in the service of sin: it appears to him an hour of inconceivable loss and injury: and he goes on weeping, and taking shame to himself.

And this brings us, II. To consider the DISGRACEFULNESS of sin. Of these unfruitful things, says the Apostle, “ye are now ashamed.” And well ye may; for there is nothing in the world so scandalous as sin. Whatever be a man’s station, or office, or abilities, sin degrades all, and renders him vile. It is not a shame to be obliged to labour; it is not a shame to be poor and dependent; it is not a shame to be tried and distressed—but it is a shame to be a sinner. For is it not shameful to be a fool? Is it not shameful to be a base coward? Is it not shameful to be a traitor to the best of kings; and to be ungrateful and perfidious to the kindest of all friends? If a benefactor should receive you to his house, and afford you all the

supplies of his table—would it not be shameful to steal out of his presence, blaspheme his name, and endeavour to counteract all his designs? Enlarge the number of images—select whatever may be deemed base and scandalous among men, and be assured it will apply with infinitely greater force to the evil of sin. We say again, nothing is so degrading, nothing can be so shameful, as sin.

But, to do justice to this part of our subject, it may be necessary to observe, that there are three kinds of shame which attend sin. The first is natural; the second, gracious; and the third, penal.

There is a *natural* shame which arises in men from the commission of sin. This it was that made our first parents hide themselves among the trees of the garden as soon as they had transgressed the Divine command—so closely did shame tread on the heels of guilt. This class of emotions may be in a great measure subdued by continuance in sin; for sin is of a hardening tendency. Accordingly we read of some who “hide not their sin, like Sodom.” Jeremiah says of some, “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.” And the Apostle speaks of some who “glory in their shame.” But these characters are not general; and this shamefulness in sinning is not easily, and perhaps never was perfectly, attained. “The eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.” Hence they not only repair to corners, and elude observation—which they would not do if there was anything

that tended to their praise; but hence also, they frame excuses and apologies. And if not ashamed of their proceedings, why attempt to deny or palliate? Why plead mistake, ignorance, surprise, infirmity? Why ascribe their sins to weakness or necessity, rather than to inclination or choice—unless they deemed them a disparagement to their character? Hence it is—that the sinner cannot endure to be alone, or bear to dwell on his own actions. Though naturally full of self-love and admiration, he slips away from his own presence, and shuns all intercourse with his greatest favourite. And why? Because he is ashamed even to meet *himself*. Upon the same principle too, when arrived at a certain pitch of iniquity, he abandons the moral world, and mingles only with those of his own quality: for here mutual wickedness creates mutual confidence, and keeps them from reproaching one another.

There is also a *gracious* shame which accompanies “repentance unto life.” This shame does not spring from a fear of the discovery of sin, but from a sense of the pollution and odiousness of it. Some crimes are universally considered as abominable; but *all* sin appears so to the real penitent: and he is now ashamed of things which pass uncensured in the world, and which once produced no uneasiness in himself. Conversion changes not only a man’s state, but his affections and his convictions. Sin appears, in consequence of it, exceeding sinful; and, oh! what holy self-abhorrence, and loathing, and shame, are now felt! The publican, standing afar off, “would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven.” “Mine iniquities,” says David, “have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.” Ezra said, “O my

God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." And returning Ephraim smote upon his thigh, and confessed, "I am ashamed, and even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." And so these believing Romans were *now* ashamed of the sins even of former years. And this ingenuous shame will be in proportion to our perception of the glory and the goodness of God. The more we think of his patience in bearing with us, while we were rebelling against him; and of his mercy and grace in pardoning our sins, and adopting us into his family, after all our provocations; the more shall we be affected with our vileness in offending him.

There is also a *penal* shame, by which we mean that shame which attends sin in a way of punishment. For God has so ordered things, that if a man be not ashamed *of* his sins, he shall be put to shame *by* them. And how often, and in how many instances, is the transgressor dishonoured in this world! See the professor of religion—"reproached," not "for the sake of Christ:" this would be his honour—but buffeted for his faults: suffering, *not* for well-doing, but for evil-doing. See the miser. "He is a proverb and a by-word." See the extortioner. How many "curse his habitation"! Behold the adulterer. "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman, lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul; a wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away." So true is the reflection of Solomon, that—"a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame."

But this will be more especially the case hereafter. Of the Israel of God we read, that “they shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end:” of Christians, that they shall “have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” But this implies the truth of the reverse; and we are assured that the wicked will “rise to shame and everlasting contempt”—ashamed in themselves; and contemned by each other, by saints, by angels, and by the Judge of all.

And oh! when they see to what disgrace they have wilfully reduced themselves; when they hear all the wickedness of their hearts, as well as lives, published before an assembled world—what wonder is it, that they call to “the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and hide them”—not only from the wrath to come, but also from shame and confusion of face?

And thus we have, III., reached the conclusion of this dreadful course, which is DEATH: “for the end of these things is death.” And by death the Apostle includes much more than the dissolution of the body. This indeed was the produce of sin: “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned.” But, besides the universal and unavoidable law of mortality which sin has established, there are many instances recorded in the Scripture, of God’s inflicting death immediately upon sinners in a way of judgment. Lot’s wife, Nadab and Abihu, Ananias and Sapphira, are proofs that, even in this sense, “*the end of these things is death.*” And, if we had an inspired history of present times, and could trace up to their proper causes those effects which are now

confounded in the common course of things, we should perhaps find the destruction of many a transgressor originating in the same way. And what assurance have *you* that the next time you take his Name in vain, or make a lie, you shall not be instantly sent from the place of sinning to the place of suffering?

Death also sometimes attends sin, not only as an immediate judgment from God, but as a natural consequence of vice. It is said that "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." How many criminals come to an untimely end at the gallows! How frequently do persons, by anger, intemperance, and such like courses, hasten on dissolution, and become self-murderers! Many might have lived longer, had they lived better; and have enjoyed a good old age, had it not been for a profligate youth: but now, if they drag on a miserable existence at all, they are "filled with the sins of their youth," which will "lie down with them in the grave." An old divine says, "the board has killed more than the sword." And a physician of great repute has given it as his opinion, that scarcely one in a thousand dies a natural death.

But what the Apostle principally intends is, not the corruption of the body in the grave, but the destruction of both body and soul in hell. It is what the Scripture calls the "second death." It is what our Saviour means, when he says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." It is not an extinction of being, but of happiness and of hope. Such is the end of sin. And it is a dreadful end; it is a righteous end; it is a certain end.

It is a *dreadful* end. Nothing that we can here

feel or fear deserves to be compared with it. Think of the degree and the duration of this misery. Reflect upon those intimations of it which we find in the Scripture. Think of being "bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Think of a place, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Think of the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Surely there is enough in one of these representations to freeze a man with horror, and to keep him from sin all his life long! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

It is a *righteous* end. Hence the wicked themselves will be speechless: not one of them will be able to complain, "I do not deserve this; he deals very hardly with me." Had not this doom been as just as it is dreadful, God, with whom there is no unrighteousness, would never have assigned it as the portion of sin. It is not possible for us to know all the demerit of sin; because we know not fully the excellences it has insulted, the obligations it has violated, the effects it has produced in the creation of God. But there is One who is infinitely wise; let us rest satisfied with the judgment of the Judge. And one thing we may observe, if the greatness of the penalty confounds us, that, in proportion as beings are holy, sin appears to them evil. Thus sin appears much more evil to a saint than to a sinner: by the same rule, it appears more evil to an angel than to a saint; and infinitely more evil to God than to an angel.

Finally. It is a *certain* end. From what quarter

can you derive a hope to escape? The power of God enables him to inflict this misery. "Hast thou an arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like his?" The holiness of God excites him to inflict this misery. He "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The wicked shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all workers of iniquity." The truth of God binds him to inflict this misery. The word is gone out of his mouth, and shall not return. "The Scripture cannot be broken and there "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God. Upon the wicked God shall rain down snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup."

He therefore that expects any other end of his pride, his avarice, his swearing, his sabbath-breaking, his disobedience, than death, is "sporting himself with his own deceivings and is even aggravating his doom by presumption and unbelief. "And it shall come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. The Lord will not spare him: but, then, the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." And is it possible for you to lie down to sleep, when you know that God is bound to punish you, and under an oath to destroy you?

What use should we make of this subject? First,

remember the particulars of this discourse; seriously reflect upon them, and resolve to have “no more fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Ask yourselves: “Since I went astray, what *have* I got but shame; and what *can* I get but death?” With this beat off all the solicitations of sin—“Away—what can you offer me? Do you think I am in love with disgrace, or in want of destruction?” Surely “the workers of iniquity have no knowledge surely the heart of the sons of “men is full of madness”—or they could not be induced to continue a moment longer in a course so unprofitable, so scandalous, so fatal—especially since there is such an encouragement afforded to all who are willing to leave it: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Secondly, let those who are delivered from this condition be thankful. “By nature children of wrath even as others; sometimes foolish and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in envy and malice, hateful, and hating one another—such—such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” And you are saying, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Admire and

adore the freeness, the efficacy, the riches of this grace, by which you are what you are. And be cautious and watchful in future. Will you turn again to folly? Would you listen to your old seducer, now you know that shame and death always follow his steps? Do you want another taste of this infamy and hell? "And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts."

To conclude—Mark the difference between the service of sin, and the service of God. It holds in all the articles we have reviewed. If sin be unfruitful—godliness is not: "godliness is profitable unto all things." Take a Christian, and ask him—What fruit have you had in all these duties and ordinances; in all this self-denial and separation from the world? Oh, says the Christian, much every way. "In keeping his commandments there is great reward." I have found "rest unto my soul." His "yoke is easy. His burden is light. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace."

If sin is shameful—holiness is not. The work in which it employs us is honourable and glorious. I do, says the Christian, indeed blush—but not in the sense you mean. I am ashamed—but it is at what I have left undone—not at what I have done. I am ashamed, but it is of my progress, not of my course:

I am ashamed, but it is of myself,—not of my master. No: he has dealt well with me. As far as I have sought him, he has been found of me. As far as I have trusted in him, he has not disappointed me. I follow him from conviction; and I am not ashamed to avow my adherence to him, and my dependence upon him.

If sin ends in death—religion does not. While the possessor has his “fruit unto holiness,” his “end is everlasting life.” And it is the end that crowns all. We have seen that religion has many great advantages at present: but if it had not—if it were all gloom, and bondage, and hardship—it has this incomparable recommendation—it ends well: ends in “glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.” If the way be rough, it leads to heaven. If the gate be strait, it opens into the paradise of God. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.”

“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat; but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink; but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice; but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.”

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

DISCOURSE XXI.

ACQUIESCENCE IN THE WILL OF GOD

“And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.”

2 SAM. xv. 25, 26.

It is very desirable to teach by example. This mode of tuition is the most pleasing, the most intelligible, and the most impressive. How useful to a scholar is a copy! How much does a builder aid our apprehension by giving us a model of the edifice he means to rear! In reading history, how much more are we struck with the representations of a battle, than by any rules of war!

So it is in spiritual things. The various subjects of religion are most advantageously placed before us, not in their abstraction—but embodied, enlivened, exemplified. We want instances—facts. We naturally inquire, How did faith operate in Abraham, and meekness in Moses? We are anxious to know how men of acknowledged religion behaved themselves

in such a season of prosperity, or in such an hour of distress.

In this, as well as in every thing else essential to the welfare of man, the Scripture comes in to our assistance, and, holding up to our view a succession of characters, in diversified situations, furnishes us with warnings, encouragements, motives—as our circumstances may require.

The condition of David, when he spake the words which we have read, was severely trying. His son Absalom had commenced a powerful rebellion; in consequence of which, he was compelled, with a few faithful followers, to leave Jerusalem, and pass over the brook Kidron towards the way of the wilderness. “And, lo! Zadok also was there, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.”

Here he paused. And here I call upon you to observe him. In such a distressing and perplexing condition, the mind will be “driven with the wind, and tossed,” unless there be some grand principle to anchor it. This Job had. “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” And this David had. His religion aided him. It shone forth in this darkness: it glorified this trouble; and rendered it the occasion of exercising several pious dispositions, which we are going to remark. “And the king said unto

Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." Behold here—his love to devotion—his dependence upon Divine Providence—his submission to the will of God.

I. Observe his ESTIMATION OF DIVINE MEANS AND ORDINANCES. The ark and the tabernacle were much more to him than his throne and his palace. And therefore he only mentions I hose. "Carry back," says he, "the ark of God—if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again"—to my house and my family?—No: but "he will bring me again, and—show me both it and his habitation"—the ark and the tabernacle. Not that he undervalued the privilege of a safe return. Religion is not founded on the destruction of humanity. We are not required to condemn the good things of nature and providence. Indeed, were we to despise them, it would not be possible for us to discover resignation under the loss of them. Then our submission appears, when we know their value, and are capable of relishing them—yet can willingly give them up at the Divine call.

Yea, when we are not sufficiently sensible of our obligations to God for temporal blessings, he often teaches us their value by their loss. In sickness the man has prized health, and has said, How little did I think of the goodness of God, in continuing the blessing so long! If I enjoy it again, "all my bones shall say, who is a God like unto thee?" Were an enemy to invade our shores; were the din of war to drive us from our dwellings, carrying our infants in

our arms; were we oppressed by the exactions of tyranny—we should soon feelingly acknowledge the advantages of national safety, of civil liberty, of wise and good laws. Owing to our present connexions and circumstances, a thousand things demand a share of our attention, and ought to excite our gratitude.

But our attention and our gratitude should be wisely exercised. We should be principally affected with “the unsearchable riches of Christ we should supremely regard our souls, and those spiritual blessings which belong to our everlasting welfare. Minds truly gracious estimate their situations and conveniences in this world by the opportunities they give them of service for God, and of communion with him. Hezekiah asks, in distress, “What is the sign that I shall go up into the house of the Lord?” “One thing,” says David, “have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

Are you like-minded? If you are, you will not suffer a little trouble, or a little expense, to keep you from the house of God. When compelled to abstain from his courts, you will feel your exclusion painful. With a mournful pleasure you will think of the seasons when you went “to the house of God with the voice of joy and gladness.” With longing desire you will ask, “When shall I come and appear before God?”

This will influence servants in the choice of their stations. They will forego a number of advantages, and put up with a number of difficulties, rather than be deprived of the means of grace.

This will actuate the man of property in fixing the

bounds of his habitation. Many persons in leaving off business go down into the country; and looking around them, say—Behold, yonder is a hanging wood—There are beautiful meadows—Here is a fine stream of water. But the Christian would inquire, before he pitched his tent, Is “the tree of life” here? Can I here have access to the “wells of salvation”? Can I “go in and out, and find pasture”?

II. See his FAITH IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE. David views his defeat or his success, his exile or his return, as suspended entirely on the will of God. He does not balance probabilities—“These things are for me, and those are against me. When I think on these circumstances, I feel hope; but when I dwell on those, I tremble. I know the issue turns upon the pleasure of the Almighty. ‘He bringeth down, and he lifteth up. When he giveth peace, then who can make trouble? And when he hideth his face, then who can behold him, whether it be done against a nation, or a man only?’”

Not that he acted the part of an enthusiast, and despised the use of means. This appears obviously from the measures he devised, especially his employing the counsel of Hushai. But while he used means, he did not trust in them. He knew that duty is ours, and that events are the Lord’s. He therefore looks beyond all instruments and second causes, to an Agent, “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”—“If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation.”

David knew it was easy for him to take wisdom from the wise, and courage from the brave; and to confound all his devices.

He knew also, that it was equally easy for God to turn again his captivity. He knew that his wisdom is infinite, his power almighty, his resources endless; he knew that "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." It would be well for us to remember this in our difficulties, and to view a change in our distressing circumstances as turning simply on the will of God. "If he speaks the word, I shall be healed. If he favours my cause, I am released. He 'knows how to deliver.' 'Nothing is too hard for the Lord.' It does not become his people ever to despair. He cannot come too late. Balaam may prepare altars, and offer sacrifices; but how can he 'curse whom God hath not cursed?' Nebuchadnezzar may heat the furnace, and the faithful servants of God may be even thrown in; but the God whom they serve is continually able to deliver them. Had he interposed earlier, the salvation would not have appeared so marvellous and divine. He often makes our extremity his opportunity. 'For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself of his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.'"

III. He professes A FULL ACQUIESCENCE IN THE disposal of THE ALMIGHTY. "But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him." Here are no imprecations of vengeance against seditious subjects, and a rebellious son; no bitter complaints of instruments; no "charging God foolishly no "teaching God knowledge." He falls down at his feet, wishing to be raised up, but willing to remain. He mourns, but he does not murmur.

Thus Eli before him had said, "It is the Lord;

let him do what seemeth him good." And thus his Son and his Lord long after, and almost on the very same spot, exclaimed, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it—thy will be done."

I have been thinking what helped to produce this disposition in David. Now there were two things in himself, and two in God, which promoted this resignation: and I mention them because they ought equally to influence us in our calamities.

There were two things in himself. The one was—a sense of his own unworthiness. A consciousness of our desert is necessary to our submission under the afflictive dispensations of Providence. When this prevails, instead of wondering at our trials, we only wonder at our exemptions and mitigations; and say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." It was thus with David. A recollection of the ungrateful and guilty part which he had acted stopped his mouth, and made him silent in the dust. "I have behaved more undutifully towards my father and my sovereign than ever Absalom did towards his. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him. Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin? Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.'"

The other was—his ignorance. For while the former convinced him that he had no right to choose, this persuaded him that he had no ability. He knew that he had often been deceived; deceived both by

his hopes and fears: that he had desired things which would have been his ruin, and dreaded things which had proved some of his chief mercies; that "the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Hence he referred himself to God, as to one who knew what was best for him, saying, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child."

There were also two things in God which aided this acquiescence. First, his sovereignty. "Has he not a right to do what he will with his own? Did not he find me a poor shepherd? Did not he raise me to the throne?—And if he requires me to lay down the sceptre, and reduces me back again to humble life—he is righteous: his authority is unquestionable. I have nothing that I can call my own: and he can take nothing that is not his."

Secondly, his goodness. The authority of God awes us, and we say,

"Peace, all our angry passions, then;
 Lot each rebellious sigh
 Be silent at his *sovereign will*,
 And every murmur die."

But it is something else that produces the cheerfulness of submission. It is the principle which actuates him—which is love; it is the end he has in view—which is our profit: it is a belief that, however things may be determined, with regard to our feelings—they "shall all work together for our good it is a

conviction that if we suffer, these sufferings are as necessary as the knife to the vine; as the furnace to the gold; as medicine to the body. This, and this alone, can enable us cordially to say, "Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

Let us be followers of David in this holy resignation of ourselves to the pleasure of God. There are two reasons why you should aspire after this state of mind.

First. It will be very advantageous to yourselves. In passing through a vale of tears you must expect to weep; but as you cannot escape afflictions, surely common prudence will lead you to ask, how you are to bear them. Now this acquiescence in the will of God is the preparation of the Gospel of peace, with which you are to be shod. Thus prepared, you may travel on through the wilderness—but what will you do, if barefooted, when you meet with thorns and briars? To vary and enlarge the metaphor—impatience turns the rod into a scorpion. While the yoke presses the neck, patience lines it with down; and enables the man to say, It is good for me to bear it. There is nothing so likely to obtain the removal of your afflictions, as this submissive frame of mind. In chastising a child, what would move you like his yielding; like the ingenuous confession, "My father, I deserve this; and I hope it will be useful to me through life"?—I borrow the image—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoan himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear

the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.”

Secondly. Nothing can be more honourable to religion. To surrender ourselves to the Divine disposal is the purest act of obedience: to subdue our unruly passions, is the greatest instance of heroism. It ennobles the possessor. It renders him a striking character. Nothing is so impressive as the exercise of the passive graces. It carries conviction into the minds of beholders, and forces them to acknowledge that there is a reality, and an excellency—because there is such an efficacy in “the glorious Gospel.” “The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price.”

But you say—Is all this attainable? It is. We readily confess that it is no easy tiling thus to refer ourselves to God; especially in practice. We here see the Christian in his best frame, and in his best moments. But it is practicable—it has been exemplified by thousands of the same nature and infirmities’ with yourselves. It is practicable—I mean, by Divine grace. And this grace is sufficient for you, and is promised to you. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For whoso asketh receiveth; and whoso seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”

We conclude with the remark of an old divine. That we may not complain of the present—let us view God’s hand in all events: and that we may not be afraid of the future—let us view all events in God’s hand. Amen.

DISCOURSE XXII.

THE CHILD JESUS.

[CHRISTMAS.]

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” ISAIAH ix. 6.

To “him gave all the prophets witness.” But what testimony was ever borne him like this?—Here we have a prediction at once the most clear in its application, the most glorious in its contents, the most consolatory in its design. And the return of this day renders it peculiarly seasonable. Let us therefore indulge ourselves in a few reflections—upon his Incarnation—his Empire—and his Names.

I. WE HAVE HERE HIS COMING IN THE FLESH.
“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.”

It is remarkable, that all this should be spoken of as *present*. In the time of Isaiah, the event could only be prophecy—but it is proclaimed as history. The Church of those days could only have *expected* this blessing; but they mention it as *actually enjoyed*

—a child *is* born: a son *is* given! Purpose and execution, promise and accomplishment, are the same with God. “One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” The divisions of time which with us mark the past, the present, and the future, are nothing to him, whose being is one continual now, and who says of himself, “I AM is my name, and this is my memorial in all generations.” And faith, uniting us to God, elevates us into his views, and makes us partakers of his excellences: “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

But for whom is this blessing designed? Who are authorized to say. Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a son is given? The persons to whom he was immediately sent were “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” “He came first unto his own, and his own received him not.” This was not, however, universally the case. There were some “who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem.” Simeon, Anna, and others, eagerly embraced him as “the consolation of Israel.” Some, affected by his preaching and miracles, also believed in him. All his first followers and his twelve Apostles also were Jews. Since then, an awful blindness has happened to this singular people: and “even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

But he was to be a more general blessing. “It is a light thing,” says God, “that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore

the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." And hence the angel said to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be *to all people*." None therefore are excluded from hope on this blessed occasion. He is come to die for the *ungodly*, for *enemies*, for *sinner*s. Surely here is a sufficient warrant for personal and universal application to him. Unto you—and you—and you—"is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord!" Some indeed will not eventually derive salvation from him: but he himself has assigned the reason, and beyond this we should not go: "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life." If people spurn the remedy, we need not inquire why they are not cured.

But what is the benefit acknowledged? Unto us "a child is born," unto us a "son is given." And is there any thing wonderful in this? Do we not hear of this every day? Is it not the privilege of almost every family?—And is there indeed nothing wonderful in the birth of an infant? How marvellous is the union of soul and body! What a mysterious thing is human life! How admirable the provision made to relieve its wants, to support its weakness, and to rear its tender years!

The birth of any infant is a far greater event than the production of the sun. The sun is only a lump of senseless matter: it sees not its own light; it feels not its own heat; and, with all its grandeur, it will cease to be: but that infant beginning only to breathe yesterday, is possessed of reason—claims a principle

infinitely superior to all matter—and will live through the ages of eternity!

But this child is all prodigy. He is miraculously conceived; and horn of a virgin. His coming “shakes the heaven, and the earth, the sea, and the dry land.” For what other child did ever the heavens assume a new star? Wise men come from the east? Angels descend from glory? Ye rulers of the earth, “I said, ye are gods but, with all your pride and vanity, at the birth of your first-born son—the stars roll on in their courses—angels pursue their work—the festivity is confined to human beings, and to a small circle of them—neighbouring countries scarcely hear of it.

What are other children at twelve years of age? The mind is only beginning to open; the ideas are trifling and unarranged; it is the transition from foolish into intelligent. Behold this child, when twelve years old, doing his heavenly Father’s business; sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. After this he went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto his own parents. And here a large proportion of his life is concealed from our view. We only know that he received no learned education, and have reason to believe that he laboured with his own hands; for in one place he is called “the carpenter.” But when he appeared in public, he spake “as never man spake.” He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He cast out devils. “He went about doing good.” “He died for our sins: he rose for our justification.” And he “entered into his glory, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and

every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." What a gift was here! But this brings us,

II. TO CONSIDER HIS EMPIRE: "The government shall be upon his shoulder." The utmost that a child can be born to is to fill a throne; and we deem this an enviable honour. But if he should be fortunate enough to reach the pre-eminence, what a short time does he hold the sceptre, before it drops from his feeble hand by decays of nature, or is forced from his grasp by the effects of violence! But the child Jesus is decreed a permanent, unchangeable authority: "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

And over what a molehill does the most extensive worldly monarch reign! The Babe lying in the manger claims unbounded empire. There is not a being in the universe but is either his subject, or his slave. He has "the keys of hell and of death." All the affairs of this world are under his management. Nothing occurs by chance. "It is he that determines concerning a nation, and concerning a people," to establish, or to destroy; to enlarge, or to diminish. They are all in his hands but "as clay in the hands of the potter." He is "King of kings and Lord of lords." They are amenable to his authority; they rule by his permission; they are controlled by his power. He girds them and guides them, though they know

him not. As far as they move in the direction of his purpose, they are invincible; when they oppose it, a straw checks and overthrows them. He is peculiarly King in Zion, he is "a Prince" as well as "a Saviour" to his people. They that know his name not only trust in him, but submit themselves to him. And their submission is natural and cheerful, because he puts his laws into their minds, and writes them in their hearts. While they obey his commands, they also acquiesce in his dispensations. To him they refer all their temporal concerns, and are willing that he should choose their inheritance for them. Thus he has a kingdom within a kingdom; a kingdom of grace within the kingdom of his providence—and the one is subservient to the other. "He is head over all things unto the Church, which is his body." He has every thing necessary for the defence of his people and the success of his cause. Therefore this "King shall reign and prosper. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed."

Much has been said on the subject of government, and volumes have been written to ascertain the prerogative of princes and the duties of subjects. While men are depraved beings, absolute power lodged in the hands of an individual would be dangerous. Authority must therefore be limited; one part of government must be a balance to another; and laws must be placed above men. But could a governor

be found perfect in wisdom and goodness, who in all cases knew what was proper to be done, and would be always inclined to do it, *his* power could not be too absolute, nor *his* authority too uncontrolled. Such a being is the Lord Jesus—and therefore he is “the blessed and only Potentate; and has all power given unto him in heaven and in earth.”

But where does this government, thus all his own, rest? “Upon his shoulder.” This may appear to some a coarse image. Ancient poetry, however, has beautified it by representing a man bearing upon his shoulders the pillars of the universe. But what was this fabled Atlas? The world with all its concerns really depends on the Redeemer—he “upholdeth all things by the word of his power.” And government upon the shoulder is significant: it implies burden; difficulty. It cannot be administered without much labour and care. And this is one reason among others why we are commanded “to pray for kings, and for all that are in authority.” Who can need our prayers so much?—What a charge devolves upon a parent when Providence puts into his hands a living mercy, and says, “Take this child and nurse it for me: I constitute thee its governor, and at thy hands will I require it”! What an awful task has the tutor of youth! What a weighty undertaking has the pastor of a congregation!—But think of the affairs of a kingdom!! Ask the rulers of this world, whether government be an easy and an enviable concern. How distracted is the head that wears a crown! “I am not able,” says Solomon, “to go in and out before so great a people.” “I am not able,” says Moses, “to bear all this people hence he had assistants provided him. The weight of government is too much

for one person, and therefore it is divided among many. A king has his council, his ministers, his officers. He cannot be all eye, all ear, all hand; he therefore avails himself of the eyes, the ears, and hands of others, lint the King of saints stands in need of no help: infinite as his empire is, he manages the amazing whole without fatigue, and without perplexity.

III. LET US REVIEW HIS NAMES. Names are designed to distinguish, to describe, and to honour. In common, a single name is sufficient for a single individual. Human excellences and accomplishments are rare and solitary. One man attends to the stars, and we call him an astronomer; a second is skilled in the species of plants, and we call him a botanist; a third speaks well, and we call him an orator. The name generally sums up all the claims of each. But what a number, and what a variety of sublime titles are employed to show forth the praises of our Lord and Saviour!—"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Bather, The Prince of Peace!"

First. He is *Wonderful*. He is so principally in the constitution of his person. Here we see combined Deity and humanity; finite and infinite; all-sufficiency and omnipotence, weariness and want. This is "the great mystery of godliness" which will for ever employ the admiration of the redeemed—"God was manifest in the flesh. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Indeed his whole history appears to be unparalleled. His manner of life; his mode of teaching; his death,

his resurrection; his dealings with his people in providence and grace—are all marvellous.

Secondly. He is *Counsellor*. He appears for us in court. He is “our Advocate with the Father.” And while he pleads our cause above, he guides our affairs below. In “him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” He is the source of all spiritual knowledge. “I am come,” said he, “a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. Counsel is mine!” Yes, blessed Redeemer! every wrong step we have taken through life has been occasioned by our disregarding thy instructions. To thee may we henceforth bring all the difficulties we feel with regard to doctrine and duty, experience and practice, our condition and our circumstances; and daily and hourly may we ask, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Thirdly. His name shall be called “*The mighty God*.” And he would not be called so unless he were so. Unless he were ‘so, the attributes which are essential to Deity would not be the properties of his nature, and we should never have read of him in the Scriptures of truth as knowing all things, as omnipotent, as everywhere present, as eternal. Unless he were so, the works which are peculiar to Deity could never have been performed by him, nor the worship which is peculiar to Deity be claimed for him and rendered to him. We do not here consider this doctrine controversially: it stands in a situation which shows its importance, and the connexion it has with the experience and hope of believers. Thus he is mighty to save; no case, however desperate, with regard to ourselves and creatures, can be too hard for him. This principle enters into all his offices. It gives infinite value to his righteousness, and effi-

cacy to his death. It renders all he does for us and in us Divine.

Fourthly. He is "*The everlasting Father* or, as it is better rendered, "The Father of the everlasting age." So the gospel dispensation is described, as being final with regard to this world, and in distinction from the temporary economy of the Jews. It is the meaning of the Apostle, when he says, "And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." And hence he adds; "We," who embrace the gospel, "we receive a kingdom which cannot be moved." And hence the angel which John saw flying in the midst of heaven had the "everlasting gospel to preach" unto them that dwell upon the earth. Of this dispensation he is the Author, the Founder. It is derived entirely from him; and, therefore, in the language of a Jew, he is the "Father" of it. Hence, real Christians are considered as his children—"Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." And again, "He shall see his seed." They derive their new and holy being from his word and Spirit; and they resemble him: they are "changed into the same image from glory to glory." And as he is the Father of the everlasting age, so he is "the everlasting Father the relation subsisting between him and his family can never be dissolved; his offspring can never be orphans.

Finally. He is "*The Prince of Peace*." And of all kinds of peace. Peace above us—by reconciling us to God. Peace around us—by reconciling us to our fellow-creatures, destroying our pride and envy, and inspiring us with humility and benevolence. Peace within us—by reconciling us to ourselves: not

to our sins—but to our remedy, our dependence, our duty, our condition. When this takes place, the troubled conscience is calmed; the tumultuous passions cease from their raging; tormenting fears and distracting anxieties give way; we are careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication we make known our requests unto God, and “the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

It was thus that he addressed his sorrowing disciple’s when he was departing from them: “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” And remember, that there is no peace worth having but his. The ungodly and the people of the world may be insensible of their danger; they may banish reflection from their minds; they may live in what they call pleasure, and say to their soul. Take thine ease—but “There is *no peace*, saith my God, unto the wicked.” But Jesus procures, reveals, produces a peace the most valuable. “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up all their wounds.” Ye weary and heavy laden—let your burdens be what they may—go to him—he will “*give you rest: and his rest shall be glorious.*”

Such is the Saviour, whose arrival in our world we this day celebrate. And what think you of him? I know what some think of him. There are some who have this morning by faith embraced the newborn Messiah, with a rapture expressive of this language; “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his

salvation." They no longer feel a void within: they no longer rove, asking, "Who will show us any good?" They have found the pearl of great price. His character and his claims have fixed and filled their minds. The manger, the cross, and the throne—these are their attractions. Here they feel obligations the most solemn and pleasing; here they find consolation the most refreshing and pure. It is here they can live, it is here they can die. Here it is that they can say, with David, "Thou art fairer than the children of men;"—with the Church, "Yea, he is altogether lovely;"—with the Apostle, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord!"

But what do *you* think of him? Has he "no form nor comeliness; no beauty that you should desire him"? Do you feel no love to his Name? Do you never pray, "Lord, save, or I perish"?—What then are we to think of you? What are we to think of the blindness of your understandings, and of the depravity of your affections? Indifferent to him?—What are we to think of your regard to your own safety and happiness? Can you find salvation in any other? What will you do without him when you come to die? How will you appear before him when he is seated on his great white throne?

For—once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and "to them that look for him will he appear a second time, without sin unto salvation." See the Babe of Bethlehem, the Judge of all! "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand

when he appeareth!" Happy those who loved and followed him "in the regeneration"! He will receive them to himself, "that where he is there they may be also."

"But where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

DISCOURSE XXIII.

THE DESIGN OF OUR SAVIOUR'S COMING.

[CHRISTMAS.]

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

MATT. i. 21.

IT is a wonderful event which we have this day been called to commemorate. The fulness of time is lived: the prophecies are accomplished: the promises are fulfilled: the expectations of the Church are realized: “the desire of all nations” is come—and we have been with the shepherds at Bethlehem, and have seen “the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger.”

For what purpose has the Son of God assumed our nature, and in circumstances of the deepest humiliation entered our world? A new star has graced his birth: “wise men” have travelled from the East to do him homage; “and a multitude of the heavenly host have praised God and said, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!” Thus heaven and earth have borne witness to the importance of this event. But wherein

does the importance of it appear? By what title answerable to his character shall we acknowledge him? Wherein lies our concern with him? And why are we so interested in his birth as to make it the subject of our greatest joy?

Let us call to mind the address of the angel to Joseph, when he announced his conception of the Virgin Mary—"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Here is a "name above every name:" a name which "is as ointment poured forth"—it is JESUS. This name was not only given by the order of God, but explained by the same order. Jesus signifies Saviour. But this name was not peculiar to him—others had worn it. The Hebrew name which answers to Jesus is Joshua; and two persons had this name expressly given them under the Old Testament: the commander who succeeded Moses; and the high priest concerned in the building of the second temple. The Levites also in the days of Nehemiah confess to God; "According to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them *saviours*, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies." Such a saviour was Gideon and Samson; with many others.

The name then is common; but not the reason of the imposition—"For he shall save his people from their sins." As if he had said—"Others have been called saviours because they had rescued the body: they were temporal deliverers; they saved the Jews from the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Midianites. But this child is called a Saviour for a nobler reason—he rescues the soul—he is an eternal Deliverer. 'He saves his people from their sins.'"

By this explanation, the angel not only distinguishes Jesus from every ether saviour, but opposes the favourite prejudices of the nation to which he belonged. The Jews expected a Messiah who should be called a Saviour; but by this name they understood a hero, a conqueror who should break the civil yoke, free them from the tyranny of Rome, and if not load them to universal empire, at least restore them to all their original dignity in their own land. "But, O ye Jews," says the Angel, "the Saviour is come to restore you, not to an earthly Canaan, but a bettor, even a heavenly country. He is come to deliver you, not from civil bondage, but from spiritual slavery: not from Cæsar, but Satan. He is come to save you from your greatest enemies; and these are—not the Romans—but *your sins*."

Let us not pass over this. Jesus came, not to suggest improvements in agriculture; plans of commerce; theories of civil policy. He left the governments of the world as he found them: these are things which fall within the reach of our wisdom to devise, and our power to accomplish.—But who could save a soul from sin?

Let us, I. CONSIDER SIN AS AN ENEMY. And, II. SEE IN WHAT MANNER THE SAVIOUR DELIVERS US FROM IT.

We talk of enemies. What should we think of an adversary, who, filled with malice, and armed with power, should invade our country, ravage our fields, destroy our cottages and mansions, our palaces and temples; who should despoil us of our goods, tear us from our families, deprive us of our liberty, and lead us away in irons, to terminate a wretched existence in a dungeon or a mine! And oh! were a

deliverer to arise to crush the foe, and to save the captives—how should we prize him! If he had suffered in the struggle, his wounds would be deemed scars of honour. When the ear heard him, it would bless him; and when the eye saw him, it would give witness to him. Our very children, made familiar with the story, would never see him pass along without exclaiming, “Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!” But this enemy would be a friend, compared with sin: and such a deliverer, therefore, would be nothing, compared with the Saviour of sinners. How is it then that we feel so much indifference towards him; that we are not continually uttering the memory of his great goodness! that we are not daily praying, “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory!” It is because—we do not believe the enemy to be so dreadful. The reason is—that we entertain slight notions of sin. To judge of the importance of a remedy, it is necessary to know the malignity of the disease: to ascertain the claims of a benefactor to our gratitude and love, it is necessary for us to know the evils from which he delivers us.

Every thing turns upon this. If sin be our worst enemy, it is easy to prove that he who saves us from it is our best friend. Let us then look at sin, and take three or four views of its evil and malignity.

Behold sin *with regard to God*. That must be the greatest evil, which is most opposite to the greatest good. In forming our estimate of sin, we are not to judge of it so much by the relation it bears to us, or to our fellow-creatures, as by its relation to God; for against *Him* it is committed; and every sin strikes at God as much as if no other being was affected by

it; and notwithstanding its fatal effects with regard to mankind, we may say to God, of every transgression, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Sin is enmity against God; against his attributes; against his government. God never yet revealed a design which sin has not withstood; nor gave a command which sin has not trampled under foot. Sin deposes God from his sovereignty, abuses his goodness, abhors his holiness, vilifies his wisdom, insults and denies his omniscience, his justice, and his power. And hence nothing is so offensive to God. It is called the "abominable thing which he hates." And we read that he is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." It is a metaphor, taken from a person who has such a, perfect abhorrence of a thing, that he cannot bear the sight; the very thought of it shocks him. This is that which renders man, though the work of his hands, filthy and abominable; and constrains even the God of love, the Father of mercies, to say, concerning him, "The wicked shall not stand in my sight, I hate all the workers of iniquity."

Behold sin in its *names*. For what term is there, expressive of reproach or misery; what image is there, that can produce aversion or fear; that is not employed by the Scriptures to represent sin? Sin! it is disobedience: it is rebellion: it is treason: it is murder: "it is the work of the devil." Sin! it is ignorance: it is folly: it is madness. Sin! it is blindness: it is deafness: it is dumbness: it is sickness: it is poison: it is slavery: it is plague: it is death: it is hell! Now, as it is said of Nabal, "as the name is, so is the man;" the same may be observed of sin: as the name is, so is the thing. Sin

is not libelled by any of these dreadful representations; they are all given us by One who perfectly understands sin, and they fall infinitely short of the subject. For if we compare sin with other evils, it will be found substantially to contain them all, and to be the cause of all. This is the fountain which has imbittered all our streams, and the seed which has so thickly sown the world with wretchedness.

Behold therefore again the *effects* of sin. How different is man from what he was originally!—But sin has made this change. Sin has stripped him of his glory, and taken the crown from his head: “woe unto us that we have sinned!”

Observe the soul of man—it is sin that has debased it, defiled it, robbed it of the image, and banished it from the presence of God—it is this that has filled it with confusion and regrets—it is this that has produced unruly passions, tormenting anxieties, a terrified conscience, a wounded spirit.

Take the body of man. This was once all immortal, without a defect, a disease, a danger. But “by sin death entered into the world,” and was crowned “king of terrors.” And now “man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” At his birth he enters a labyrinth of thorns and briers, and cannot move without “piercing himself through with many sorrows.” Even every comfort has its cross, and every blessing its curse. And how little of the misery of the world comes under our observation! Oh! could we witness all the pains of the diseased at this moment: could we behold all the effects of war, pestilence, and famine! Could we see the bones of all the human race, from the death of Abel to this very hour, piled into one immense heap

—oh! what could we think of an enemy capable of producing such mischief as this!

Behold Adam and Eve, expelled from Paradise. Behold the Deluge, sweeping away “the world of the ungodly.” Behold Sodom and Gomorrah, “set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” See the plagues of Egypt; the destruction of the former inhabitants of Canaan; the dispersion and misery of the Jews, a people once dear to God—in all these instances, the evil of sin is brought down to a level with our senses. And it is sin also that has reduced the material creation to vanity, and doomed it to a general conflagration. As, under the Law, the very house of the leper was to be pulled down, so it is with regard to this world. You say, Can trees, and valleys, and hills, and skies, be criminal? No; but they have been the unconscious instruments of the sinner’s guilt, they have been contaminated by his use of them, and the day of God cometh wherein “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up.”

Thus far we have traced the effects of sin down through the history of *this* world. But there is another world that has been running parallel with this, and which will continue when this is no more. And here the consequences of sin most tremendously appear.

Enter it and see. The first thing that strikes you, is the fall of an innumerable multitude of superior beings, hurled down from heaven—What roused the vengeance which pursues them with such severity? What is it that, in a moment, could transform angels

into devils! A little of that envy, that pride, that independence of spirit, which you think nothing of—"he spared not the angels that *sinned*, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."—And what place is that, "the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up for ever and ever"? Sin built hell; sin produced "the worm that never dies sin kindled "the fire that never shall be quenched." Oh! could you lay down your ear, and hear sin spoken of in its proper dialect, by the old sons of perdition! What do you suppose Judas now says of betraying his master for thirty pieces of silver; Saul, of persecuting David; Cain, of killing his brother Abel! But all this regards the present degrees of their misery, not its future continuance.

Hence, you must contemplate sin in the threatenings of the Scripture. Oh! read and tremble. Bead of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power"—read of a doom which I hope you will never hear—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now I reason thus, and a child can understand me—If God can righteously threaten all this misery, he can also righteously inflict it; and if he can righteously inflict such misery, sin must deserve it—and if sin deserves it—deserves such punishment!—how is it possible for us to think too highly of its guilt!!

There is yet another way of judging of the evil of sin; and it is—by considering the means employed to remove it. Now there was only one Being in the universe equal to this work—the Lord of life and glory. By no other hand could this enemy fall: a thousand

attempts had been made—but the victory was reserved for him.

And there are two things here worthy our remark.

The first is, That he derives from this work his highest title. His name is the memorial of this achievement; he will henceforth be known through all worlds as the Conqueror of sin! And therefore we find, that though he is a Creator and Preserver, yet he is adored under the character of a Saviour, by all the saints on earth, and by all the angels in heaven. “Worthy is the *Lamb that was slain* to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” “Unto him that loved us, and *washed us from, our sins* in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

And the second is. That even in this glorious Personage, who alone was adequate to the undertaking, it required something peculiar and extraordinary to accomplish it. He does not deliver a sinner as he performed his other works. In order to *save*—he must be humbled and exalted—he must descend from heaven to earth—and ascend from earth to heaven.

Let us enter into this, and, II. Consider IN WHAT MANNER HE SAVES HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS. Now he accomplishes their deliverance by price—and thus he redeems: and by power—and thus he renews: in other words, by his cross and by his grace.

To save us, he must suffer: by the shedding of his blood we are ransomed, and by his death we live. The case is this: where the command of the law is broken, the curse of the law enters. Sin renders man obnoxious to punishment; and this punishment is as

certain as the justice and the truth of God can make it. Now we had sinned, and therefore must have suffered—had not the Saviour become our surety, and our substitute. But he, standing in our place, became answerable for us; “he has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us.” Thus it is said, the Lord “laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And how was it laid upon him—but by way of expiation? And for what purpose was it laid upon him—but that we might be released from a load which would have sunk us to the lowest hell? Hence it is said, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” In this sense he is so often said to “die for us”—not only for *our good*, but *in our place* and *as our victim*. How else could he have fulfilled the types under the Law? We are assured from the writings of the New Testament, especially from the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the daily and annual sacrifices offered by the Jews were typical of Christ: but if they typified him at all, it must have been in his death; and if they typified any thing in his death, it must have been the atonement which it made. They could not typify, in him, the death of a martyr, sealing his doctrine with his blood; or the death of an exemplar, illustrating the virtues which he had taught. These views of his death are true as far as they go; but they did not go far enough to reach the main thing, the thing which God determined from the foundation of the world to render prominent in his death, and which the Church has so beautifully expressed in these words—“He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the

chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

And thus it is that he saves us from the guilt of sin. But, to take a full view of this part of the subject, it is necessary to observe, that by his atonement he not only removes guilt from the view of God, but also takes it from off the mind. For it is here alone that we find effectual relief. That which appeases God's wrath, can alone appease the sinner's conscience. This blood, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, addresses both God and the sinner—it says to the one, "Forbear to strike and to the other, "Be encouraged to hope." It answers all that justice has to say in a way of claim, and unbelief in a way of objection. Thus by believing "we enter into rest. Our fears and jealousies subside; we draw near to God with humble confidence, and feel "a peace which passeth all understanding."

But to know whether our relief be really peace, or nothing more than ease—it is necessary to consider, not only how it is obtained, but by what it is accompanied. The peace he gives has purity *with* it, yea, purity *in* it. Those whom he redeems, he sanctifies; those whom he pardons, he renews. And hence you read of our being "saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

In attending to this process, let us remember, that he always saves us from the *love* of sin. Here is the difference between moral reformation and evangelical conversion. In the one, sin is avoided; but in the other, it is abhorred. For sin may be shunned where it is still loved; and the retreating sinner may look back, like Lot's wife, and bewail the idols he has been forced to leave. Am I addressing none who know

what it is to forsake sin, only from a regard to reputation, from the influence of connexions, and the fear of consequences? Would you not rejoice if God would take off the restraint, and allow you to live as you please? Would you not feel grateful towards him if he would permit you to live in sin, and not die in sorrow? Blessing him for the indulgence, would you not go forth, free and easy, and say, "Well, no longer will I be detained from worldly dissipation—my heart has been always in it. No longer will I avoid slander—I always found it the salt which gave a relish to conversation. I will now grind the faces of the poor, and debase myself even to hell, to get wealth—I loved money equally well before; but it was dreadful to think that no covetous man, who is an idolater, should have any inheritance in the kingdom of God—but now I can be covetous here, and safe hereafter"?

Turn we to the Christian. Of the Redeemer's subjects it is said, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power and among other things, he is willing to part with sin—with all sin—with even his dearest sins. His present hatred is greater than his former love. He now sees, not only what sin has cost him, but also what it cost the Redeemer. "Can I ever call that sweet, which he found so bitter; or deem that light, which he found so heavy? Can I ever be a friend to his enemy?—to a monster that killed *him* who is all my salvation, and all my desire?" A Christian may be surprised by sin, but he can never be reconciled to it. He has sworn eternal hatred against it—and he took the oath under the cross.

But is this all? Is he held in bondage by a tyrant he detests? No. Jesus opens the prison to them

that are bound. He saith to the prisoners. Go forth. Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the Law, but under grace. Thus sin is dethroned—not only in the heart, but also in the life. By the influence of his Holy Spirit, he increasingly mortifies their corruptions, and enables them to “lay aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, and as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.” The means of grace are now prized; and as they are used with a humble dependence and a holy purpose, they are not used in vain. In waiting upon the Lord, their “strength is renewed; they mount up with wings, as eagles; they run, and are not weary, and they walk, and are not faint.” Losses and trials, and all the dispensations of Providence, are now also under a gracious agency, and are made to “work together for their good.”

But while the reign of sin is thus destroyed, the remains of it continue: and these are deplored and felt by the Christian as his greatest distress. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” In these circumstances, two things relieve his mind, and animate him in the warfare. The one is, that his Saviour is “able to keep him from falling and the other is, that “he will present him faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.” Then will he shake himself from all his dust, and “put on his beautiful garments” of complete holiness. What a blissful change! When he examines himself, he can find no ignorance, no pride, no unbelief, no weakness—He is become a part of a “glorious Church, and has no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!”

But this respects only the soul—yonder still lies the poor body. Death is the consequence of sin: and while the body is in the grave, the believer is not saved from all the natural effects of sin. But Jesus comes—"the resurrection and the life. He will change this vile body, that it maybe fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Now behold the work of the Saviour perfectly accomplished, and the deliverance of his people absolutely complete. Behold him "delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father," and hear him saying, "All these I engaged to save from their sins; and, lo! they are all sinless."

To conclude. Let us observe, First, If his name be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins, how awfully deceived are those who hope to be saved in them! And yet, a degree of this confidence too commonly prevails. There are few indeed but entertain some expectation of going to heaven when they die, however unholy they may live. Hence, though conscious that they love sin, and indulge themselves in the practice of it, they feel nothing like despair or distress. But upon what principle is your hope founded? Did you never read that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord? Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Did the Saviour come to give you a licence to sin with impunity? His coming was designed to make sin appear "exceeding sinful his aim, as you have heard, was to save us from it. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. For this purpose the Son of God was

manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And what notion have you of salvation, unaccompanied with a deliverance from sin? This is like saving a man from drowning, by keeping him under the water which is destroying him; or like recovering a man from sickness, by leaving him under the malady which constitutes the complaint. Were it possible for you to be pardoned and not sanctified, you could enjoy no communion with God, and God could derive no service from you; you would remain strangers to peace and pleasure; and the cause of your misery would be left behind. Sin and sorrow are inseparable. God himself cannot separate them: he can only destroy the one by removing the other. He makes men happy by making them holy.

Besides these thoughtless creatures whom I have mentioned, there are some who are more systematically wrong with regard to this subject. They profess to glory in the Saviour's cross, but they will have nothing to do with his sceptre. His righteousness is their darling theme; but they mean by it—a fine robe to cover a filthy back. They are fond of the assurance of faith; but they intend by it a speculative persuasion of their safety, underived from and unconnected with any gracious operations and qualities, as evidences. They consider it as a species of unbelief even to question their being the people of God; but they retain the love of the world in their hearts, and discover the same unsubdued tempers as others. They think it would be wrong to allow sin either to distress or alarm them—sin cannot hurt a believer—indeed sin has not the same evil when found in them, as when found in others: "he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel!"

This error docs not, like many others, arise from mere ignorance. And therefore the apostle Jude calls those who hold it "ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness." And they would do well to remember that another Apostle says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." And the Saviour himself says, "But these mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." The character here given of the Lord's people is, that they are saved from their sins: and this is what every truly awakened soul desires.

Therefore, Secondly, Here is relief and consolation for those who are sensible of the evil of sin, and are asking, "What must I do to be saved?" Though deliverance appears so unspeakably desirable, you feel that you are wholly unable to accomplish it yourselves. Nothing in your sufferings, or doings, can wash away the pollution, or subdue the influence of sin. Such despair as this makes way for the hope of the Gospel. The convictions, which you feel so painful and alarming, are necessary, to enable you to perceive the meaning, and to feel the importance of this glorious dispensation. And these also prepare you to welcome the approach of such a peculiar Saviour. So that to you it is not only "a faithful saying," but "worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners." Open, then, your hearts, and let me pour into them the delightful message—"Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord!" He is come to "seek and to save that which was lost." He is come that you "might have life, and that you might

have it more abundantly." "The Sun of righteousness is arisen with healing under his wings." Exercise faith upon him. In him there is plenteous redemption. He is now asking, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Let not the nature or the number of your transgressions keep you from him. For what is he come—but to save us from our sins? If you do not think yourselves too good, he does not think you too bad to be saved by him. Throw yourselves at his feet, and say, "O Lord, undertake for me—'Save me, and I shall be saved; heal me, and I shall be healed; for thou art my praise.'"

Finally. What should be the feelings of those who are already saved by him?—To you, all this is more than speculation: it is experience. You were once "in the bondage of corruption;" but "the Son has made you free; and you are free indeed." Not that you are freed from all service and obedience—but you now obey, and serve a Master whose "yoke is easy, and whose burden is light." From such an obligation you do not wish to be delivered. You can never forget what great things he has done for you. You acknowledge his goodness in saving you from indigence, from accidents, from diseases, from "wicked and unreasonable men"—but, above all, you bless him for "turning you away from your iniquities."

Thus delivered out of the hand of your enemies, see that you "serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of your life." Feel your engagements to him. Let the impressions of gratitude become every day more powerful. And to a wondering, or a despising world, say, with the Apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us; be-

cause we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which lived should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

DISCOURSE XXIV.

THE UNION OF PRAYER AND WATCHFULNESS.

“Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night.” NEH. iv. 9.

IN this mode of defence we have an example worthy of our imitation. It is equally expressive of piety and prudence; of dependence upon God, and the use of means.

And such a union as this is equally pleasing and profitable. It forms the man, and the Christian. It blends duty and privilege together. It keeps our devotion from growing up into rank enthusiasm; and our diligence from sinking into the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God.

Let us not imagine that the force of this example is inapplicable to us. What did our Saviour say to his disciples in the garden? “*Watch and pray*, lest ye enter into temptation”—the very thing here exemplified by Nehemiah and his brethren: “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night.” Besides, one of the most common and striking images by which the

life of the Christian is held forth is that of a warfare. A warfare we find it to be—"Without are fightings, and within are fears." Like these builders, we also are opposed by various classes of enemies who labour to hinder our work, and are always endeavouring to get an advantage over us. What then can be more reasonable than to betake ourselves to *prayer* and *vigilance*?

I. Let us MAKE OUR PRAYER TO God. On him let us place our reliance; and bring all our perplexities, afflictions, and wants, and spread them before his throne. Nothing can be done without prayer.

Prayer is recommended by God himself—"Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

The very exercise of prayer is useful. It calms the mind; it drives back our fears; it strengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees.

Prayer is the forming of a confederacy with God, and bringing down the Almighty to our assistance: and

"Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees."

He knows that he cannot contend with Omnipotence; but he will never be afraid to meet you alone, however you may be armed. He will never be afraid to engage you in the field, if he can keep you out of the closet. This then is our wisest course, because it is our safest—not to encounter the enemy single-handed, but, when we are in danger of any sin, feel any rising passion, or perceive any approaching temptation—to say, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Here is a foe, and I feel my weakness and my ignorance—

O come to my succour; inspire me with strength; teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. 'O Lord, haste thee to help me!'

For, let us remember, that every thing is under his control; and, according as we please or offend him, according as he interposes in our favour or refuses his aid, we fail or prosper. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Does a nation dispense with God, and place their proud dependence on natural and acquired resources? He can lead away their counsellors spoiled, and make their Judges fools." He speaks, and the tempest roars—and a navy sinks in "the mighty waters." He sends sickness: a general is laid by—and his absence occasions the destruction of a whole army, and the devastation of a whole country.

Does a man in trade dispense with God, and rely upon the wisdom of his own understanding, the power of his own arm, or the claim he has on the friendship of others?—How easily can God convince him of his dependence upon Providence! He can touch an invisible spring, and a thousand occurrences are in motion: the man wonders to find his plans crossed, his hopes disappointed. It matters not what begets—he gets nothing. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put into a bag with holes." Or he may succeed—but his prosperity will destroy him. The God he disregards stands by, and, as he drinks the poison, says, "Let him alone." He

would be rich without consulting God—and he *is* rich—and falls “into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

Surely a Christian does not think of going on without God! Generally and habitually, he does not. “Without me,” says the Saviour, “ye can do nothing;” and the believer is convinced of this—but not so much as he ought to be; and sometimes he seems entirely to forget the conviction. Let us take an instance. When our Lord forewarned Peter of his danger, Peter deemed the premonition needless—“Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended; though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny.” And he was sincere. But though warm, he was not wise. He was not aware of his own weakness. He did not consider how differently he would feel in new circumstances: he did not apprehend that a little curiosity would bring him into company, and company into danger; and that the impertinence of a maid servant would induce him to “curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.” Had he prayed, where he presumed—had he said, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest my frame, and rememberest that I am dust; I bless thee for the merciful caution; ‘hold thou me up, and I shall be safe,’”—he would have triumphed, where he fell: and have been—not an instance of the weakness of human nature, but of the power of Divine grace. Let his injury prove our security. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall.” “Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct

thy paths." "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

But what is the dependence upon God which we recommend? It is wise, it is cautious, it is active. And if vigilance be nothing without prayer, prayer is nothing without vigilance. We must therefore,

II. SET A WATCH, BECAUSE OF OUR ENEMIES, NIGHT AND DAY. For the help God affords is not designed to favour indolence, but to encourage exertion; and in his wisdom he has connected the means and the end together: and therefore to expect the end, without the use of the means, is nothing but presumption.

If people would exercise the same common sense in religion which they discover in the ordinary affairs of life, it would save them from a thousand mistakes. Behold the husbandman. He knows that God gives the increase—but he also knows *how* he gives it—and therefore manures, and ploughs, and sows, and weeds. His reliance upon God tells him that favourable seasons and influences are necessary, to raise and ripen the corn—but he is never guilty of such folly as to go forth at harvest, and expect to reap where he has not sown. Yet such is the folly of many with regard to religious things. Such is the folly of a man who complains he does not profit by the word—but never tries to impress his mind with the importance of the duty in which he is going to engage; never hears with attention and application; never retires to review what he has heard, and to make it his own. Does the word of God operate like a clmrm, so that it is equally the same whether a man ho awake or asleep? Such is the folly of a man who

complains that his children are not religious, when he knows that he never trained “them up in the way they should go never prayed with, them; never instructed them early in the principles of the Gospel; never placed before them a good example in his own temper and life. Such is the folly of those heads of families who complain of servants—not considering that kind affections, expressions, and actions, can only be returned where they are received—that a harsh, unfeeling, tyrannical master; that a haughty, niggardly, scolding mistress—can never be served by cordial attention, and cheerful obedience. By failing in their duty to their dependents, they set the consciences of their dependents easy in the breach of duty to them. A poor man may talk of casting all his care upon God, and sing, Jehovah jireh—“the Lord will provide,” as long as he please; but if he become idle, wandering about from house to house; if he omit opportunities of exertion, and lives beyond his income—let such a man remember, that he tempts God, but does not trust him—an inspired Apostle says, “if any man also will not work, neither shall he eat.” God knows our dispositions, and hence he is prepared to advise us—and he has commanded us “not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” If we disregard this admonition, and form irreligious alliances—all the devotion in the world will never remedy the mischief or prevent the misery.

He then who, while he lives carelessly and indifferently, hopes to be delivered from evil merely by prayer, is only “sporting himself with his own deceivings.” He who enjoined prayer, never intended to make it the “sacrifice of fools.” Prayer, when unac-

rompnnied by a corresponding course of action, is trilling with God; and prayer, when contradicted by our practice, is insulting God to his face.

And therefore, not only be prayerful, but “sober and vigilant.” And, to enable you “to set a watch” successfully—take the following directions.

First. Impress your minds with a sense of your danger. The evil which lurks under every temptation is inexpressible. The design of it is to make you *sin*; and to sin, is to debase your nature, to defile your conscience, to rob yourselves of peace and reputation, and to destroy “both body and soul in hell.” I know there is a deceitfulness in sin; and that the enemy endeavours to represent it as liberty and pleasure; or, if an evil at all, as a trifling one. But take your estimate of all sin from the Scripture, from the Judge himself who is to punish it—and you will find that it is “exceeding sinful”—that its history, like Ezekiel’s roll, is “written within and without with lamentation and mourning and woe.”

Think of this—and common sense being your counsellor, you will watch; you will be willing to make any sacrifices, any efforts, rather than lie down in everlasting shame and sorrow. “If I conquer—I gain endless honour and happiness. If I am overcome—I am undone for ever. And, O my soul, is there no danger of this? Are there not temptations in every situation? In my business? In my food? In my dress? Have I not a wise and powerful adversary, who ‘goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour’? And is there nota subtle party within, carrying on a traitorous correspondence willi the world and the devil without?—O my soul, awake, and watch!”

Secondly. Study your constitutional weakness and failings. Endeavour to know "what manner of spirit you are of." Some are more inclined naturally to sloth; others, to anger and impatience: some, to pride and vanity; others, to wantonness and the pleasures of sense. There is a "sin that most easily besets us;" and this demands our peculiar circumspection and care.

Thirdly. Observe how you have already been foiled or ensnared. He who would encounter an enemy successfully, should be informed of his mode of fighting; and how is this to be done but by observation and reflection? "How was such a place taken? How did I lose such a battle? What rendered the last campaign so little efficient?—Let me look back upon my past life; and endeavour to derive wisdom from my old follies, and strength from my falls. By what secret avenue did sin enter? Have I not been taken by surprise, where I deemed myself most secure? And may not this be the case again? Are there not some places and companies from which I never returned without injury? Shall I turn again to folly? Let painful experience awaken me—and keep me awake."

Fourthly. Guard against the beginnings of sin. You should learn, even from an enemy; and take the same course to preserve yourselves, as the Devil does to destroy you. Now the tempter never begins where he intends to leave off. Would he induce a man to impurity? He does not propose the crime at once—but prepares for it by degrees, by the cherishing of loose thoughts, by the indulging of improper familiarities, by the courting of favourable opportunities. If he would produce infidelity—he

first reconciles the youth to read poisonous books, perhaps for the sake of the style, or some curious subject treated of; he draws him into the company of those who entertain loose notions of religion, and ridicule *some* of its doctrines and institutions: from these, he joins the sceptic; and *he* prepares him for the scoffer. Guard therefore against the first deviations from the paths of righteousness. Crush the cockatrice in the egg; or it will grow up into a frightful serpent. Cut off the shoots of iniquity; yea, nip the very buds: it will otherwise "bring forth fruit unto death."

Finally. Avoid the occasions of sin. Nothing is more dangerous than idleness, or having nothing to do. Our idle days, says Henry, are the Devil's busy ones. And, says another, When the mind is full, temptation cannot enter; but when it is empty and open, the enemy can throw in what he pleases. Stagnant waters breed thousands of noxious insects; but this is not the case with living water.

A prudent man looketh well to his going, and will think it at any time worth while to go round, in order to avoid a pit. "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house"—lest, by going nigh, you should be tempted to go in. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" Can a man wish the weeds in his garden to wither, and daily water them? If a man prayed to lie heavenly-minded, would he go and wait in a place of dissipation for the answer?

Sometimes Christians are called into situations and circumstances, in the discharge of their duty, that are very trying. When this is the case, the business is

the Lord's; and he will take care of the servant employed in it. And therefore, in such instances, we have seen the weakest believers preserved. But it is otherwise when you rush into such dangers, uncalled of God. Is God bound to work miracles as often as you choose to play the fool, or to act the sinner? Are you justified in bringing yourselves into a situation where the alternative is either a supernatural deliverance, or a shameful fall?

Thus, then, let us make our prayer to God, and set a watch. Let us impress our minds with a sense of our danger—let us study our natural dispositions—let us remark in what manner we have been injured already—let us guard against the beginnings—and shun all the occasions of sin. Thus shall we “stand in the evil day; and having done all, shall stand. Yea, in all these things, we shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

Nor shall we be always in a state of warfare. We shall soon exchange the toil of the soldier for “the rest that remains for the people of God.” Our praying and our watching will soon be needless. We shall put off the helmet, and put on the crown. “Sing, O daughter of Zion: shout, O Israel: be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord hath taken away thy judgments: he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.”

DISCOURSE XXV.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” REV. xxii, 2.

“YEA, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Such was the exclamation of the Apostle. Such was the judgment he formed of an acquaintance with the Saviour of sinners. He saw an excellency in it that led him comparatively to undervalue and even despise every thing else. And no wonder.

What can be so suitable, so necessary, to creatures in our circumstances, as the knowledge of the Lord Jesus? If we are exposed—he is our refuge. If we are wanderers—he is our guide. If we are poor—he is rich. If we are nothing—he is “all, and in all.” The Christian, feeling his necessities, and enlightened from above to know the source of his supplies, often exclaims, as he reads through this sacred Volume, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write; whom David,

Joseph, Isaac, prefigured; who realizes, in his own character, the temple, the altar, the paschal lamb, the ark." He holds communion with him as the "Book of ages," as "the Sun of righteousness," as the "Fountain of living waters," as—"the Tree of life, in the midst of the paradise of God."

Of this we have a striking representation in the words before us. John saw the new Jerusalem descending from heaven. It was a city four-square. The gates, the walls, the very foundations, were of precious stones. The pavement was of gold—for what we adore, they trample upon. Thus far the allusion is taken from the world of art—but nature also lends her combined aid—and here is a reference to Eden, the original residence of man. In this residence, it is well known, man drank pure water, and lived on fruit. Accordingly, a fine river watered the garden; and a tree, called "the tree of life," grew in the centre, whence the water of life, and the tree of life, stand significantly for all the supplies of the spiritual life. And here we have both. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

It will be necessary to premise, that the tree of life which John saw, was not a *single* tree: for, then, how could it grow on both sides of the river? but a *species* of tree, or many trees of one kind. There is nothing forced or unusual in this language. We should be easily understood were we to say, the cedar-tree

grows on both sides of Lebanon; or, the apple-tree flourishes best in such a soil: and we should be understood to mean—not an individual tree, but the kind of tree. And this is confirmed by a parallel passage taken from the visions of Ezekiel: “And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.” Upon the same principle, it is not necessary to suppose the tree of life in Eden was a single tree; it was more probably a number of trees of the same species, finely arranged, and bearing in abundance. This conjecture has to plead not only probability, but authority. The learned Doctor Kennicot has defended this opinion.

But however this may be—whatever the tree of life was to man in his innocency, Christ is to man in his fallen estate; what that was to Adam under a covenant of works, Christ is to man under a covenant of grace. That insured life to obedience; he insures life to faith. It is his own declaration, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This is the new and living way opened in the Gospel, and by which we can alone pass into a happy immortality.

Whether the tree of life in paradise was more than sacramental, affording a pledge of the continuance of life, while man remained in a state of obedience; or whether, in addition to this, it had an innate virtue to perpetuate the immortality of those who partook

of it—we cannot absolutely determine. The latter has been deemed probable by many, from the words of Moses: “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” But we are sure that Jesus Christ has not only procured for us a title to endless life, but actually communicates life to all those who believe in him. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” And therefore it can only be derived from him. And as what we live upon is previously destroyed, so that we literally live by death—the death of fruits and vegetables, and animals—so by his death we live. It is his own declaration, though it may prove as offensive to some who read it, as it did to those who originally heard it: “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”

And, therefore, we cannot be made “partakers of Christ” without resembling him. We cannot receive a life-giving Saviour, and remain dead in trespasses and sins. If joined to him, we shall be quickened by

him, and walk "in newness of life." And it is owing to the little communion we have with him that our religion is so languishing, and that there are so many "things in us that are ready to die for he came not only "that we might have life," but "that we might have it more abundantly."

The *situation* of this tree is worthy of our attention. Endeavour to apprehend the scenery as it appeared to the eye of John. The river softly rolled down the middle, and thus formed a street on each side of it; and in the midst of each street, in a beautiful row, grew the tree of life. So that the inhabitants could walk between the houses and the trees, and between the trees and the river, on each side. It was therefore not concealed, but obviously seen; it everywhere met the eye, and tempted the hand. Nor was it confined, but easy of access to all who passed along, and to persons on either side of the river—"In the *midst* of the street of the city, and on *either* side of the river, was there the tree of life."

And "the righteousness of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Is Christ hidden? Exposing himself to view in every direction, he cries, "Behold me, behold me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. Come unto me,

all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

Is he secluded from approach, and from participation? Few, comparatively, will partake of him—but he has told us the reason: “Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life.” Otherwise, none are forbidden: for “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” Is he a fountain? He is a fountain opened. Was he represented by the manna? This fell all around the camp, and all were equally welcome to go and gather it up. Was he held forth by the brazen serpent? This was suspended upon a pole fixed in the centre of the camp, and it was announced, that every one that was bitten, when he looked upon it, should live. Was he typified by the cities of refuge? There were six of these at certain distances from each other, that, in what part soever of the country the man-slayer lived, he might soon reach a place of safety. They were situated on high hills, or on extensive plains, that the avenger of blood might not overtake him, while searching for them. The roads leading to them were fifty-eight feet four inches wide, and well repaired, that nothing should hinder his progress, or stop him for a moment. Where rivers would have checked their course, bridges were thrown over: and where cross-ways would have perplexed their minds, directing-posts were fixed, with their extended arms pointing and crying, REFUGE, REFUGE!—The application of all this is easy. Oh! think of it, ye who are disposed to “flee for refuge to the hope set before you! ’ Here is strong consolation—and spiritual distress requires it.

Behold, further, the *fertility* of this tree.

First. It is said that it bears “twelve manner of fruits.” Other trees yield only after their kind. To a vine we go for grapes, to a fig-tree for figs. But suppose a tree that should bear both these, and ten more sorts of the most delicious fruit! Would it not excite your curiosity? Would you not even go far, only to see this wonder of nature?

“Turn your eyes towards me,” says the Saviour, “I am all this. I am the ‘child born,’ and ‘the everlasting Father.’ ‘I am the root and the offspring of David.’ ‘I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending.’ I am he ‘that liveth and was dead.’ I am ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,’ and the ‘lion of the tribe of Judah.’ Such a combination of perfections and blessings, O man, did thy salvation require! Though all thy miseries flow from one cause—sin; thy wants are various, and demand various relief. You are enslaved, and need redemption—and I give my ‘life a ransom for sinners.’ You are guilty, and need justification—and my ‘blood cleanseth from all sin.’ You are unholy, and need sanctifying grace—and ‘a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ You are weak—but ‘my strength shall be made perfect in weakness.’ You have tribulation in the world—but ‘in me you shall have peace.’” Thus God “supplies *all* our need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Thus we are “blessed with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Secondly. The produce is not only abundant, but continual. It yielded her fruit “every month.” This is not the case with our trees. They bear only once a year. And hence our spring is so important—we

go out, and anxiously look for the buds and blossoms; and if we find none, our hope is cut off, and for twelve months we impatiently wait for the return of the season. But this tree bears always—in winter, as well as in summer—perhaps he bears most in winter, or at least more is then gathered than at any other time. Our external troubles, and our internal distresses, endear him, and urge us to make a more earnest application to him. But the Apostle tells us that he found him answerable to all his varying conditions: “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” If we prosper, he can keep us. If we fall into adversity, he can sustain us. He can bless you in social scenes; and also in solitary seasons. Joseph enjoyed him in the prison, and Daniel in the lions’ den, and John in his banishment. And when nothing else looks green and fair—he affords succour and supplies. And therefore says the Christian, whose faith and hope are fixed on him: “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Hence, in a case more distressing to a good man than any other; I mean, when his family yields him no comfort, bears nothing, yea, discovers no marks of spiritual life—he can pluck something from this tree, which is always bending with fruit: “Although my house be not so

with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." And when we are taking a farewell of life, and all the powers of nature fail—he is the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever—And hence the same tried and triumphant believer exclaims: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

When our Saviour, as he came from Bethany, hungered, he saw a fig-tree, and went up to it, hoping to find fruit thereon, and found none, "for the time of figs was not yet." But he himself will never occasion such a disappointment in those who apply to him. Come when we will, it is always the time of fruit. The tree bears "every month." Ye young, you cannot come too soon. Ye aged, you cannot come too late. It is necessary, however, to observe, that this is true only of the time of your continuance in this world. If you drop through life destitute of the blessings of his salvation, your opportunity is over, and will never return. You are—therefore admonished to "seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."

Observe, finally, what is said of the *leaves* of this tree. They "are for the healing of the nations." Other trees have leaves, and they are by no means useless. Not only do they add to the appearance and beauty of the tree—for how would a tree look without them!—but they serve to screen the new-born naked bud from the cold by night, and the excessive heat

by day; they catch the dew and the rain; retain and guide the moisture; and thus they aid the preservation and growth of the fruit. The leaves of a tree afford a comfortable shade to those who not only wish to partake of its produce, but want also to stand out of the sun. The Church therefore says, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Leaves, especially in the earlier ages of the world, were frequently applied to wounds, and many of them are to this day reckoned medicinal.

What then are the leaves of this tree, here distinguished from the fruit—but the institutions of religion, the ordinances of the Gospel, which we commonly and properly call, the means of grace? These derive their being and their efficacy from him, as leaves from a tree. In the use of these he has promised his blessing: by the application of them, he brings us health and cure. What are our Sabbaths? What are our sanctuaries? What are the ministers of the word? What is this Book?—what are the leaves of this Book?—but "the leaves of this tree, which are for the healing of the nations?"

When we are perfectly recovered, and removed to that country "where the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick," these means and ordinances becoming unnecessary, will be laid aside. There will be no more prayer; no more sermons; no more bread and wine, the emblems and memorials of a Saviour's death. The end of all will be fully accomplished in our happy experience.

In the mean time, they are of unspeakable importance, and we should be careful to show our regard for them two ways.

First. By being thankful that we are indulged with the means of grace ourselves. Let us hear what the saints of old said, who lived under a dispensation far inferior to ours: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!—Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee. Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." As soon as ever our ministers end their discourses, we should remember the words of our Lord: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Not only are these means instrumental in awakening us at first, but they are useful to revive, to refresh us; to strengthen our weak hands, and confirm our feeble knees, all through life. Here, like Hannah, we pour forth our sorrows, and leave them behind us. Here, with Jeremiah, we find his word and eat it, and it is the joy and the rejoicing of our hearts. Our doubts are solved. Our peace is restored. Our resolutions are invigorated. Our "strength is renewed. We mount up with wings as eagles, we run and are not weary, and walk and are not faint."

Secondly. Let us be concerned for the extension of these privileges to others. Let us exert all our influence in diffusing them. Let us endeavour to spread them, not only in our own neighbourhood, and in our own country, but in all "the regions of darkness, and of the shadow of death." O when

shall these leaves be for the healing of "the nations"! How much do they need the influences of the Gospel of peace! How are they enslaved; how are they bruised; by tyranny, by war. by superstition, by "the God of this world!" Hear how they groan; see how they bleed and die! How many millions of your fellow-creatures are there who never heard of the name of a Saviour! They feel the same depraved dispositions with yourselves, but know nothing of that grace that can create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within them. They are burthened with a sense of guilt, and many of them make costly sacrifices and go toilsome pilgrimages, to get relief—but they never heard an Apostle saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

Let us therefore pray that God would pity the nations, and communicate to them the same means and privileges which he has bestowed upon us. It is easy to see how healing the institutions of the Gospel are to a nation, even when in numberless instances they are not effectual to salvation. Where they prevail, they civilize the multitude. They tame the fierceness of their passions, and the savageness of their manners. They tend equally to secure the prerogative of the prince, and the rights of the subject. The same may be said of all the other relations in life. They expand the affections, quicken sensibility, and promote benevolence. There was no hospital in the heathen world. The philosophers of Greece and Rome never planned an infirmary. But in this country, so highly favoured by the Gospel, it is hardly possible to move without being struck with the monuments of christianized humanity.

Here the blind are led into an asylum. There orphans are snatched from ruin. There the victims of seduction are hid from infamy, and encouraged to repentance. And here the sick are made whole.

What then would a nation be—if all its inhabitants were Christians indeed! A single sentence of the Gospel, if every one would agree to be influenced by it, would be enough to turn a country into a paradise—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them!"

Lord Jesus, put this law into our minds, and write it in our hearts! Increase daily the number of those who shall make it the rule of their lives! "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty—and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness. O King of saints, become the king of nations—and reign for ever and ever!" Amen.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

BACKSLIDING REPROVED.

“Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” JEREMIAH ii. 2.

THIS address employs a figure of speech very common in the Scripture, especially in the prophecies. It consists in representing the state of a nation by the various ages, changes, and circumstances of a single individual.

When the Jews left Egypt, and began their journey in the desert, it was the time of their “youth.” And when, in Horeb, God claimed them as his peculiar people, and they said, all that the Lord commandeth us we will do, it was the season of their “espousals.” Since that interesting period, they had become more remiss and degenerate. And Jeremiah is commissioned to cry in the ears of Jerusalem—“I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.”

Yet surely these words are not less suited to an individual than to a nation; or less true of Christians than of Jews. Let us then consider them two ways. AS THEY FURNISH US WITH REMARKS. II. AS THEY APPLY TO CHARACTERS.

These words supply us with several useful remarks.

First. Behold in God a disposition to commend, rather than condemn; to praise, rather than to censure. To a person who reads the history of the Jews, their early behaviour in the wilderness will appear very improper and blameworthy. They discovered much ingratitude and unbelief; they often complained and murmured, and sometimes talked of making themselves a leader, and returning back into Egypt. Nevertheless God here speaks of it comparatively with honour—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." He was acquainted with all the disadvantages of their situation. He considered how material things affected the body, and how the body influenced the mind. He knew their frame, and remembered that they were dust.

"He saw their flesh was weak and frail,
He saw temptation still prevail;
The God of Abraham loved them still,
And led them to his holy hill."

While we admire this tenderness, let us learn also to resemble it. Let us excuse and approve as far as we can; and, in examining characters, let us observe the good more largely than the evil. Let us beware of indiscriminate reflection; of speaking severely of persons in the gross; of branding a whole course

of life with the reproach of a particular action. A man may redden with a blush, or turn pale with a fright—but what should we think of the painter, who in his delineation would secure this temporary incidental colour, instead of his natural and common complexion? When the angel appeared to Abraham, Sarah behaved very unbecomingly: she hid herself behind the door; she listened, she disbelieved, she laughed, and she denied the whole. There was only one good thing; one thing commendable and exemplary on this occasion—and the Holy Ghost has seized and mentioned this only to her honour: “Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” Job, in the paroxysm of his grief, cursed the day of his birth; but he is proposed only as an example of patience: “Ye have heard of the patience of Job.” Notwithstanding the imperfections remarked in the seven churches of Asia, they are still called the seven “golden candlesticks.”

Secondly. “God remembers the past.” Our memories soon fail us. How little can we now retrace of all the busy concerns in which we have been engaged! How few of our actions, and how much fewer of our words, and of our thoughts, are we able to recover from the oblivion of time! But all of them are with God. Old impressions soon give place to new ones, and we often find it difficult to recal, without assistance, an occurrence that happened a few months, or a few weeks ago. But “a thousand years are in his sight but as yesterday, when it is passed, and as a watch in the night.”

As he observes every thing, so he retains it; and

what with us—is past, with him—is present. It was a persuasion of this that led David to pray, “Remember not against me the sins of my youth.” For he can easily show us that he remembers them. He can write bitter things against us, and make us possess the iniquities of our youth. He can bring back old sins by afflictions; and he can bring back old sins by convictions. He can tell us all things that ever we did. Transgressions, committed forty years back, he can revive, even in their aggravations and circumstances, with all the freshness of recent guilt. And it is well to be convinced of this truth, in a way of mercy, and while we can apply for pardon. For he will certainly convince every impenitent sinner of it hereafter, in a way of justice, when he will publish to the world all the private wickedness of his heart and life, and fill him “with shame and everlasting contempt.”

Thirdly. It is well to be informed of what we once were, and to be led back to our former history and experience. It is useful for a preacher sometimes to cry in our ears, and remind us of our natural state; that we may “look to the rock whence we are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged.” It is needful for him to remind us of the dispensations of Providence which have attended us in former years:

“Why should the wonders he has wrought
Be lost in silence, and forgot?”

It is well for us to raise our Ebenezers, and to inscribe upon them, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped me.” Such memorials God himself prescribes. “O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab

consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim, unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.”—It is desirable to bring back to the mind our former frames and feelings in religion. We need every thing that is favourable to self-examination and self-knowledge. We ought to be able to judge of our progress, or of our declensions, in the divine life. The state of our souls in particular circumstances and seasons should be secured, that, after the lapse of years, it may be reviewed. A comparison of our present, with our former experiences, will, in some instances, encourage; and in more condemn.

But we need reproof. It will be profitable for us to afflict our souls. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

This brings us, II. To consider those words AS APPLICABLE TO CHARACTERS.

And First. They will apply to Christians under declensions in religion. It is said of Jehoshaphat, that he walked “in the first ways of David his father.” This is an intimation that his first ways were his best: that the king never equalled the shepherd. This is awful. But the case is not peculiar to him. Backsliding is no uncommon thing. For it should be remembered that where there are no gross and scandalous deviations from the path of duty, there maybe many secret alienations of heart from God; and where iniquity does not abound, the love of many

may wax cold. Let us imagine the Supreme Being, by his ministers, addressing such characters as these: I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth:—I remember thy simplicity. One motive influenced and decided you. If God was pleased and glorified, and you could enjoy his smiles and his presence—it was enough; and the applause or censure of worms was less than nothing and vanity. You rejoiced that you were “counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name and binding the reproach of the Cross as an ornament upon your brow, you said, If this be to be vile, I will yet be more vile. One thing you desired of the Lord, and that you sought after—it was a participation of the portion of his saints. Therefore, regardless of all other things, you prayed, “Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen: that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance.” You did not think of stipulating for any thing else—with this, having only food and raiment, you could learn to be content. But, alas! since this period, how often have you looked aside after the friendship of the world! how often have you yielded a little of your firmness to avoid the reproach of the Cross! It is not sufficient for you now to have “God for your portion”—you are miserable unless you are in a fair way of adding house to house, and joining field to field. A little disappointment in worldly things fills you with fretfulness and despondency, as if all was gone or going; and, like Jonah, you sometimes exclaim, when a gourd withers, “I do well to be angry even unto death.”

—I remember thy attachment to the means of

grace. O how you loved his word: it was your meditation all the day!—How welcome was the preaching of the Gospel! Then a trifling indisposition; a little rain or cold; the unseasonable calling of a friend—did not keep you from the courts of the Lord—nor did you hear half asleep. How you prized the Sabbath! How you numbered the intervening hours that should draw it on! How you hailed it when it arrived—“This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!” And O how precious were those seasons in which, around the table of a crucified Saviour, you received the dear memorials of his dying love! In the reception you said—“His flesh is meat indeed! and his blood is drink indeed!” And in the review—“I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste!” Then Christians appeared like angels. How attractive, how edifying, was the communion of saints! If two of you walked towards Emmaus, you took sorrowful and sweet counsel together; the Redeemer was your theme and your companion; and when you came to the village whither you went, you said one to another, “Did not our heart bum within us while he talked to us by the way, and opened to us the Scripture!” And when alone, was not your meditation of him sweet, and therefore frequent? Could you not say, with David, “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O Lord; how great is the sum of them! if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.”

I remember thy holy and active zeal:—How you abounded in the duties of obedience; how you daily naked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” how

dissatisfied you were in the service of God, unless you could “draw near even to his seat how the bitterness of repentance made you loathe sin; at what an awful distance you kept yourselves from its approach; how you shunned “the very appearance of evil;” how, when the name of God was blasphemed, you could not sit “like a man in whose mouth there are no reproofs,” but spoke for God, and defended his cause;” how “jealous” you were “for the Lord of hosts how your bowels yearned over perishing sinners; how you longed to teach transgressors the way in which you were walking! how you seized every opportunity to invite others to taste and see that the Lord is good; how to relations, friends, neighbours, you said, “Come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel!” I need not proceed. Such is the change.

And has God deserved it? Have you gained by these declensions from him? Have you not compelled him to say, “Have I been a wilderness unto Israel—a land of darkness? O that they had hearkened to my commandments! then had their peace been as a river, and their righteousness like the waves of the sea!”

How dreadful is it that, when every thing requires our advancement, we should be stationary! that, when means and ordinances, mercies and trials, unite to urge us forward; that, when our obligations to God are daily increasing, and the day of account every hour approaching—we should not only stand still—but even draw back!

Surely it is high time to awake out of sleep! Declining Christian! attend to the admonitions given to the declining Churches: “Nevertheless, I have some-

what against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold last, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Lay these things to heart. Say, "O that it was with me as in months past!" Carry thy case to the Scriptures, to the cross of Christ; to the throne of grace: and pray—"Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation."

Secondly. The words will apply to those who promised fair in their youth, and are now become irreligious. Many a fine morning has been overspread with clouds, and followed by foul weather. Many a tree in spring has been covered with blossoms, which have never settled into fruit. And thus it has been with many a youth who has discovered amiable and pious propensities. Thus it was with the young man who came to our Lord as an humble inquirer concerning eternal life: it is said, "When Jesus saw him, he loved him." Thus Joash was remarkable for early goodness; and was preserved in it during the life-

time of the excellent Jehoiada; but, upon the death of his guardian, he was drawn aside by evil company and counsel. And, from this and various other causes, there are many young persons in the same condition now.

Perhaps you say—"But we are not vicious and profligate." So far it is well. And oh that this was true of all! but, alas! we have swearers now, who in their youth feared an oath; we have sabbath-breakers now, who in their youth revered the sacred hours; we have sceptics and scoffers now, who from a child knew and admired "the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation." You say, "We are not like them." But they were not thus drawn aside all at once; they became wicked by degrees. This is always the course of sin. They "proceed from evil to evil:" they "wax worse and worse." The way to hell is down hill; once in motion, it is easy to go on, and you know not where you shall stop. You say, "We are not like them." But let me, my dear young friends, ask you—Are you not much less piously inclined than you once were? Have you not exchanged a lovely teachableness of mind, for conceit and self-sufficiency? a tenderness of conscience, for an insensibility of mind, which the word can seldom move? Have you not given up private prayer? Have you not lost much of your veneration for the pious and the good? Cannot you trifle with what once made you tremble? Are you not beginning to "walk in the counsel of the ungodly;" to "stand in the way of sinners to "sit in the seat of the scornful"?

Ah! had you proceeded in the good course in which you were once engaged, ere now you might

have been far advanced and established; ere now, actions would have produced habits, and habits have yielded pleasure. What can be more distressing, than your declensions from the good ways of God, to your pious friends; to your godly ministers! O how does it grieve them to see you breaking over the barriers of a good education, and resolving that the prayers, and tears, and vows of your connexions shall be all in vain! Ministers viewing you with hopeful pleasure, as they buried the aged and the honourable, were saying—Well, others are coming forward, and will be the pillars of our bereaved churches: “instead of the fathers shall be the children.” Your parents were beginning to say to each other—We shall soon be laid low in the dust—but these our loved offspring shall be a seed to serve him. Now a death has spread over all their hopes!—especially when they reflect, that—you are likely to, go greater lengths in error and wickedness than others; and that you will be reclaimed with much more difficulty than those who never did such “despite to the Spirit of grace.” But Thirdly. There are some who in their early days are truly devoted to the service and glory of God. To you, my dear young friends, the words are applicable—not in a way of reproach, but honour—not in a way of rebuke, but encouragement. And what we wish you to observe is this—that early piety is peculiarly acceptable to the God of your lives and mercies. He takes it kind—O wonderful condescension! O touching motive!—he takes it *kind*: “I remember thee, the *kindness of thy youth*, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.”

You are forsaking the world, und willing to follow

him whithersoever he goeth. *You* are pressing through a thousand allurements and seductions to reach him, and to say, kneeling at his footstool, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." *You* give him the first-born of your days, the first-fruits of your reason and affections—And I say again—he takes it as kindness—"I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." He will guide you with his counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory. Should life be spared to a late period, it will only extend your course of usefulness, and with pleasure you will look back upon a life of mercy and grace, of communion with him, and dedication to him. Found in the way of righteousness, he will view your hoary head as "a crown of glory." When the days come in which many will say, "*We* have no pleasure," it shall be otherwise with you. Under the decays of nature, and the loss of friends of which time has robbed you; when every thing earthly has become distasteful; and you are made to "possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed unto you"—with humble boldness you may plead, "Cast me not off in the time of my old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." And he will answer you: "Even to your old age, I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

DISCOURSE XXVII.

THE MISERY OF CONTENDING WITH GOD.

“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!” ISAIAH xlv. 9.

THE life of man is held forth by various images: and it is worthy of our observation that they will apply equally to the righteous and the wicked. For instance.

The Christian is a traveller—and so is the sinner; only the one is journeying to heaven, and the other to hell.

The Christian is a husbandman—so is the sinner. Both sow: only the one “sows to the flesh, and shall of the flesh reap corruption: while the other sows to the Spirit, and shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

The Christian is a soldier—and we read in the Scripture of his commander, his enemies, and his arms: of his “fightings without,” and of “his fears within of his toil, and of his triumph.—But if the life of the Christian be a warfare, so is the life of the sinner. There is however this difference between them. The one wages a good warfare, and is crowned

with glory and honour—the other is engaged in a cause the most infamous, and covers himself with shame and confusion. The one is sure of victory—the other is certain of defeat. The one fights for God—but the other against him—and “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!”

I. LET US MENTION SOME INSTANCES IN WHICH THE SINNER STRIVES WITH GOD.

II. CONSIDER THE *Woe* WHICH HIS OPPOSITION NECESSARILY ENTAILS UPON HIM.

And, O! let me beseech you this evening to hear, not only with seriousness, but with self-application; that, while I am endeavouring to lay open this *crime*, and this *curse*, you may individually ask yourselves, in the presence of God, whether you are chargeable with the one, in order to determine whether you are exposed to the other.

I. Let me specify some INSTANCES IN WHICH THE SINNER MAY BE CONSIDERED AS STRIVING WITH GOD. And here I hardly think it worth while to mention atheism, which opposes his very being, and tries to banish him from the world which he has made. Some, indeed, have supposed that a speculative atheist is an impossibility. I have often thought that if such a monster *can* be found, he is to be found, not in a heathen but in a Christian country. How far God may give up a man “to strong delusion to believe a lie,” who has despised and rejected the advantages of revelation, it is not for us to determine—but “if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

It is undeniable however that we have a multitude of practical atheists. That is; we have thousands who live precisely as they would do if they believed

there was no God; and are no more influenced by his presence and perfections, than if they were persuaded the Scripture was "a cunningly devised fable." Yea, they not only live "without God in the world," but they live against him! Wherein?

First. They strive with him by transgressing his holy and righteous Law. And this is done, not only by the commission of those sins which it forbids, but also by the omission of those duties which it enjoins. The man that does not love his neighbour and strive to do him good, is therefore criminal, as well as the man who robs and oppresses him. This law is also broken by the desires of the heart, as well as by the actions of the life. It is so spiritual as to apprehend murder in angry words, and adultery in wanton looks. Now every instance of disobedience is a contention with God; a daring struggle to determine whether we shall be governed by his will or by our own.

Secondly. The sinner strives with God by opposing the Gospel. The Gospel is a scheme of mercy designed to glorify God in the salvation of man, and is made known "for the obedience of faith." It calls us to repentance. It calls us to renounce our own righteousness. It calls us to flee for refuge to the Saviour of sinners. If, therefore, we go on in our impenitency; if we endeavour to establish our own righteousness, and save ourselves; if we endeavour to rear a shelter, instead of repairing to the only refuge provided—we are striving with God. In the Gospel God says, "Come and let us reason together but the sinner says, "Depart from us: we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The language of the Gospel, as a token of willing submission, is, "Kiss

the Son”—the language of the sinner is, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” The language of the Gospel is, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times; and be clean”—the language of the sinner is, “Are not Abana and Tharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?” No. And the reason is, that your cure can only come from God, and he has determined to save you in his own way: he has revealed only one remedy: to this the promise is made; to this he requires you to submit; and if you refuse this method, and think of becoming your own physician, you are at variance with God. And, even after persons have some serious concern about their souls, they find it no easy thing to yield up themselves unreservedly to this sovereign plan. Such is the pride of reason, and the force of legality; such a difficulty is there in relinquishing all apprehension of some worthiness and strength of their own; and such a disposition have they to make themselves better before they rely on the Saviour, that they are often detained long in opposing this gracious scheme, till increasing conviction compels them to acquiesce. And, though the force of it be subdued, something of the old leaven remains in the people of God all through life.

Thirdly. The sinner strives with God by violating the dictates of conscience. Conscience is the Divinity in man. And how often, and how faithfully, has it addressed you! “O do not that abominable thing that I hate”—and yet you did it. “Abandon that vicious course: ‘its steps take hold on hell’”—and yet you pressed forward. “Beware of that irreligious connexion: ‘evil communications corrupt

good manners: a companion of fools shall be destroyed”—and yet you complied with their enticements. And O! what labour have you had to lull conscience asleep, that you might steal forth and pursue your iniquities undisturbed! How hard have you often found it to subdue the uneasinesses which have sprung from its reproaches and condemnation! And sometimes, in struggling with you alone, has it not been ready to gain the victory, till you went forth and called in to your assistance—your comrades, and your dissipations; and, thus rallied and reinforced, you have renewed the contest, and again “done despite unto the Spirit of grace”?

Fourthly. The sinner strives with God by refusing to resign himself to the dispensations of his providence. By various blessings and indulgences, in his person, in his family, or in his business, God would attach his heart to himself. Hence the Apostle says, that “the goodness of God leadeth to repentance it ought to do so; it is the design and the tendency of it—But the sinner frustrates this design and tendency—yea, he does more—he turns it into an encouragement to sin. He is evil because God is good; and the mercies, which should serve as so many “cords of love” to draw him to God, he employs as so many weapons of rebellion against him! “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. Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.”

God tries other means. He sends a succession of disappointments and afflictions. These are designed

to wean him from the world—but “he holds fast deceit, he refuses to return.” They are “to hedge up his way with thorns”—but he breaks through them and wanders on. By these God arms himself to awaken his fears, and drive him back—but “he rushes upon the thick bosses of his buckler.” God strikes—and he strikes again! “O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock: they have refused to return.”

He fixes the bounds of our habitations; arranges all our affairs; leaves nothing to chance. And, upon this principle, we “should learn, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content.” For God cannot err. But the sinner murmurs and complains; he quarrels with the allotments of Providence; he wishes to rectify the Divine proceedings—God has not properly disposed of him, or of others—and the common sentiment is, that God has placed him too low, and others too high; indulged him too little, and others too much.

Again. The sinner strives with God by the persecution of his people. For such is the intimate and inseparable union between him and his followers, that, in whatever degree you endeavour to injure them, you oppose him: he considers it as done against himself: “for he that toucheth them, touches the apple of his eye.” Therefore said our Lord and Saviour, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?”

Finally. He strives with God by trying to hinder the spread of his cause. He who, by fraud or force, would keep the Gospel from entering a neighbour-

hood, or, by reproach or threatening, would discourage people from hearing it, is in avowed opposition to the revealed will of God, “who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Persons may endeavour to justify their opposition in some cases, because those who are labouring to do good are not of their community, and “walk not with them”—but, surely, it becomes them to be exceedingly cautious in their conclusion, and to weigh the admonition of Gamaliel: “Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it: lest haply ye be found even to light against God.”

And be it remembered, that men will be judged not according to their success, but according to their intention. God may overrule their rage for good, and make all their efforts to subserve the cause they oppose—but as this was not their design, it will not be their exculpation. It was “in their heart” to prevent the diffusion of truth, and the influence of the Gospel: and God deals with them accordingly. He “looketh to the heart and will punish them in proportion to the good they would have hindered, and the evil they would have spared, had they been successful. For “woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!”

II. NO WONDER SUCH A WOE IS HERE DENOUNCED—for this striving with God is,

First, A practice the most shameful and ungrateful. What would you think of a child who should strive with his father, reproach his character, counteract all his designs, and endeavour to injure his concerns?—But such is your conduct towards God. “Is not he

thy Father, that hath made thee?" What would you think of a person who would set himself against a benefactor that had never given him the least ground of provocation, and had always been doing him good? But such is your conduct towards God. He has preserved your souls in life. His air you have breathed. From his table you have been fed. He has given you all things richly to enjoy.

Has he not therefore reason to be astonished at your baseness and ingratitude? "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

It is. Secondly, a practice the most unreasonable and absurd. For observe—in all the instances in which you oppose him, he is aiming to promote your good: his design is to make you wise, to make you holy, to make you happy; and the advantages of compliance will be all your own. Besides—

Can you do without him?—Can you do without him in life? In death can you do without him? Who else can pardon you? or sanctify you? or comfort you? or give you an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour? What then can equal the folly of offending and provoking *Him* whose favour is life, and upon whom you absolutely depend for every thing essential to your happiness in time and eternity?

And therefore. Thirdly, nothing can be more injurious and ruinous. In striving with him, you only resemble the wave that dashes against the rock, and is driven back in foam; or the ox that kicks against

the goad, and only wounds himself; or the thorns and briars that should set themselves in battle array against the fire. Hence says God, "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth." If you will contend, choose an enemy like yourselves, with whom you may claim some kind of equality. There is none between you and me. There are cases in which it may be proper to wage war, where there is only a probability, or even a possibility of victory. But what desperate madness actuates *you!* *You* strive with an adversary by whom you know you *must* be conquered. For "have you an arm like God, or can you thunder with a voice like his?" Need you be told, that he can work immediately upon the mind, and in the twinkling of an eye could produce such terrors in your consciences as would be intolerable? Need you be told that he is able to destroy both body and soul in hell? Need you be told that all creatures, from an angel to a worm, are under his control, and only wait his signal to fall upon you?

This, you say, only shows what he *can* do. Let us then see what he *will* do. What has he said? Read these threatenings: "If ye walk contrary to me, I also will walk contrary to you; and will punish you seven times for your iniquity." "He shall he revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire; taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that 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. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are

ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

“But what reason have we to believe that all this is true?”—Because it is found in a book written by God himself. Because many of these threatenings have already been accomplished. Because it accords with those evils and miseries which are found to attend wickedness even in this world. And because no one ever hardened himself against God and prospered. Did Pharaoh? Did Belshazzar? Did the Jews?

To improve this awful subject: let me ask—Whether you are for God or against him? Be not surprised—you are either his friends or his enemies: there is no neutrality here. In some cases, neutrality is allowable if not commendable. In family disputes, or in quarrels among neighbours, it maybe proper to stand neuter. If we can do no good, we shall do no harm; and this is often a considerable point. In the senate of a nation, a member may waive his vote: things may be balanced in his mind; and nothing, for the time, may cause either side of the question to preponderate. And it is the excellency of a representative to be of no party. Two nations may worry and consume each other; while a third, however pressed, may remain neutral and save its wealth and its subjects. But here—we repeat it—and it cannot be repeated too often: here there is not, and there cannot be a state of indifference. “He that is not for me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other;

or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

Are you then the enemies of God; and have you to this hour been striving with your Maker? O! let me admonish you. Let me address you in the words of Eliphaz to Job: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee." Let me urge you, in the language of the Apostle Peter: "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you in due time." If you are willing to return, be not discouraged. Behold him stretching forth the golden sceptre, saying, Touch, and live: "I will be merciful to the unrighteous, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." He is "in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." He has established "a ministry of reconciliation," and sends forth his ambassadors to "beseech" you to be reconciled unto God. How wonderful that he should not wait to be solicited, but make the proposal himself, and urge you to accept of it! Will not such love prevail? Do you still harbour doubts in your minds which keep you from him? Let me, if possible, dispel them by another illustration—for till your hope be excited, it is in vain to expect your return. A king may justly punish rebels: but suppose, from his clemency, he has issued a proclamation, assuring them that whoever within a given period will come in and give up his arms shall be pardoned and released—What would you think of this prince, if, as soon as one of these rebellious subjects entered his presence to claim the privilege, he should have him immediately executed!—But you say—surely he never could do this—his honour would be at stake. Though

he was originally under no obligation to save him, he is now; for he has bound himself by his word. And can God deny himself?—Venture then upon his promise. Go to him with weeping and supplication, and say, “O Lord, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: by thee only will we make mention of thy Name.” But remember, you have no time to lose. The season of allowed submission is fixed, and will soon elapse. “Agree with thine adversary *quickly*, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.”

Happy are you who have abandoned the unrighteous struggle, and are now one with God. The enmity of your heart has been slain; the weapons of your rebellion have been thrown down, and many a tear shed upon them. Be as zealous for him as you have been against him. He has done much for you; and you have much to do for him. Rise up for him against the evil doers, and stand up for him against the workers of iniquity. Redeem for him the time which you have lost. Honour him with your substance. Employ in his service every power you possess, and every blessing you enjoy. Whether you live, live unto the Lord; or whether you die, die unto the Lord; so that, living or dying, you may be the Lord's.

To conclude. We have been speaking of a striving with God which is unlawful and destructive—but there is a striving with him which is allowable and necessary. It is by prayer and supplication. Such was the strife of the woman of Canaan under the several discouragements she at first received, to try her fervency and her faith. “Let me alone,” said God to

Moses; Moses was striving with him in prayer for the preservation of the Israelites; and God speaks as if he could do nothing against prayer. "Let me go," said the angel to Jacob: Jacob was wrestling with him; and "he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he blessed him there."

And when Providence seems to oppose the promise; when experience seems to disagree with the word; when we are exercised with delays and rebukes too—then to persevere—to pray and not faint—this will be found nothing less than a wrestling with God. But this is a holy violence. This is a pleasing resistance. And in this strife we are sure to prevail. He never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

COMMUNION WITH THE SAVIOUR INSEPARABLE FROM HOLINESS.

“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” JOHN xiii. 8.

IF the most minute circumstances in the lives of illustrious characters be perused with eagerness and pleasure, surely we can never feel indifferent to any part of the history of our Lord and Saviour. He was fairer than the children of men: he was higher than the kings of the earth: all he did was wise and good: and we are concerned in all.

Observe the transaction to which the words before us refer—“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper”—Such a solemn preface raises a high degree of expectation. From such an introduction, who would not look for an illustrious display of his power and glory?—But “he laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then

cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" How much was all this in character with Peter!—He was strongly attached to his Master, and deeply sensible of his own unworthiness: but forward and impetuous; rash in action; and often speaking without due reflection. Therefore "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." "There is something more in this action than you are aware of, and by-and-by you will perceive it." The intimation refers to the design of this washing, which was two-fold. First, exemplary—to enforce upon them condescension, humbleness of mind, brotherly kindness. And secondly, symbolical—to lead their minds impressively to things of a higher nature. What therefore was perhaps excusable in Peter before, became censurable now. After such an intimation he should have implicitly acquiesced; instead of which, he saith, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Upon which, Jesus answered him in plain and awful terms, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

Though this declaration intends nothing less than the necessity of obedience in this instance, it surely comprehends much more. He therefore now does not mention the washing of his feet, but of himself: if I wash *thee* not. And the threatening—thou hast "no part with me," seems too dreadful to be denounced against an unwillingness to comply with this ceremonial observance, which sprang from something good as well as evil in the Apostle; and was therefore a mixed action: a sin of infirmity. Besides, we know that our Saviour was accustomed to teach by facts and imagery; to pass from the body to the mind; to

ascend from particular hints to general truths; and to express more than is immediately perceived, in order that it might be discovered by repeated meditation, or illustrated by subsequent events.

We deemed these few words necessary to justify ourselves from the deserved reproach of those who, as they call it, are always spiritualizing the Scriptures, and building important doctrines on historical circumstances, till the word of God becomes contemptible to the wise, and unintelligible to the simple; and seems to have no real and determined sense left. It is high lime that this trifling and mischievous mode of leaching should be discountenanced and laid aside.

Let us hasten to consider, with all the seriousness the subject requires, THAT PURIFICATION, WITHOUT WHICH ALL OUR HOPE OF AN INTEREST IN CHRIST IS VAIN. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Of this exclusion from Christ, Let us examine the CONDITION—the DREADFULNESS—and the CERTAINTY.

I. The CONDITION—"If I wash thee not."

It reminds us that sin is of a defiling quality. When God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, it is said, they were "altogether become filthy." Hence, we read of "the filthiness of flesh and spirit" This evil hath defiled all our powers and all our actions; all we possess and all we enjoy: and while it pollutes us, it causes us also to pollute others.

Man may palliate the evil of sin, but in the view of the Supreme Judge it is unspeakably vile and hateful—"He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." And when the sinner himself is convinced of sin, he sees it in the same light. As a discovery

of the guilt of sin awakens his fear, so a perception of the impurity of it excites his aversion and disgust. He sees, he feels that he is unclean, and deservedly excluded from communion with all holy beings. He cries, "Behold, I am vile! wherefore I abhor myself, repenting in dust and ashes." He "loathes himself, for all his abominations nor will he be perfectly reconciled to himself while any of the hateful defilement is found within him.

Now this enables us to determine what our Saviour means by washing us. It is the sanctification of our nature. It is what the Apostle calls "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." As water removes defilement and restores to purity, so the influences of Divine grace deliver us from sin and make us truly holy. Hence we find it promised in a fulness and variety of expression: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." We do not indeed mean to intimate that real Christians are entirely freed from all sin here—for, thee, who could lay claim to the character? Unmixed purity is the privilege of heaven. There alone shall we be "presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." The greatest saints have now their infirmities; and groan, being burdened. But let us remember, that though this work is completed in eternity, it is begun in time:

that the true Christian is the subject of a glorious change, not only as to his actions, but also as to his dispositions; that he is saved from the love of every sin, and the dominion of every sin; that there is no sin unknown which he does not wish to discover; and no sin discovered which he does not resolve to destroy; and no sin which he resolves to destroy, but he strives and labours to destroy—"plucking out even a right eye, or cutting off even a right hand; denying all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world."

But how are we thus cleansed from our iniquities? and who has the honour of our deliverance? He is the grand purifier: his name is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins—"If *I* wash thee not." The work is his; and whatever means are used, they derive both their being and their efficacy from him. There is no other fountain opened for sin and uncleanness than his dying wounds supplied. His "blood," says the Apostle, "cleanseth us from all sin." "He loved us," says the Church, "and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

Let us not look to him for justification only, but remember that he is "made of God unto us sanctification," also; that he delivers us not only from the curse, but the pollution of sin; that he rescues us not only from the burden of condemnation, but the bondage of corruption; and not only gives us the title to heaven, but produces in us the meetness for it—He "is all in all." To induce you to seek after this state, consider,

II. The DREADFULNESS of the exclusion—"Thou Hast no part with me." "Thou hast no real interest

in me; and thou canst have no reasonable expectations from me." There is something very tremendous in this. Hear how the Apostle Paul speaks of a privilege from which you are excluded. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death: if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." The Apostle was a good judge, and you here see that he infinitely preferred union with Christ to every thing else.—But you say, you are not like-minded; you do not thus value him; you prefer a thousand objects to an interest in him—and therefore to you there seems nothing so very dreadful in this threatening.

But the question is—whether your judgment be a righteous one. A pearl is not the less precious because the swine tramples it under foot. A toy is not more valuable than a title to an estate because an infant or an idiot may give it the preference.

And the question also is, whether you will always remain in the same opinion. Will the day of judgment, think you, operate no change in your sentiments? Will not the approach of death alter your convictions? What! when all those things which now engage and amuse you fail—will you want no

hotter portion? If while I am speaking a messenger from the “king of terrors” should seize you, and you were carried to your bed, and compelled to look backward upon your life, and forward to your doom—what could succour and relieve you?—Yea, if conscience were to fall upon you this moment, and the terrors of the Almighty troubled you; you would soon find the truth of Solomon’s words, “The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear?”—And then what advantage could you derive from all your worldly possessions? They would be all physicians of no value; miserable comforters. Your relief could only come from another quarter—but from that quarter you are forbidden to hope.

If our Lord and Saviour was an unimportant character, your exclusion from him would not be so fatal—but the fact is, that every thing you need is found in him, and to be derived only from him. Of what worth Christ is to us, is a question, says an old writer, which would nonplus all the saints on earth and angels in heaven to answer. One thing we are certain of—that no being in the universe can fill his place, and do for us what he is able to do. And therefore, if he will have nothing to do with us, our case is indeed miserable and hopeless. We are wanderers without a guide: we are dying patients without a physician or a remedy: we are exposed to the deluge, and have no ark. It matters not to whom we belong; if we had part with a king, he could not help us in our most important concerns—the concerns of the soul and eternity. He cannot give us the true riches. He cannot deliver us from the wrath to come. He cannot bless us with all spiritual

blessings in heavenly places. And what can we do without these? "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." And if we miss salvation, we are lost for ever. "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

To have no communion with him in whose favour is life; to hear him say, I have a family, but you are no part of it—you are not a child, nor even a servant; to hear him say, I have a plantation, but you are not in it—you are not a cedar, no, nor a shrub; to hear him say, I have in reserve for my followers, thrones of glory, rivers of pleasure, fulness of joy—but as for you—you—have "neither part nor lot in the matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God"—if this be not dreadful, nothing *can* be dreadful.

Especially when we add that there is but one alternative—If you have no part with Christ and his people, you must have your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, with the devil and his angels! You have already fixed your destiny; you have chosen the left hand; you are already mingling with the goats; you are walking the downward road—"As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." Who believes this? Let us then see whether we cannot establish,

III. The CERTAINTY of this exclusion. There are two ways of proving this. The one is by testimony. "If you receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater." And, says not our Lord and

Saviour, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me"? One declaration from him renders a thing as certain as a thousand—otherwise I could go on quoting Scripture—and say—"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But where shall I end? "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? He not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

The other is reasoning from principles. Let us view the Saviour, with whom we hope to have communion for ever—But he is pure and holy; his person is pure; his kingdom is pure—pure are its joys, its services, and its company. If therefore we are not made pure and holy, we have no likeness in him; and were we in a state of union, such a heterogeneous mass of materials would form a body like the image of Nebuchadnezzar, where the head was indeed of gold, but the breast and arms of silver, and the inferior parts of baser metal, down to the feet, which were part of iron and part of clay. Can this be a representation of the Church of the living God? If Christ is the head, and Christians are the body, let us remember that the head and the body partake of the same nature: and that if Christ be the vine, and Christians the branches, the vine and the branches partake of the very same qualities.

What intercourse can there be where nothing pre-

vails but a contrariety of inclination and an opposition of interest? "How can two walk together except they be agreed? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"

Indeed without this renovation we should be wholly incapable of deriving happiness from our connexion with him. Our being for ever in his presence would only render us miserable: there would be nothing in the praises or in the pleasures of that sacred state to fulfil our desires, or to gratify our taste. Dismiss the Bible, or suppose that God had expressed no determination to exclude "every thing that defileth" from the abodes of blessedness: in this view the case would be the same as it is now; the happiness of an unrenewed sinner is impossible, upon every principle. Wherever he may be placed, *while he has sin in him, he has hell with him.*

This train of reflection informs us. First, how exceedingly those misunderstand the Gospel, and exclude their own souls, who expect to be "made partakers of Christ," while they seek not to be sanctified by him. "He was manifested to take away our sin. He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In this every real Christian rejoices; the plan meets his wants and his wishes. He gladly embraces the Saviour in all his offices, and, while he glories in his cross, submits to his sceptre. He seeks after a present salvation from sin, as well as a future deliverance from wrath; and the

faith which pacifies his conscience purifies his heart. I hit, to look for comfort without holiness, is to separate what God has unalterably joined together. To depend upon Christ for pardon and acceptance, so as to encourage ourselves in sin, or reconcile ourselves to it, is "a way which may seem right unto a man, but, be assured, the end thereof are the paths of death!"

We may, Secondly, congratulate those who are made free from sin. You have "an inheritance among them that are sanctified." Yea, you not only share with the saints, but also with the Saviour: you have part with Christ! you partake of his safety and his dignity. "When he, who is your life, shall appear, you shall also appear with him in glory. You shall sit with him upon his throne. You shall enter the joy of your Lord. If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

Can you be poor?—Having nothing, you possess all things. "For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Can you be miserable?—"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice." If "troubled on every side"—you are "not distressed:" if "perplexed"—you are *not* in despair: if "persecuted"—you are "not forsaken:" if "cast down," you are "not destroyed."

And if you have part with him in his glory, can you be unwilling to share with him in his reproach? If you are to "live with him," cannot you "die with him"? If you are to "reign with him," cannot you also "suffer with him"? According to the

Apostle, you ought to “rejoice, inasmuch as you are made partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

Thirdly. Are there any here whose desires are awakened, and who are asking, Can I obtain a portion in Christ, and how is it to be obtained? Let me conclude by a word of direction and encouragement. And it is this. From a deep conviction of your need of him, apply immediately to him. “Take with you words,” which he himself has furnished, and say, “Lord, take away all iniquity. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

Exercise faith upon his power, and say, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Be persuaded of his willingness. Believe that “he waiteth to be gracious, and is exalted to have mercy upon you.”

What were those who are now so happy with him? They were once “far off: and children of wrath, even as others.” Behold, they all rise up and address you: “O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” “That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Above all, hear their Lord and Saviour, saying, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out!”

DISCOURSE XXIX.

A CHECK TO PRESUMPTION.

“Let us therefore foer, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

HEB. iv. 1.

“FAITHFUL are the wounds of a friend.” Hence, says David, “let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.”

Would you deem a man your enemy because he told you the truth? especially if the intelligence was of importance, and your ignorance of it would be ruinous? Would you blame a person who, seeing your house to be on fire, would endeavour to wake you from a pleasing dream? Or would you say to one who checked you on the brink of a precipice—“Why did you not suffer me to go on? Why did you spoil my reverie?” Surely even a blow that saved you from such dreadful jeopardy, would be esteemed an instance of friendship.

But all allusions fail when we think of the soul and eternity. Every thing is little and trifling compared with the acquisition of endless life. Here is a subject which requires, infinitely more than any other, fidelity in the speaker; and a disposition open to conviction and fearful of deception, in the hearer. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

Let us consider two things. The First, regards THE BLESSING PROMISED. And the Second, THE STATE OF MIND IN WHICH WE SHOULD CONSIDER IT.

I. The Gospel is not only a revelation, but A PROMISE: and A PROMISE exceeding great and precious. It not only holds forth to our view, but it proposes to our hope, eternal life; and whatever is previously necessary to the acquisition of it. The promise was early made, and was often renewed with enlargements. Thousands in the successive ages of the world have laid hold of it, and—it is "left" for us. Yes, in this blessed Book, we have "a promise left us of entering into his rest."

But what is this rest?—We may view it as it is begun upon earth, or completed in heaven. Even while the believer is upon earth, this rest is not only ensured, but begun. Hence, says the Apostle, "we which have believed do enter into rest." Before he knew the Saviour, he was a stranger to rest; but Jesus had said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" he was enabled to believe his word; he ventured upon his promise, made application to him, and found "rest unto his soul." Let us observe him—

View him with regard to his *understanding*—and you will find that he has rest. He is freed from the jealousies and uneasinesses which arise from uncertainty of mind with regard to truth. He is no longer the sport of delusion: he is no longer like “a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed,” now urged in one direction, and now in another; he no longer flounders in the mud and mire—he has found rock; he stands upon it: his goings are established. He “knows whom he has believed.” He knows that he “has not followed cunningly devised fables.” He knows “the doctrine” he has received “to be of God.”—He “has the witness in himself.”

View him with regard to his *conscience*—and you will find that he has rest. He is freed from the torment of fear, and the horrors of guilt. A crucified Saviour “has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweetsmelling savour.” An apprehension of this truth “healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” In proportion as we realize it by faith, the burden, too heavy for us to bear, loosens and falls off; and, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

View him with regard to his *passions* and *appetites*—and you will find he has rest. While pride, and envy, and malice, and avarice, and sensual affections, reigned within, often striving with each other, and always fighting against the convictions of his judgment, the man’s breast was nothing but a scene of tumult: he was “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest;

whose waters cast up mire and dirt: there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." But sanctifying grace has delivered him from "the bondage of corruption," and from the tyranny of adverse and raging lusts: it has subdued his tempers, and regulated his desires; it has restored order and self-government—and all this has restored peace.

View him once more with regard to his "condition and circumstances"—and you will find that he has rest. He is freed from those anxieties and inquietudes which devour others, who make the world their portion, and have no confidence in God. But the world is not his portion; he has not laid up his treasure on earth. His inheritance is "incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him." He is nobly superior to events. Nothing that occurs can materially affect him; he is therefore easy and composed. He has also a confidence in God which wonderfully calms the mind with regard to present occurrences. He knows that the God who loves him, reigns over all; that all his dispensations are righteous, and wise, and kind; that he will not forsake him, but "make all things," however contrary in their appearance and tendency, to "work together for his good." Hence he feels a holy indifference, a blessed resignation to the will of Providence; and, committing all his concerns to his Heavenly Father, he learns, "in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content:" according to the language of the Prophet and the Apostle: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made

known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But, excellent as his present condition is, compared with his former state, it is nothing, compared with his future. With all his advantages here, a voice perpetually cries in his ears, "Arise and depart; for this is not your rest." However favourable the voyage, they are now on the boisterous, treacherous ocean; they are looking out for their native shore; and by-and-by they will enter the harbour—"then are they glad because they are quiet; so he bringeth them into their desired haven." At death we are told the righteous and the merciful enter into rest. And this rest is pure, undisturbed, and everlasting.

They shall rest from "their labours." Though all activity, they shall be incapable of fatigue and languor, for their powers will be fully equal to their work. "Repentance shall be hid from their eyes." Their praying days will be all over. It shall never more be said to them, "Be patient in tribulation or "fight the good fight of faith." Without *were* fightings, and within *were* fears: but they are for ever ended. Darkness no longer struggles with light; or faith with unbelief. "The flesh no longer lusteth against the Spirit, nor the Spirit against the flesh." They are delivered from all the temptations which were so often ensnaring or distressing them here. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest." "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." And nothing remains of their trials, but a grateful remembrance of the hand that sustained them under all

their difficulties, and delivered them from all their grief.

The Apostle therefore, to express heaven, often uses the word rest. And it is observable that he employs two allusions to enable us to conceive of it the more clearly: the one taken from Canaan, in which the Jews rested after the toils of the wilderness; and the other, from the Sabbath, on which Christians rest after the perplexities of the week.

Ah! ye glorified saints, you can tell us what this blessed rest is. You have traversed the wilderness—where you “wandered in a solitary way; where you found no city to dwell in where, “hungry and thirsty, your souls fainted in you.” But you have left the desert! you have passed the river Jordan; and have entered “the land flowing with milk and honey”—you are “come unto the rest which the Lord your God giveth you.”

Your week days, your worldly days, are now over, and you have begun your Sabbath. Here you loved the Sabbath: but here the Sabbath was soon over, and the things of the world again deprived you of the fine feelings it produced. You sometimes passed silent Sabbaths, and mourned the loss of sanctuary privileges. You always spent imperfect ones: you could not do the things that you would; and soon grew weary in the service of God, though not of it. But now your “strength is perfectly renewed.” You are “for ever with the Lord.” You “serve him day and night in his temple; and shall go no more out”—you have the keeping of “the Sabbath which remains for the people of God.”

Such is the blessing. Let us consider, II. THE STATE OF MIND IN WHICH WE SHOULD REGARD IT—

Let us therefore “fear, lest, a promise being reft us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” But what is this fear?

It is not the fear of the sluggard dismayed by difficulties, and crying, “There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets.” Such a man will be sure to come short. The fearful are to have “their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Nor is it the fear of the unbeliever, who suspects that the promise shall not be accomplished; for there is not the least ground for such an apprehension: because “faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it.” This fear prevailed in the Jews, and excluded them from the land of Canaan. They thought God had undertaken more than he could perform: they asked, “Can he furnish a table in the wilderness?” they said, “The people are too strong for us and, thus despairing, they murmured to return. Let us guard against this fear, and be fully persuaded that what God has promised he is able to perform; and that, difficult, or even impossible, as it may appear in our eyes to bring a guilty, depraved, helpless sinner to glory—if he has undertaken it, he will perfect that which concerneth us.

But the fear here enjoined is a fear of caution; of vigilance; of scrutiny; a fear which leads us to examine ourselves; and allows us, in this awful concern, to be satisfied with nothing less than evidence; a fear that induces us to question—and therefore to inquire whether we are the subjects of divine grace; whether we are the “heirs of promise whether we have a title to heaven, and are in a fair way to obtain this blessedness.

Now the thought of missing this rest is sorely enough to awaken in you this peculiar concern—especially when you consider two things: the possibility of your coming short; and the consequence of your coming short.

First. To excite in you this fear, remember the possibility of your coming short. And here let me mention a fact which should make you tremble. It is this—out of *six hundred thousand* Israelites, who came out of Egypt to possess the land of Canaan, *two only* entered!—But what is this to us? Hear how the Apostle applies it. “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples”—adds the Apostle. They are emblems and warnings to us. We here behold persons, under a dispensation of peculiar privileges, considered as the people of God, delivered from their enemies by the most wonderful displays of Divine power; clothed in garments unimpaired by wearing, or by time; and whose meat and drink were not only miraculous, but sacramental—and, after all this, we see them perishing under the wrath of Heaven. “Wherefore,” says the Apostle again, “let him that thinketh he standeth” high in the Divine favour, and is perfectly secure, “take heed lest he fall.” Let him not depend on external privileges; on gifts; on being

baptized in his infancy; on his partaking of the memorials of the Saviour's death—or a thousand other things, which are no certain proofs of salvation. Persons may go far, but not far enough; they may be convinced, but not converted; like Saul, they may have *another* heart, and not a *new* one. And indeed nothing is more common than delusions of this kind. Oh! how many there are who say, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!" Oh! how many are there who entertain confident holies of heaven, that will never see it! They are pillowed up on the bed of carnal security—die like lambs—and awake with the devil and his angels! "Let us therefore fear."

But, Secondly. Consider the consequence of coming short. Is it not dreadful to be deprived of that "fulness of joy"—of that "crown of life"—of that "everlasting kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him"? What would it be to lose your business, your health, your friends, compared with the loss of the soul?

And remember, there is no medium between heaven and hell—if you miss the one, the other is unavoidable.

And remember also, the aggravations which will attend the misery of those who perish in your circumstances. There is nothing so healing, so soothing, as the expectation of hope; and of course there is nothing so tormenting as the disappointment of it, especially where the object is vastly important. What then can equal the regrets and horrors those will feel who shall come short of eternal life! What

will be their reflections when they see that the blessing was attainable, but that their own folly had deprived them of it! And when they discover their mistake, but, alas, too late to rectify the error!—A timely fear would have prevented all this.

Yea, remember also, that you will not only be disappointed *in* coming short—but you will be punished *for* it. Your perdition will be your greatest sin. You could not be lost without contemning the *authority* of God, who commanded you to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and trampling under foot his *mercy* and his *grace*. You offend him even more by your unbelief than by your iniquity. The Gospel has its threatenings, as well as the Law; and after the one has condemned you for transgressing its commands, the other will condemn you for the rejection of its remedy. Thus, as the Apostle says, the word you hear will “prove the savour of death unto death.” How then can you escape if you neglect so great salvation? If you could even elude the curse of the Law, you would have to encounter the damnation of the Gospel. What then think you of both? “Can thy heart endure, or thy hand be strong, when he shall deal with thee?”—“Let us therefore fear.”

And observe, how far the Apostle extends the admonition—“Let us fear, lest *any* of you *seem* to come short of it.” We see that he applies it to *all*: deeming none below the benefit of caution, and none above the necessity of it—lest “*any* of you.” And he applies it to all in the *greatest* degree. Lest any of you—what! should come short? No—but *seem* to come short. He not only forbids us to go back—but even to look back. He would have us not only avoid the

reality—but the appearance of evil. He would have us not only possess religion, but “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” He would not have us remit our caution and our zeal in the smallest degree, so as to render our adherence to the truth suspicious, or our declension from the ways of God probable. He would not have you to leave your eternal state in the least uncertainty; or live so as to awaken doubts in others, and to lead the people of the world to say—“Ah! they are yielding by little and little; they cannot throw off every thing at once—they will soon join us again.” We are, like the patriarchs, to “declare *plainly* that we seek a country”—and not puzzle our neighbours to determine whether to consider us at home, or only as strangers and pilgrims upon earth. We are not to be doubtful characters, so that no reader can make any thing of us, or say whose hand the writing is; but we are “to be *manifestly* the epistles of Jesus Christ, known and read of all men.” “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should *seem* to come short of it.”

To conclude. Let us observe, first, how thankful we should be for such a promise left us of entering into his rest! For surely we could not have reasonably expected it. Had we been informed that God was about to give us a revelation from heaven, our guilty minds would have foreboded nothing but tribulation and wrath, vexation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. This we deserved—but, behold, he speaks—and his “thoughts are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to bring us to an expected end.” The address is to tell us of a remedy for our disease; a refuge from the storm; a passage from

this world of misery into a better, even “a heavenly country.”

O what welcome intelligence is this! How much did we stand in need of such a discovery, such an assurance, as this! Our earth is a vale of tears; creatures are broken reeds and empty cisterns: our mortifications are frequent; our pains numerous; our enjoyments unsatisfying! “Surely man walketh in a vain show!”—But he is not compelled to walk so now. There are realities attainable; there is satisfaction; there is rest. “He hath showed thee, O man! what is good. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee.” Do not, do not resemble the Jews of old: “to whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing:—yet they would not hear.”

Let us, Secondly, see how necessary it is in religion to avoid passing from one extreme into another. The Gospel encourages our hope: but then it enlightens it, and guards it. It tells us not to “refuse to be comforted but it teaches us to blend a holy jealousy with our confidence, and “to rejoice with trembling.” Some people seem to consider the fear of which we have been speaking as legality and unbelief—whereas it is promoted by an evangelical frame of mind, and is the offspring of faith. It does not question the truth of the promise—but only makes a man anxious to ascertain whether he has any part or lot in the matter.

And should this be carelessly decided? Can a man in such a case be too safe or too certain? Is it not much better to be even needlessly distressed for a time, than to be deceived for ever? Is it not better

to have a troubled conscience than a seared one? "To this man, says God, will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Be not highminded, but fear. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

Indeed this fear seems to be unavoidable from the very nature of the case. Whoever attends to the workings of his own mind, well knows that the proposal of any great or unexpected benefit always produces a variety of emotions. Wonder is the first: this is instantly succeeded by joy—but there is another feeling which also immediately seizes the mind and works very powerfully—and this is solicitude—care to attain and secure it—fear, lest after all we should not realize the possession of it. And this is what our Saviour means when he says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." This *hiding* is not in order to secrecy, but safety: for, as by hiding things we commonly secure them, the one is put for the other; and this explanation accords with the experience of every awakened soul. For, in proportion as you prize salvation, and desire it, and apprehend it to be necessary, will be your fear of coming short of it. Indifference does not generate fear—No: but conviction docs; and so does attachment.

Lastly. What are we to say of those of you who know nothing of this salutary concern? Perhaps, if some of you were to speak what you feel, you would say, that the loss of this rest was the least of all your fears. It never disturbs your repose by night, nor

embitters your enjoyments by day. Whenever the thought enters, you consider it as an intruder, and soon expel it. All your fear is limited to the world and the present life. You fear for your health, and are alarmed when any unfavourable symptoms appear. You fear for your business; your fortune; your estate—and cannot deem yourselves too secure. “You ask, what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?” But you never inquire, “What must I do to be saved?”

And yet what is every other interest to this?—And do you imagine that this greatest of all concerns can be managed or secured without attention or care? Do you think that leaving the boat to the stream will bring you safe—while you are asleep, or at play?—This may do if you wish to sail down *with* the stream and be carried into the gulf below. But the course to heaven lies *against* the stream—and helm and oars and labour and diligence are indispensably necessary. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” Amen.

DISCOURSE XXX.

REVIEW OF LIFE.

[LAST DAY OF THE YEAR.]

“And God requireth that which is past.” ECCLES. iii. 15.

WITH God, nothing is past; nothing is future. I AM is his Name, and this is his “memorial in all generations.” “One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day.”

The very reverse of this is the case with us. For with us nothing is present: all is future, or past. Thus a man stands by the side of a river, and sees something swimming down the stream—now it is above him—and now it is below him—but it never abides before him—so of all the things that befall us in this world, to use the language of the poet,

“We can never say, they’re here,
But only say, they’re past.”

But, when they are gone by, we have not entirely done with them. Some consequences do remain, and others ought to remain—“And God requireth that

which is past." He demands an account of the past—and this we shall have to render hereafter: he demands an improvement of the past—and this we must attend to now.

Let us then apply this to a review of our MEANS—to a review of our MERCIES—to a review of our SORROWS—and to a review of our SINS. We cannot have a better opportunity for this exercise, than the present season, when we are closing another period of our short and fleeting time. While therefore the few remaining sands of the year are running out, let us remember, that God requires "that which is past"—

I. A REVIEW OF OUR PAST MEANS AND PRIVILEGES. God judges of things as they are: he knows that the body is nothing to the soul, or time to eternity. He has therefore graciously provided for our spiritual and everlasting welfare. He remembered us in our low estate, and devised a way in which his mercy could be exercised in harmony with his justice. This purpose of grace, formed before the foundation of the world, was accomplished in the fulness of time. The Friend of sinners came to seek and to save that which was lost. He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. "All things are now ready." But you are to be made ready too. Hence the dispensation of the Gospel, and all the advantages with which you have been indulged. By these, I mean your having been born in a land of vision where the Saviour of the world is known. I mean, your having enjoyed the blessings of the Reformation, which gave each of you the Scriptures in your mother tongue;—in the original, the Bible would have been no more to you than a

fine well of water covered by a rock, which you could not move, or as so many beautiful pictures hung up in a dark room; but now the stone is rolled away from the well's mouth, and these pictures are placed in open day. I mean, your having had the word of life, not only to read, but also to hear. I mean, your having had ministers to call you to repentance, to warn you of your danger, to beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God. I mean, the various ordinances of the sanctuary, and all the helps to seriousness and devotion which the goodness of God has afforded you. These means of grace are unspeakably important, and you have had them in rich profusion: you have had "line upon line, and precept upon precept." During the past year only you have to account for fifty-two sabbaths, and perhaps more than one hundred sermons!—What influence have all these had upon your minds? Are you crucified to the world? Are you denying yourselves, and taking up your cross, and following the Saviour? Are your affections more spiritual, your principles more powerful, your minds more enlightened? Must we address you as our Lord did his disciples, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" or as the Apostle did the Hebrews, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat"?

Oh! let me call upon you to review all your opportunities and means of instruction and improvement, and compare yourselves with them. See whether the end of them has been answered at all; and whether your proficiency has been proportioned in any degree to the number and value of your privileges. Do not

think your concern with them is all over—"God requireth that which is past." What is become of these advantages? To what purposes have you applied them? Where are the fruits of them?—They were given you as talents to improve; and if they *have* been *useless*, be assured they *will* prove *injurious*. If they do not save, they will condemn; and if they are not the "savour of life unto life," they are the "savour of death unto death."

The proprietor of the vineyard said, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none." Observe this. You see God distinctly notices *how many* seasons of unprofitableness people have passed through. And if he thought of cutting down this tree because in a favourable situation it had yielded nothing for *three* years only, what can he resolve but the immediate destruction of those individuals who have been fruitless under the means of grace for ten, twenty, perhaps forty or sixty years! Surely the vine-dresser himself cannot implore for such, one year, one month, one week more! "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

II. HE REQUIRES A REVIEW OF PAST MERCIES. When humble and attentive minds look back, their mercies appear so many, that it is impossible to enumerate them. And hence divines have taught Christians to serve their mercies as botanists do flowers—to class them: or as astronomers deal with the stars—to form them into constellations. They tell them, in looking back, to think of mercies temporal and spiritual; mercies public and private; mercies personal and relative. They tell them to think of continued mercies, restored mercies; and of

preventing and delivering mercies. They would have them also fix their minds on particular instances—for instances affect much more powerfully than things in a mass. They teach them also not to overlook the circumstances which enhance their blessings; such as are derived from their seasonableness, their utility. Take their advice, and pursue this plan.

How many times has he lulled you to sleep in his arms; fed you at his table; clothed you from his wardrobe! How often has he supplied your wants, and wiped away tears from your eyes! When brought low, has he not helped you? When in jeopardy, has he not defended you? When sickness has alarmed your fears, has he not led you back from the gates of the grave? When accidents have been ready to destroy, have not "all your bones said, who is a Godlike unto thee!" In how many cases has he given us favour in the eyes of our fellow-creatures; and blessed us with the advantages and pleasures of friendship! From what low and obscure beginnings has he raised some of us in the course of his wonder-working providence! and how well does it become us to compare the former—when with our staves we passed over Jordan, with the present, when we are become two bands, and have all things richly to enjoy.

There are few persons who in looking back are not able to perceive some very striking displays of Divine goodness. We do not wish people to be forward to publish these to the world—many of them would not be, and could not be striking to others; but they ought to observe these remarkable interpositions themselves, and to say, with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Nothing can impress or influence our minds when it is forgotten. We should therefore recall our mercies, and place them full before us, that we may feel whether we have rendered according to the benefit done us. How much of our insensibility and ingratitude springs from inattention and a bad memory! and how well may it be said of thousands, as it was of Israel, "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee!"

As it is so necessary to keep things in the mind, and as our memories are so treacherous, it would be well for us, in every possible way, to aid our recollection, and to endeavour to preserve and perpetuate those good feelings, which our mercies produce when we receive them. Thus "Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." And thus Joseph, by the very names of his children, would recall the wonders which the Lord had shown him: "Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: for God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." And hence the command given to Ephraim: "Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities."

If we had indulged a person year after year all through life, should we not require him to think of it; to be sensible of our kindness, and to behave towards us in a manner becoming his obligations?

There is nothing perhaps we feel more painfully than the ungrateful reception of the favours we bestow: and a very few instances of unthankfulness are sufficient to induce us to discontinue our benefits. What then does God think of us? Not only are the expressions of his goodness infinitely more numerous than any favours we can show our fellow-creatures, but they are all undeserved. Our fellow-creatures have claims upon us, and we are bound, as we have opportunity, to do good unto all men. But God is under no obligation to us. All his bounty is grace; and therefore, if he is continually doing us good, and filling our hearts with joy and gladness, surely he expects that the language of our lips, and of our lives, should be, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me!—He requireth that which is past." And he demands,

III. A REVIEW OF OUR PAST SORROWS AND DISTRESSES. With all your supplies and indulgences, you have had your hours of trouble; and have found this world to be a vale of tears. *Can* you forget those seasons in which your worldly comforts fled, your refreshing gourds withered, your beloved friends and relations were removed by death?—Oh! never—"the wormwood and the gall" of such—and such an affliction—"my soul hath it still in remembrance, and is humbled within me." And be not afraid to think of it. "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better;" it is made more serious, and more soft; and thus the soil is improved for wisdom, mid truth, and devotion, to flourish in. Do not derive your morals from the school of the world. Their maxims are in perfect opposition "to the Spirit which is of God." They endeavour to banish

from their minds every thing that has a tendency to do them good. Hence when troubles befall them, the design of which is to bring them to reflection, they do every thing in their power to escape a sense of them, and to prevent the remembrance of them. And thus the kind and salutary purposes of Heaven, in afflicting them, are disregarded, and they go on thoughtlessly, till the "evil day" comes upon them with all its horrors and surprise.

As our troubles are designed to do us good, not only in experience, but also in review, we should labour after a practical remembrance of them. They have been lost upon us, unless they have made us wiser, more sober-minded, and less disposed to expect a rest below the skies. We should judge of the future by the past, and conclude that life will be what it has been, a chequered scene; and that no condition, no connexion, will afford us unmixed happiness. Surely, after the experience of years of vanity, we should begin to gird up the loins of our minds, and to declare plainly that we seek a better country. Surely these disappointments and regrets urge us to say with David, "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee;" or, with Micah, "Therefore will I look unto the Lord, and will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me!" We cannot now plead ignorance: our dreams have been disturbed: we are awake—and it is high time to arise. It is high time that the trifler should become a man and the man a Christian.

It is an awful thing to come out of trouble: for it always leaves us better or worse than it finds us. We should therefore ask with peculiar concern—"What benefit have I derived from such a visitation of

Divine Providence? The rod spoke—did I hear its message? The physician has been employed—is my distemper even beyond the reach of medicine? I have lost the life of my friend—and have I lost his death too? My relation has entered the joy of his Lord—I have one reason for loving earth less, and do I love it more! one reason for loving heaven more, and do I love it less?

Past afflictions should also teach us not to be too much dejected or dismayed in prospect of future ones. For how has it boon with us? We feared as we entered the cloud, but the cloud was big with mercy, and poured down blessings. What terrified us in imagination, we bore with cheerfulness. When the day of trial came, we had grace to help in time of need; and it was found sufficient for us. And our Cod is the same, and has promised that he will never leave us nor forsake us.

And, oh! happy is he who, in reviewing his griefs, can say, “Well, so many of my troubles are gone for ever. So many steps of my wearisome journey I have taken—and the hour is not far off that shall end the toilsome pilgrimage.”

“O most delightful hour, by man
 Experienc'd here below—
 The hour that terminates his span,
 His folly and his woe!

“Worlds should not bribe me back to tread
 Again life's dreary waste;
 To see my days again o'erspread
 With all the gloomy past.

“My home henceforth is in the skies—
 Earth, seas, and sun, adieu;
 All heaven unfolded to my eyes,
 I've no regret for you.”

IV. GOD REQUIRES US TO REVIEW OUR PAST SINS. Many of these have grown out of our privileges, our mercies, and our trials. They have been attended with singular aggravations. They are more in number than the hairs of our head. In many things we offend all.

It is well if, upon a review of the year, we can exculpate ourselves from sins committed against man—but what are these, compared with the offences which we have committed against God! Indeed all sin is really committed against God. There is not a duty which we owe our fellow-creatures but he has enjoined the observance of. He has commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and therefore every deviation from this rule is a transgression of his law, and a provocation of his anger. But when we judge ourselves more immediately in relation to him, when we consider what he has righteously required of us, and reflect upon our omissions of duty, and our actual departures from him, in thought, word, and deed, we are compelled to exclaim—“Who can understand his errors?” The review is painful—but it is useful, it is necessary.

It will lead us to admire the longsuffering of God, in bearing with us year after year. Though we have proved such cumberers of the ground, he has still spared us. Though we have so often provoked him, he has not destroyed us. We may look upon each other this evening with astonishment, and say, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.”

It will be a call to repentance. This always commences in a conviction of sin, and is daily brought into exercise by fresh discoveries of its remaining ex-

istence. "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them."

It will humble us. And we need every check to pride, for we are prone to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. But what are we? Have we lived a day without being fools, loiterers, undutiful servants, unfaithful stewards? And what reason can we have to be proud?

It will promote charity. Wo shall he tender towards others, in proportion as wo deal honestly and severely with ourselves. The most effectual way to take us off from beholding the mote in our brothers' eye is, to employ ourselves in extracting the beam from our own. We have all our infirmities, though they may not be precisely of the same kind with those which lead us so rigorously to condemn others. We are all "in the body, and should consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted."

It will be a spur to diligence. Do you ask, in what are we to use diligence? This depends, in some respects, upon the condition you are in. Perhaps to this hour some of you have been anxious about every thing, except the pardon of your sins. While these remain unforgiven, the wrath of God abideth on you, and you are every moment in danger of sinking into the lowest hell. It is obviously therefore your duty immediately and earnestly to seek after an interest in Christ, by whom alone you can be justified freely from all things.

But diligence equally becomes those of you who hope that you are already partakers of this blessing. You can never do enough for him who has saved you by his grace. You have much lost time to redeem, and much lost ground to recover. When you ought to

have been running, you have been standing still—perhaps drawing back. Some, who began the divine life long after you, are now far before you on the heavenly road. You are surrounded with dangers which require incessant vigilance and prayer. You have a thousand mistakes to rectify, and numberless excellences to acquire. What is the life of a good man? What is it that distinguishes him from others—but a faithful investigation of his faults: an attention to moral improvement; an endeavour to make each day a practical criticism on the past? He observes *how* he was hindered: and remarks *where* he fell, or was *likely* to fall. And thus he levies a contribution of profit even upon his losses; and derives wisdom from his ignorance, strength from his weakness, and zeal from his indifference.

To urge you to this four-fold review, Remember the intimation we gave you at the beginning of this address, and which is so fully expressed in the words of the Apostle—"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Therefore, judge yourselves, that you may not be condemned with the wicked. This account will be personal, public, and impartial. "He will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And whence will he bring them? From the book of his remembrance: there he has recorded all your means and mercies, troubles and sins. From the book of your own memory: there also they are secured. For there is a difference between remembrance and memory; the former often fails, but what is inscribed upon the latter abides indelibly, and only requires something to shine upon the letters to render it legible. Have you not ob-

served, that what seemed dead in the mind only required circumstances to revive it? With what freshness and force have things long forgotten sprung up in the memory when recalled by occurrences! Thus all the history of man will hereafter be re-traced—re-traced in order to be tried—and tried in order to be approved or condemned. “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

With this solemn thought, let us close the period of our time that is now going to be numbered with the years before the Flood. It has seen many carried down to their graves, and has brought us so much nearer our own. “The fathers—where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?” “Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.” And when a few years are come, we shall go the way whence we shall not return. We are accomplishing, as an hireling, our days; and our neighbours, our friends, our relations, will soon seek us—but—we shall not be.

Let us sing:

“Lord, what a feeble piece
Is this our mortal frame!
Our life, how poor a trifle’t is,
That scarce deserves the name!

“Alas, the brittle clay,
That built our body first!
And ev’ry month, and ev’ry day,
'Tis mould’ring back to dust.

“Our moments fly apace,
Nor will our minutes stay;
Just like a flood, our busy days
Are sweeping us away.

“Well, if our days must fly,
We’ll keep their end in sight;
We’ll spend them all in wisdom’s way,
And let them speed their flight.

“They’ll waft us sooner o’er
This life’s tempestuous sea;
Soon we shall reach the peaceful shore
Of bless’d eternity. ”

DISCOURSE XXXI.

OUR IGNORANCE OF FUTURITY.

[NEW YEAR'S DAY.]

“So soon as I shall see how it will go with me.” PHIL. ii. 23.

I HAVE the pleasure to address you on the first day of another year. The day is only distinguished from others by human institution; but this has given it various advantages and characters, natural and civil, intellectual and moral. It is often a season of peculiar transactions; in which persons balance their accounts, commence business, form connexions. It is a period marked by humanity and benevolence. Children beseech time mercifully to spare the guides of their youth. The father and mother hope to see their dear offspring long coming around them. The husband congratulates the desire of his eyes, and the wife hails the companion of her journey. Friendship renews every lively desire; and all, however indifferent at other times, yield to custom, and wish your returns of this day to be many and happy.

It is a season of thankfulness and joy. We praise the Preserver of men, who has held our souls in life,

and carried us through the unnumbered dangers of another year—while our feelings are tempered to solemnity by the reflection, that many have finished their course, and that we look for some of our own relations or acquaintances in vain!

For it is a period of seriousness and recollection. It reminds us of the instability of the world, and the rapidity of time. Of this indeed, every day and every hour should remind us; but the changes made, and the losses occasioned by these variations, are too common and inconsiderable to awaken reflection. But the termination of a year rouses even the careless, impresses even the insensible. And if we do not allow the subject to operate on the mind, who does not feel for the moment the sentiment of Job, “When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return”?

But there is another relation in which we may consider this day. When we begin a new division of time, we naturally look forward, and endeavour to penetrate our future condition. The prospect is intimately connected with many of our duties, and will become injurious or profitable, according to the manner in which it is indulged. Let us then confine our attention to this view of the subject. And consider, I. OUR INABILITY TO DETERMINE OUR FUTURE CIRCUMSTANCES. II. SHOW WHAT USE WE SHOULD MAKE OF OUR IGNORANCE. III. SEARCH FOR SOMETHING TO SATISFY AND COMFORT US, UNDER ALL OUR SUSPENSION AND UNCERTAINTY.

I. Though the endowments which distinguish the Apostles were extraordinary, they were not absolute, but limited in their exercise by him who gave them. In some cases Paul could discern spirits, and

foretell things to come—but in others he was held in ignorance, and could only reason from probabilities. 'I'lius he said to the church of Ephesus, "And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there." He was now a prisoner at Rome. His trial was depending, but the result of it he was unable to determine. He could therefore only form his plan conditionally, mid resolve to send Timothy to the Philippians "so soon as he should see how it would go with him."

And will not this apply more fully to our circumstances?

When we look into futurity, all that meets the eye in a dark unknown. Even in those cases in which God has announced things to come, the prophecy is wrapped up in so much obscurity, that the fulfilment and the explanation generally arrive together. We can previously ascertain nothing. And how often has this been exemplified in the calculations of wise men—and some not very wise—with regard to those predictions which remain to be accomplished! Not only have they been drawn off from more useful duties, but they have frequently survived their laborious schemes, and been ashamed of the confidence with which they have published them. After gazing from the tower of their folly, they found that God had gone by in another road than that which they appointed him, and had used other instruments than those which they had put into his hands. They did not consider that the advantage of prophecy is to be derived from the completion; and that so far is a previous knowledge of it from being necessary, that it would in many instances prove hurtful, and often prevent the accomplishment. It is not for us

to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put into his own power.

In the course of a few years only, how have all our conjectures been disappointed! More than once we imagined that we had seized the clew, and the skein of Providence seemed likely to be unravelled; but suddenly we found it more entangled than before. And would any one now undertake to determine what will be the state of the nations of the earth a few months hence?

Sometimes a cloud no bigger than a man's hand has overspread the heavens; and from apparently inadequate causes events have arisen the most astonishing: while, on the other hand, the best-concerted plans and the most powerful resources have failed. Some are offended at the word chance; but the Scripture employs it, and it is no improper term. If indeed we apply it to God, it is profane—for "known unto God are all his works from the beginning; his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." But what counsel is to him, chance is to us. We know nothing before it arrives. The consequences of things would be known if these things themselves moved on in one even regular course, and always terminated uniformly in the same manner—but when we see them often turning up contrary to their natural tendency—when we see that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill"—our anticipations must be always liable to uncertainty. "Time and chance happeneth to them all!"

What says your own history? He has led you, but it has been by "a way which you knew not and

perhaps you hardly know it now. How wonderful have been the removals of your habitation, and the connexions which you have formed! How strange and unlooked for have been both your friends and your enemies! Some have acquired wealth, and others filled offices towards which they could not have formerly aspired. Had these changes a few years before been foretold, they would have appeared incredible; and the subjects of them would have said, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be!"

So little have we been capable of judging aright, that, we have in a thousand instances mistaken our real welfare: we have desired enjoyments which would have been a snare; and have been afraid of trials which have proved to be some of our chief mercies. When he was approaching to "empty us from vessel to vessel"—to keep us from "settling upon our lees when he came to prune away our suckers—that we "might bring forth more fruit we mistook the friend for an enemy; and said, "All these things are against me," when they were "all working together for our good!"

Nor have you any information that can enable you to see how things will go with you for a single year. You know not how it will go with your health this year—what seeds of disorder may spring up in your frame; what accidents may befall your persons. You know not how it will go with your circumstances this year—what losses or successes you may experience; what new scenes of enjoyment may be opened, or what old ones may be dried up. You know not how it will go with your relations this year—whether you will be indulged with their continu-

ance or stripped of their company. Perhaps the eye of Providence now sees the hearse standing before your door; and you trying to go in to take a last view of your happiness, before it be committed to "the house appointed for all living." The Lord preserve this family! but in what different circumstances may the members of it assemble together on the return of this day! The wife may be seen in widowed weeds! The children may appear Orphans! The sister may say, "Alas! my brother!"

Let us, II. SHOW WHAT USE WE SHOULD MAKE OF THIS IGNORANCE.

Let us learn from it our littleness; let us confess that we are nothing, and that God is all in all. "Vain man would be wise and there is nothing of which he is so proud as his knowledge—but there is nothing that should make him more humble. For what can we know? "Who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?" Can he distinguish between appearances and reality? Can he see the combination, the dependences, and the effects of things? Does he "boast himself of to-morrow," when he "knoweth not what a day may bring forth"? "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Are we then qualified to be our own guides, or to manage our own affairs? "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." "He shall choose our inheritance for us." "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too

high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

Secondly. Since we cannot see how things will go with us, we should beware of presumption. "Go to now, ye that say, 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 shall be on the morrow." The Apostle here gives us tlic scheme of an unsanctified tradesman. He resolves to go without delay to some place where he can carry on business to advantage. His aim is not fraud, but fair gain in the lawful way of buying and selling. And where is the harm of all this? Is not diligence laudable? Are we not commanded to provide for our own house? Wherein then does this man appear blamable? Perhaps he was actuated by avarice; and was seeking not a subsistence, but a splendid independence. Perhaps he was influenced by imprudence, and was not aware of the bad effects of roving abroad, or of changing his scene of action: for "as a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place and "a rolling stone gathers no moss." This may be true—but what this man is here condemned for is this—God is not in all his thoughts. These words, "*I will*," are too big for him. Regardless of God, he engages to live a year, and all the year to be successful. He seems to exclude the possibility of sickness or accidents; of unfaithful servants or insolvent debtors; of dear purchases and cheap sales: as if he foresaw and secured all the events of the year himself—while he was not sure that he should be able even to *begin* his journey, and knew not what should be even on the *morrow*. Well

does the Apostle call this rejoicing "boasting," and say that "all such rejoicing is evil."

Things may be within the reach of our knowledge and not of our power. But how can that be within the reach of our power that does not fall under our knowledge? How can we ward off dangers of which we are not apprized? How can we arrange and regulate occurrences of which we can have no foresight? Now this is our case. We know only the *present*: and what superstructure can we build on such a narrow foundation? How often, even while forming a plan, has the lapse of a few days so varied circumstances, that we have been compelled to new-model it, or to abandon it altogether! "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise, for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools."

We dare not infer the future from the present. David erred here. After he had been delivered from Saul, and other enemies, he tells us that he had too much confidence. And in "my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong but hear what he adds—"Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." The rich have been often stripped of their wealth; and the caressed of their honour. Many a fair morning has turned out a very stormy day.

Thirdly, the same considerations which should check presumption, should also prevent despair.

Seeing we know not how it will go with us, why should we look only for evil? It may be far better than the foreboding of our fears. Our deliverance may be much nearer than we imagine.

“The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
Can give us day for night,
Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
To rivers of delight.”

Indeed, our extremity is often his opportunity. It is often darkest just before break of day. And when the ebbing of the tide is lowest, the flowing is nearest.

Fourthly. Since we see not how it will go with us, let us draw off our attention from future events to present duties. We are to cast not our work, but our care upon the Lord. Duty and means belong to us, but events are entirely his. And he says to us, as the king did to his prime minister: “Attend you to my affairs, and I will attend to yours.” “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Such is the temper and the business of a Christian. The child at school is not to lean his elbow on the table, and vex himself by thinking how he shall find raiment, how he shall get home, how the expense of his education is to be defrayed. He is a learner; he is to mind his book—the father requires no more of him—he will provide. The farmer is not to muse from day to day about the

weather: "Perhaps it may not be a fine season—there may be a blight—and all my labour may be lost." No: but he is to act; he goes forth bearing precious seed, commits it to the ground, and then pursues his other business—and what can his anxiety do afterwards? "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The soldier is to learn his exercise, to obey the word of command, to keep his arms bright, to be always at the post assigned him; but he is not to neglect all this, by busying himself in drawing plans of the campaign, and describing the duties of the general.

Finally. Our ignorance of what may befall us should lead us to seek after a preparation for all events. Do you ask, where shall we find it? I answer, in the blessed influence of Divine grace. This drew prayer from Jacob when he went forth with a staff; and praise when he returned with a fortune. This preserved Daniel in the court of Darius and in the lions' den. This enabled Paul to say, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And seeing we have not the ordering of the weather, nor the choice of our food—happy is the man, whose constitution enables him to bear *any* weather, and whose appetite enables him to relish *any* food.

This leads us, III. To inquire WHAT THERE IS TO

ENCOURAGE US UNDER ALL THIS DARKNESS AND UNCERTAINTY. You say, I see not how it will go with inr, And it is well you do not. You know as much ns it is good for you. For it is with the mind as it is with the senses. A greater degree of hearing would incommode us; and a nicer degree of seeing would terrify us. If our eyes could see things microscopically, we should lie afraid to move. Thus our knowledge is suited to our situation and circumstances. Were we informed beforehand of the good things prepaid! for us by Providence, from that moment we should cense to enjoy the blessings we possess, become indifferent to present duties, and be filled with restless impationoe. Or suppose the things foreknown were gloomy and adverse, what dismay and despondency would be the consequence of the discovery! and how many times should we suffer in imagination what we now only endure once in reality! Who would wish to draw back a veil that saves them from so many disquietudes! If some of you had formerly known the troubles through which you have since waded, you would have fainted under the prospect.

You say. You see not how it will go with you; but God does. And he is your friend, and your father, and loves you better than you love yourselves, and is far more concerned for your happiness than you can be. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" Nothing is hid from him. "He knows thy walking through this great wilderness. He knows thy soul in adversity." He sees all thy dangers and all thy wants. Nothing can surprise him whose eyes are in every place. Nothing can elude his notice who numbers

the hairs of thy head. When Abraham was called to leave his own country, and his father's house, he obeyed; and "he went out, not knowing whither he went." But though he knew not "whither he went," he knew with whom: he knew that he followed a guide who could not lead him astray. And thus Job relieved his mind under a pressure of perplexity: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

You say, You see not how it will go with you. But you know "that it shall be well with them that fear God." You know that if you are his, though your way may be thorny, "your shoes shall be iron and brass and that as "your day is, so shall your strength be." You know that love is the spring of all your trials, as well as of your comforts. And that though no "chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby." You know that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." In a word—and is it not enough to know this?—you know that "*all things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are called according to his purpose.*"

You say, You see not how it will go with you. But your ignorance only regards *time*: all in *eternity* is sure. Beyond this land of darkness dwells ever-

lasting light. Your uncertainty only regards the roughness or smoothness of the way—for you know what stands at the end of it—it is your Father's house, where are many mansions !

“See the kind angels at the gates
 inviting us to come;
 There Jesus the forerunner waits
 To welcome travellers home.”

Yes, you know how it will go with you there. There you will “enter into peace;” there “the days of your mourning will be ended;” there you will be “for ever with the Ford”!

“There shall we see his face,
 And never, never sin;
 There from the rivers of his grace
 Drink endless pleasures in.”

Ah! blessed privilege—and happy they who can enjoy it! They have enough to relieve them in every distress. Their afflictions must be light and momentary indeed, when they are persuaded that they tire working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But this is not my case. My perplexity seems to increase in proportion as I advance. To me the other world seems darker than *litis*; and it is a gloomy valley that leads to it. Oh! if I knew that all would *end* well!—But this is that which adds a pressure to every burden, and embitters nil my comforts—I see not how it will go with me
 AT LAST.

My Christian friend: I designed not, by what I have said, to intimate that such a persuasion is essential to your safety, but only that it is a desirable

privilege; and in this we are agreed. But remember, *it is attainable*. You may have “a good hope through grace,” and “the full assurance of hope.” You are commanded to seek it. In the mean time I would observe, that the solicitude you feel is no bad evidence in your favour. In proportion as the mind feels the importance of salvation, it longs for certainty, and, fearful of deception, is not satisfied with slender evidence. May the Lord, you are now following sorrowful and in darkness, shine upon your path, and “fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

But if we cannot begin the new year with confidence and joy, let us do it with seriousness and prayer. Let us resolve to walk before him in newness of life. Let us commit ourselves to the care of his Providence, to the word of his grace, to the agency of his Holy Spirit. And let us lift up our hearts with our voices while we sing,

“And now, my soul, another year
Of thy short life is past;
I cannot long continue here,
And this may prove my last.

“Much of my dubious life is gone,
Nor will return again;
And swift my passing moments run,
And few perhaps remain.

“Awake, my soul: with solemn care,
Thy true condition learn—
What are thy hopes, how sure, how fair;
And what thy great concern!

“Now a new scene of time begins,
Set out afresh for heaven;
Seek pardon for thy former sins,
In Christ so freely given.

“Devoutly yield thyself to God,
And on his grace depend;
With zeal pursue the heavenly road,—
Nor fear a happy end.”

DISCOURSE XXXII.

RELIGION MORE THAN FORMALITY.

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”

2 TIM. iii. 5.

AND what is godliness? It is the tendency of the mind towards God: and is exercised in believing in him, loving and fearing him, holding communion with him, resembling his perfections, and employing ourselves in his service. It is the introduction of God into all our concerns, our acknowledging him in all our ways, our doing all we do in his Name, and with a reference to his authority and glory, through the mediation of the Saviour, and by the influences of the Holy Spirit.

This is godliness; and nothing else deserves the name. This godliness, however, has its *form* and its *power*; and this distinction enables us to arrange *four classes of characters*.

For, first, *there are some who have neither the power nor the form of godliness*. They are as destitute of the pretension as they are of the reality; and often glory in this—for we read of some “who glory in their shame.”

Secondly, *there are some who possess both the power and the form.* And these are the most worthy of our esteem and imitation. May their number daily increase!

Thirdly, *there are some who have the power of godliness, but not the form.* Their religion is a kind of disembodied spirit: and because some have laid too much stress upon outward things, they lay too little. They carry their notions of the spirituality of divine worship so far as to exclude social considerations; the influence of the body over the mind; and the use which the Supreme Being himself makes of our senses, to aid our graces, and which is simply the principle upon which baptism and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper are founded. They do not remember, that though the substance be confessedly the main thing, circumstances are often very beautiful and impressive and beneficial; that we are not only to possess, but to profess religion; that we are not only to serve God individually, but to unite ourselves to a body of Christians, and walk in holy fellowship, "striving together for the faith of the Gospel and that we are bound not only to "glorify God in our spirits," but "in our bodies also, which are God's." So that the form, when attached to the principle, is so far from being improper, that it is commendable and important.

But here we have reached the Fourth class to which we referred, *those who have the form, but deny the power.* These are awful characters; and therefore, says the Apostle, to Timothy, "From such withdraw thyself." We should do this as much as possible with regard to their persons; but, above all, with regard to their, state. In order to this—let us.

I. CONSIDER THE POWER OF GODLINESS; and, II. INQUIRE WHENCE IT IS THAT SO MANY WHO DENY IT ARE STILL DISPOSED TO MAINTAIN THE FORM.

I. THE "POWER" OF GODLINESS IS HERE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE MERE "FORM:" and indeed it is easy to show the difference between them. The one is principally external, and deals in words—the other is internal, actuating our feelings, and governing our actions. The one is the name—the other is the thing; the one is the appearance—the other is the reality. The one is the body—the other is the soul, that inspires every member, and penetrates every particle of the frame. The one is the picture—the other is the original: the one shows us the Christian on canvas—the other presents him to us alive and in motion.

Now what I want to convince you of here is this—that real godliness is more than a show, a fancy, a form—it has an efficacy in it—there is a power attending it. For consider how it is produced and maintained. It is, in its existence as well as in its revelation, a Divine principle. Hear how the Apostle speaks of it in his epistle to the Ephesians. "God is able," says he, "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"—"according to the power that worketh in us." I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—"that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." And again, he prays for them, that "they may know—what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own

right hand, in the heavenly places:" where we find—that the same almighty energy which quickened into endless life the entombed body of our Lord, is actually put forth in the renovation of the believer: "that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also walk in newness of life." Hence it is called "the life of God;" and "the participation of the Divine nature." What is the water that the Saviour promises to give to those that ask him? "Living water." "And," says he, "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Here is nothing stagnant and dead; but every thing is expressive of influence and activity.—Thus the Apostle tells the Thessalonians that the Gospel came to them—"not in word only, but in power and that they received it, not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, "which effectually worketh also in you that believe." And thus, to view the subject more separately, and in parts, we read of "the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope."

Observe the subjects of Divine grace. This principle distinguishes them from others: and is capable of producing a holy singularity. If you have only the form of godliness, there will be no practical difference between you and others; if servants—you will be as idle, as gossiping, as regardless of the property of your employers, as others: if wives—you will be as unsubmissive; if husbands—as tyrannical: if tradesmen—as grasping and over-reaching as others. But if you have the power—you will resemble good Nehemiah. "The former governors," says he, "were chargeable to the people—but so did not I, because

of the fear of God." Piety would not suffer him to act like them. And if you are under the influence of it, you will not, in your various relations and circumstances, be borne down by the errors and vices around you: but you will be *able* to act uprightly: you will be kept from consulting custom, and be constrained to listen to conscience: you will not be permitted to sin as do others, or "sleep as do others—you will not be conformed to this world, but be transformed, by the renewing of the mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." A dead fish can swim *with* the stream, but a live one can swim *against* it.

Yea, this principle distinguishes the man from himself. Thus, under the influence of it, the drunkard becomes sober; the swearer learns to fear an oath, and the liar a lie. He that stole, steals no more, but labours. The churl becomes liberal, and the niggard bountiful. It cannot be otherwise. If the man has been moral before, he continues to avoid the same vices, to perform the same duties, and to attend the same means of grace, as before; but from very different motives, and in a very different manner. He has now also much more to engage his attention.

His regard is no longer confined to externals only, but he is taken up with "the hidden man of the heart;" and prays, with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Hence spring exercises to which he was once a stranger; and he feels himself engaged in a warfare which often perplexes him, and leads him to exclaim, "If I am his, why am I thus? "

Behold then the life of the real Christian, and trace tlic operation of the power of godliness there.

It appears with regard to the ordinances of divine worship. Others who have only the form, come without expectation and prayer, and return without reflection and concern: they are satisfied with their attendance—but he is not. He is anxious to derive spiritual advantage from it: he enters the closet before he approaches the temple, and his language is, “O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!” Oh that I may be of “the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

It appears with regard to the dissipations of the world. He voluntarily resigns those amusements in which he once placed so much of his happiness: and he returns no more to them. And why? If he were mindful of the country whence he came, he has opportunity to return: he is surrounded with the same allurements as others—why then does he not engage in these diversions again?—Because he has found something infinitely more noble and more satisfying. And a greater good has power to abolish the impressions of a less. When the sun arises, the stars disappear. And the grapes of Eshcol cause us to forget the leeks and onions of Egypt.

You may see it in the mortification of sin. He denies himself; he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts; he plucks out a right eye, and cuts off a right hand. You may see it in what he is willing to sacrifice and to suffer. Read history: read the book of martyrs; read the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews—and see what the force of this powerful principle can accomplish. There you see an Abraham, at the command of God,

“leaving his own country, and his father’s house, and going out, not knowing whither he went:” and, in obedience to the same authority, “when tried, offering up Isaac; his son, his only son; of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” There you see a “Moses, when come to years, refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephtha; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

“But we are not called to such scenes as these.” Blessed be God, you are not. But every Christian, says Luther, is a piece of a martyr; “yea,” says the Apostle, “and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” There is the same malignity in human nature against vital religion as formerly; and it will operate as far as it is permitted by circumstances. And when religion is vital, it will enable a man to abide the test; and resolve to go forward, notwithstanding the ridicule of infidels, the sneer of worldlings, and the reproaches of relations and friends. And this requires a degree of the same grace as martyrdom.

The vigour of this principle appears also in other sufferings. How many are there at this moment, enduring a variety of grief in private, whose names will never be published in history, but who, in the eye of God, are greater than the admired heroes of the age! They act nobly, without the prospect, or the desire of notice, or of fame: they breathe no revenge towards instruments; they neither charge God foolishly nor unkindly in any of the disappointments and afflictions which have befallen them; they are strangers to impatience and repining; and all you hear is, “I mourn, but I do not murmur. I pray, but I do not prescribe. ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.’ I have more reason for thankfulness than complaint. I know not what he is doing with me—but ‘he knoweth the way that I take.’ Whether the trial be removed or continued, increased or diminished, it is with him to determine—so it should be—and so it shall be. ‘Behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him!’”

Yea, we have seen and heard the saints “joyful in glory, and shouting aloud upon their dying beds;” raised above the fear of “the king of terrors” himself, and exulting, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Surely, therefore, in the religion of the blessed Jesus, there is an excellency, an efficacy, a power.

But this power, derived from a Divine influence, and distinguishing the Christian from others and from himself—this power, which enlivens him in ordinances, raises him above the world, subdues his corruptions, and supports and comforts him in all his sufferings—this power, many, alas! are ignorant of, and in works, if not in words, really deny.

II. THEY YET ASSUME AND MAINTAIN THE FORM—and some of the reasons which induce them to do this are the following:

First, because the *form* is comparatively easy. The difficulty lies in the *power*. It is an easy thing to pretend to be rich; to purchase splendid apparel and furniture; and live in style upon the property of others—which is the fashion of the day. This differs exceedingly from the economy and industry and labour of the man who in his calling gains a competency lawfully. It is an easy thing to profess to be wise: but to acquire knowledge by the weariness of study; by rising early and sitting up late; by keeping the mind always alive, and attentive to perceive, appropriate, and classify fresh intellectual stores—here is the difficulty. And thus it is in the case before us. The *form* of godliness requires no strenu-

ous exertions; demands no costly sacrifices. It is the *power* of it that renders the Christian life a "striving to enter in at the strait gate;" a "pressing into the kingdom of God a "wrestling with principalities and powers a "running the race that is set before us;" a "fighting the good fight of faith." And it is this too that incurs opposition from the world. It will indeed be acknowledged that sometimes the very form draws forth the rancour of others: and of all people those are most to be pitied who are persecuted for what they have not; who are reproached as Christians without deserving the honour. But, upon a nearer inspection of these mere formalists, the world is generally made quite easy. They see that they were mistaken in the characters; they find that they are "of their own," though wearing a religious uniform. And discovering in them their own spirit, which disposes them to plead for their vanities and leads them to indulge in the very same practices, as far as they can safely do it—they will readily allow them their odd way of thinking, or their peculiar observances; yea, they may even consent to go with them to hear their favourite preacher, if these formalists will go with them in return to see their favourite 'actor. The real Christian may say to these nominal ones, as his Lord and Saviour did to the Jews; "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the deeds thereof are evil."

Secondly, Persons are sometimes induced to take up the form of godliness through the influence of their connexions. From some of them they feel the influence of authority; from some, the influence of friendship; from some, the influence of business.

For with many, "gain is godliness and they assume religion because they imagine they can succeed better in the church than in the world. This often decides the place of their hearing. Some of them also pay for seats in *several* places of worship—it makes them known—and is likely to increase customers.

Though religion particularly and practically considered be obnoxious to mankind, yet, viewed superficially and in the gross, it commonly obtains something like applause; and few would choose to have any thing to do with a person who avowed himself to be irreligious in principle and practice. Many therefore nicely determine the boundary of safety; and, without going so far as to give offence, they will go far enough to procure respect. Hence, says Henry, "they assume a form of godliness to take away their reproach, but not the power of it to take away their sin."

Thirdly, They avail themselves of the form of godliness to preserve peace within. For, without something of religion, conscience would rage and clamour; but, by means of this, it is amused and quieted; and this renders it so extremely dangerous. For, engaged in a number of duties, he presumes on the goodness of his state; and, feeling no fear, he makes no inquiry. The man is secure without being safe; and, while "poor towards God," supposes himself to be "rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing."

But "what is the hope of the formalist though he has gained?" And what does he gain? He may pass for religious in the opinion of his fellow-creatures, and lull conscience to sleep—But does he obtain the

approbation of God? Can he possibly elude his discernment? "His eyes are as a flame of fire," which will pierce through every pretension, and consume every disguise. No. "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

And, to draw towards a close—If such a subject as this was ever necessary, it is peculiarly so in the present day, when hearing the gospel entails so little reproach, and the profession of religion is so cheap, having become so common. Let me therefore beseech you to examine yourselves by this solemn test; and to inquire, whether you have the power, as well as the form of godliness. It is a good evidence in your favour, if you are willing to come to the light; and can even address yourselves to God in the language of David: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

And be it remembered, that in a case of such vast importance, and where the consequences of deception are not to be repaired, we cannot be too anxious to be right. It is better to have a timorous conscience, than a presumptuous one: and to be unnecessarily distressed for awhile, and—be safe—than to enjoy a carnal confidence, and—perish for ever!

To induce you to seek after real godliness, you

would do well to reflect on “the exceeding great and precious promises” which are attached to it in the Scriptures of truth. If you have the life and power of religion, you will indeed be engaged in exercises and trials which the mere formalist escapes—but then you will have privileges and hopes of which he can never partake. He does not go far enough to relish its enjoyments or amass its riches. But “for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.” “The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.” “Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” For eternity—here is the assurance of deliverance from every evil, the possession of all good, the vision and the presence of their Lord and Saviour for ever. And for time—here is the certainty—not of health, of property, of ease and friendship—but what is far better—the *persuasion*, that “all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose!”

“Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name!”

DISCOURSE XXXIII.

AUTUMN.

“We all do fade as a leaf!” ISAIAH lxiv. 6.

THE inspired writers often send us to the animal, and even to the vegetable world for instruction: and it must be confessed, that they are wonderfully adapted to strike and to admonish us.

The misfortune, however, is, that, “seeing many things, we observe not.” The means of instruction are plentifully dispensed, but a mind to use them is rarely found.

Yet such a mind it behoves us to cultivate. And when the attention is awakened, and we are willing to learn, every thing becomes a teacher or a monitor. “The heavens declare the glory of God. All his works praise him.” The ravens encourage us to trust in him for food; and the lilies for clothing. His voice is heard in the thunder: he whispers also in the breeze: and even a falling leaf preaches a lesson to man.

From our windows, or in our walks, we may now see the trees shedding their honours. Isaiah tells us

that this is an emblem of ourselves—"For we all do fade as a leaf."

It is observable that he does not compare life to a tree. An oak by slow degrees rises to perfection, and long maintains its glory. For ages it defies the fury of the elements, and at last, after long and repeated assaults, it gradually decays, or, sullenly submitting to the axe, sinks slowly and crashing upon the ground. Many trees are much less solid and durable than the oak. But man is compared to none of them—his image is "a leaf."

A leaf, while it hangs on, adorns the branches, and looks beautiful; it is the shelter of the fruit and the dress of the tree; it waves to the wind and murmurs to the ear. But how weak, how frail is it! By what a slender bond does it retain its situation! How small a force is required to bring it down to the ground! where it soon mixes with the earth, and is no more to be distinguished from it.

A leaf does not always endure a whole season. It is exposed to a thousand disasters. It is often crushed in its prime. Insects gnaw it oft'; the beasts of the field may devour it: winds may scatter it; or it may be shaken down with the fruit. And, between the diseases and accidents to which human nature is liable, few of the human race comparatively attain old age. The Jews formerly reckoned up nine hundred and three diseases; but accidents are absolutely innumerable. A vapour may cause death: our houses may bury us in their ruins: our food may poison us. When we consider the extreme delicacy of the human frame, and the multiplicity of fine and tender parts of which it is composed, the derangement of one of which brings on the dissolution of the whole—the

wonder is, that we ever live a single day to an end! Accordingly many are carried to the grave as soon as they are born. They open their eyes on a vale of tears; weep and withdraw. Others grow in stature, become lovely in form, engaging in manners, amiable in temper, and promising as to wisdom and virtue; these live long enough to engage the affections of their relatives, and then leave them mourning and "refusing to be comforted because they are not."

Others advance further, form connexions, and enter on their busy schemes—but "in that very day, their thoughts perish." Sometimes wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, receive a commission to destroy. Those may be compared to storms, which desolate a whole forest at once, and cover the ground with foliage.

When a leaf falls, it drops irrecoverably. It is otherwise with the tree: "there is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet, through the scent of water, it will bud and bring forth boughs like-a plant." But the leaf has no second spring: it can never be revived. And man is like it. "Man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost and where is he?—Man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." Oh! could prayers and tears bring him back, and rejoin him to the living! But all is vain!—And equally vain are all our wishes and our endeavours to prevent the doom! "O remember that my life is wind; mine eye shall no more see good. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine

eyes are upon me, and I am not. As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more."

But the main thing intended in the image is, the short continuance of its being, and the still shorter duration of its vigour and verdure. Be favourable, ye winds, and, ye beasts of the field, come not to devour—let the leaf remain and flourish. How contracted the measure of its existence—and of its glory! When Jacob was asked how old he was, he answered, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years: few and full of evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage: and I have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." But if he fell short of the age of his ancestors, we come vastly short of his. That man is old. Ask him, how many annual periods of time he has passed through? "Threescore years and ten." Ask him, how life looks in review?—"As a tale that is told; as a dream when one awaketh." Ask him, how it passed away?—"As a flood—swifter than a weaver's shuttle." Ask him, where now are the companions of his youth? How many will he reckon up, who have gone down to the grave, and have seen corruption! and how few remain to be the associates of his hoary hairs! "Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand's breadth, and my age is as nothing before thee; verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity."

And how often does a leaf fade, sooner than it falls! And is it not so with man? If spared, how soon does

he begin to discover infirmities! “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow labour in the preserving, and sorrow in the possessing. The body decays; the head bows down; the beauty consumes away; the hands cannot perform their enterprise; “the grinders cense because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened.” The powers of the mind partake also of the declension. Sir Isaac Newton, before his death, could not comprehend one of his own axioms! The memory drops its treasures. The vigour of fancy fails. Judgment is dethroned. “Man at his best estate is altogether vanity.”

Such is the representation of human nature. For this extends to all; whether old or young, poor or rich, despised or honourable, foolish or wise, yea, wicked or righteous—“we ALL *do fade as a leaf.*” And who is not ready to say, with David, “Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?” But, to enable us to judge properly in this case, and to vindicate the Divine perfections and providence—

Let us remember,

First, That this state of frailty and vanity was not I lie original state of man; but the consequence of transgression. God made man upright and immortal; lint “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned.”

And, Secondly, That it is not his only state. There is another life to which the present is introductory, and in connexion with which it should always be considered. The one is the way; the other in the end. The one is the seed time; the other is

the harvest. The one is a state of probation; the other, of retribution.

Thirdly, The vanity and brevity of the present life, if wisely improved, is advantageous with regard to the future.

It furnishes us with no inconsiderable proof of a world to come. Every thing in such a state as this being unanswerable to our faculties, our wants, and our desires; we are constrained to look out for another.

It urges us towards it, and helps to prepare us for it. Since it is only a troublesome voyage, who would desire its longer continuance? Since all is vanity and vexation of spirit here, are we not even compelled to seek a better, a heavenly country? Since the world is our grand enemy, is it not well to find it rendered so unlovely and unseducing? Now you have only a few days to live; you have no time to trifle, but *must* attend to the things which belong to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes.

This frail life too, in the Fourth place, is continually guarded by a wise and tender Providence. All our times are in his hand. He careth for us. "A sparrow falleth not to the ground without our Heavenly Father: and the very hairs of our head are all numbered."

Let us add two reflections, and conclude. And First, if life be like a fading leaf, let us regard it accordingly—

Let it prevent despair. If life be short, thy troubles cannot, O Christian, be long!

Let us also repress fear. It is little the most powerful can do, and before they strike they may fall. "I, even I am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall

die, and the son of man that shall be made as grass?"

Let it check envy. "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Fret not thyself because of evil doors, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down us the grass, and wither as the green herb."

Let it moderate your attachments and dependence. Make what use you can of a leaf, but do not lean upon it for support; do not hold your estate by it. Regard your present possessions and comforts as vain and vanishing; and detach your affections from things below. "Wilt thou set thy heart on that which is not?" Parents! view your children as uncertain delights. Husbands! remember how easily the desires of your eyes may be removed from you.—To-day we have friends and relations, to-morrow we are alone like a sparrow upon the house-top.

And oh! bring it home to yourselves—*you* are going as well as your comforts. Reflect upon your frailty not only at a funeral, or under sickness, or in old age—but habitually—and immediately. To what purpose is it to put the evil day far off in apprehension, when it is so near in reality? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Go to now, ye that say, 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 shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away."

Let me then ask you. How do matters stand with

regard to another world? Are you born again? Have you a title to heaven or a meetness for it? The grand question is—not “what shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?”—but “*what must I do to be saved?*” You should be principally concerned—not for to-morrow—but for eternity. To-morrow may never come; eternity will. May the Lord prepare us for it!—“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Let us remember, Secondly, that all is not fading. “All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever: and this is the word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto you.”—By means of this everlasting word, you are informed of a Saviour, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—of durable riches—of bags which wax not old—of a crown of life—of “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that FADETH NOT AWAY.”

“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

DISCOURSE XXXIV.

THE DESIGN OF AFFLICTION.

“Therefore, behold, I will hedgo up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, tlmstho shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.” HOSEA ii. 6, 7.

THE language of Scripture is very figurative. And herein lies much of its excellency and utility. For since we derive our knowledge through the medium of the senses, in no other way could spiritual truths ho easily and forcibly lay hold of the mind.

Nothing is more common in the prophecies than to express the relation between God and the Jews of old by the alliance of marriage. He was considered as their husband. Hence they were laid under peculiar obligations to him; and hence their sins had the character of violating the marriage contract.

They were commanded to worship the Lord alone; and Him only were they to serve. But, alas! “they often declined from his ways, and hardened their heart from his fear or, to use the language of the

metaphor: "They went a whoring after other gods; and played the harlot with many lovers." Hence the calamities which befel them. But while these calamities were the effects of sin, they were also the means of bringing them to a proper state of mind. They are therefore considered eventually as mercies: and are spoken of not in a way of threatening, but promise: "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them; then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now."

But what is all this to us? Much every way. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope." God has a people for his name in all ages. And Christians stand in the same relation to him now as the Jews did of old. And are we better than they? In no wise. And were not God's dealings with them designed to be typical of his dealings with us? They were: and, in reading their history, we may peruse our own.

Let us then endeavour to explain and improve the words as applicable to ourselves.

They do not indeed require much explanation. For when God says—"I will hedge up thy way with thorns," it is obvious that he means—I will perplex them, embarrass them; pierce them through with many sorrows. There is another hedge which God raises for his people, and of which we read in the Scripture—it is the hedge of protection. Thus,

speaking of Israel as a vineyard, says God, "I will take away the hedge thereof;" thereby laying it open to the intrusion of beasts and travellers. And thus, wlu'ii Satan surveyed the condition of Job, he saw that he could not touch him without Divine permission—"Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side?"

But the hedge here spoken of is the hedge of affliction, composed of some of those thorns and briers which sin has so plentifully produced in this wilderness world. And the metaphor is taken from a husbandman, who, to keep his cattle in the pasture, and prevent their going astray, fences them in; and the sharper the hedge, the better. Thus God resolves to make our rovings difficult. If we *will go* astray, we must smart for it. "Now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Nihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts."

But he adds—"I will make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." This is another image to convey the same truth, only with this addition—that if lighter afflictions fail of their end, God will employ heavier. They may be foolhardy enough to break through the thorns, and may go on though wounded and bleeding—but they shall not get over the wall—I have stones as well as brambles—I will present insuperable difficulties. Yes, God can deprive us of liberty; he can

reduce our means; he can deprive us of health and property; he can take away the desires of our eyes with a stroke; and easily and effectually stop us in all the ardour of our schemes and enterprises.

It shows us what a variety of troubles God has to dispose of; afflictions of all kinds and of all degrees; suited to our natural disposition and our moral perverseness. It shows us also our obstinacy; that God is compelled to deal with us as with brutes, who are not to be governed by reason and ingenuous motives, but require blows and restraints. So foolish are we and ignorant, so much are we like a beast before him, that we must be hedged in with thorns, and confined in with a wall.

At length, wearied to find their paths, and unable to overtake their lovers, they are convinced of their folly, take shame to themselves, and resolve to go back. To this they are excited not only by present distress, but by former pleasure. They remember the happiness they once enjoyed in the service of God—and say, “What have I any more to do with idols? I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.”

Thus it was with the prodigal. He had destroyed his reputation, and wasted his substance among harlots and in riotous living; he had reduced himself to the most abject condition, and lived on the husks which the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. One day a thought of home struck him—he instantly formed a comparison between his present and his former circumstances—he recollected the honour that attended him before his wanderings; the plenty that crowned his father’s board; how much was always taken away from the table, yea, how much even the

servants left;—and sighed—and said—“How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare—and I perish with hunger!—I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants”—“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: thou shalt she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it hotter with me than now.”

From the passage thus briefly explained, let us glance at four things. The First reminds us of OUR DEPRAVITY. The Second, of THE DIVINE GOODNESS AND CARE. The Third, of THE BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION. And the Fourth, of THE DIFFERENCE THERE IS BETWEEN OUR ADHERING TO GOD, AND OUR DEPARTING FROM HIM.

I. We are reminded of OUR DEPRAVITY. It appears in our proneness to go astray. There is in us hi “evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” We transfer to the creature those regards which are due only to the Creator. We fear other things more than God; we love other things more than God. We make friends, and fame, and fortune, our dependence; and withdraw our hope and confidence from Him who is the only portion of his people. Thus they became our idols.

And these are our lovers, who profess to give us “our bread and our water, our wool and our flax, our oil and our drink.” These are the rivals of the Supreme Being; and, alas! they are too often sue

cessful, and draw away our hearts from God. Our backslidings are many. For let us not deceive ourselves. Let us not judge of our declensions only by gross acts, but by the state of our minds. It is indeed a mercy if we have been preserved from those scandalous falls which would disgrace our profession. But where none of these vices have appeared in the life, there have been many deviations from God in our thoughts, and affections, and pursuits. By this therefore we should try ourselves. For, in proportion as we “love the world, the love of the Father is not in us.” And, in the same degree that we “make flesh our arm, our heart will always depart from the Lord.”

II. But our depravity is not more observable than THE DIVINE GOODNESS AND CARE. For, while we are thus perpetually roving from him—what does he? Does he destroy us? No. Does he abandon us to ourselves, saying, They are joined to idols; let them alone? No—but he employs means, various means, to hinder and to reclaim us—“I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths: and she shall follow after her lovers, and shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them.”

And why does he make use of all these various expedients? Is it because he stands in need of us?—no—but because we stand in need of him, and can do nothing without his counsels and his comforts—because he is very pitiful and of tender mercy—because he is concerned for our everlasting welfare—because he would not have us deceived, ensnared, destroyed—because he would not have us take up with this world as our portion, but keep our eye upon a

better, even a heavenly country, and confess ourselves to be strangers and pilgrims in the earth.

And when the believer comes to himself, and considers these dealings of God with him, he exclaims, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldest visit him! What am I, to engross the attention of the Almighty! Am I worthy of all these pains? Can I ever bring forth fruit to reward this expense of cultivation? 'What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him; and that thou shouldest visit, him every morning, and try him every moment?'"

III. This brings us to remark THE BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION. This benefit might be exemplified several ways.

Afflictions are designed to be trials. They evidence the reality and the degree of our religion both to ourselves and others. When a person is surrounded with worldly possessions and enjoyments, it is not easy for him to determine whether he is leaning on these or on God. But let them be removed, and his reliance will quickly appear. If he is placing his dependence on these, he will sink when they are removed. But if, while he uses them, and is thankful for them, he still makes God "the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever," he will not faint in the day of adversity; but be able to say, with former sufferers, We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed: we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off

from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

Afflictions are excitements. They quicken to the exercise of grace, and to the performance of duty. When Absalom wished to see Joab, he sent him a messenger, but he would not come—he sent a second time, but he still refused. Well, what was he to do now?—Says Absalom to his servants, “See, Joab’s field is near mine, and he hath barley there—go and set it on fire,” and he will soon come to know the reason. And so it fell out: “Then Joab arose and came to Absalom, unto his house, and said unto him. Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?” Why, says Absalom, Not because I wished to do thee an injury, but wanted an interview, and could obtain it in no other way. Thus, when we become indifferent to communion with God, and disregarded the successive messages of the word—“Go,” says God to some fiery trial, “go and consume such an enjoyment—and he will soon be with me; soon be upon his knees, saying, ‘Do not condemn me; show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Why am I thus? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’”

But here we particularly see that afflictions are intended to be spiritual preventions—they are “to keep man from his purpose.” The people of God are not always aware of this at first, and therefore, when they meet with these obstructions, they sometimes fret, and think they do well to be angry even unto death: they think he is their enemy, while he is proving himself to be their friend; and that he is opposing their progress when he is only hindering their wanderings.

Disappointments in favourite wishes are trying, and we are not always wise enough to recollect—that disappointments in time are often the means of preventing disappointments in eternity. Our murmurings and repinings arise from our ignorance: we see not the precipice and the pit on the other side of the hedge or of the wall.

I wish you therefore, above all things, to remember, that it is a most singular mercy for God to render the pursuit of sin difficult. If we are going astray—is it not better to have the road filled with thorns than strewed with flowers? Is it not better to have it rough and uninviting, than smooth and alluring? If there are certain things in us, the destruction of which is equally necessary and difficult—is it a blessing to have them fed, or to have them starved? There are some who are now rejoicing because their plans succeed, and every thing favours their wishes, who, if they knew all, would see awful reason to weep and mourn—And there are others, who, if they knew all, would no longer be sorrowful because they cannot advance, but are checked in every path they tread. They would see that they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. They would see that the loss of creatures is to lead them to ask more earnestly for “God their maker, who giveth songs in the night.” They would see that the sickness of the body is designed to be the cure of the soul. They would see that earth is embittered, that heaven may be endeared.

Such a discovery of the design and consequences of these exercises would change the whole face of the dispensation, and lead them not only to submit, but to give thanks.

But how awful is it when afflictions are useless; and even medicine is administered in vain! And there are those, who, like Ahaz in distress, sin more and more against God. When he arms himself to withstand them in their mad career, they “rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler.” If they cannot pierce the hedge or the wall by which he opposes them, they will lie down in sullen obstinacy and sin “as they can”—to use the words of the prophet, rather than yield. “Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock—they have refused to return.”

But this shall not be the case with the people of God. The grace which employs the means will render them effectual. They shall not only feel—but reflect—and resolve. “Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now!”

IV. We observe THE DIFFERENCE THERE IS BETWEEN OUR ADHERING TO GOD, AND OUR FORSAKING HIM. Behold the declining Christian seduced by the world. When he was beginning to deviate, many a Samuel cried, “Turn ye not aside: for then shall ye go after vain things, which cannot profit or deliver;—for they are vain.” But he disregarded the friendly counsel. Others had been drawn into this unhappy course; and they had all told him the confusion and regret with which it had been attended.—But he would also try for himself—and, says God, Let him try—“that he may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.” By-and-by he heard a voice saying—“O that they had

hearkened to my commandments! then had their peace been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea!—Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? A land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?”

And now he bethinks himself, and begins to compare the present with the past. “How different the scorching sands, the briers, and serpents of this desert, from the green pastures in which I once fed, and the still waters by which I once refreshed my weary soul! ‘O that it was with me as in months past.’ Once I walked with God. I could behold his face with confidence. The glory of the Lord was risen upon me, and I walked all the day long in the light of his countenance—‘Then was it better with me than now!’ Once I had free access to the throne of grace. I approached it with humble and holy boldness; and there are many places that can witness to the tears of joy and sorrow with which I poured out my soul before God. But now the recollection fills me with dismay. I have now little heart to pray. Conscience indeed drags me along to the duty, but I enter the presence of my God with a slavish fear or a chilling indifference—‘Then was it better with me than now!’ Once I had sweet communion with the Saviour of sinners. When oppressed with a sense of guilt, I saw the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice, and the perfection of his righteousness, and, by believing, I entered into rest. Under every accusation, he was near that justified me. In every duty, and in every trial, he encouraged me by saying, My grace is sufficient for thee: ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ Now I only see my sins and my enemies—

but where is the Saviour and the helper?—‘Then was it better with me than now!’ Once I experienced the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit. By these I was enlivened, refreshed, and enlightened. I saw clearly the path of duty. I could harmonize providences and promises. I claimed the privilege of a child and an heir of God. But now the Comforter, who should relieve my soul, is far from me. I have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, by which I was sealed unto the day of redemption—‘Then was it better with me than now!’ O what enlargements of soul had I in his ordinances! How often did I find the sanctuary to be no less than the house of God, and the gate of heaven! How sweet was his word to my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my lips! What a feast did I enjoy at his table! His flesh was meat indeed, and his blood was drink indeed!—‘Then was it better with me than now!’ And oh! with what cheerfulness I carried my cross! I could even glory in tribulation also; for as the sufferings abounded, the consolations did also much more abound. The storm without raged in vain—for all was peace within—but now conscience gnaws me like a worm—and the promises which should be my support are neither within reach nor within sight—‘Then was it better with me than now!’ There was a time that I could see him not only in ordinances, but also in providences; not only in his word, but also in his works I could enjoy him in my creature comforts. I relished his love in my daily food; I saw his goodness in all my connexions: but now I know not whether any thing I possess is sent in wrath or mercy; I can find him in nothing: ‘Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot per-

ceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him!’

“I cannot fully describe my case. All I know is—and this I feel by an experience too bitter to be expressed—that *it is not with me as it—once was!*”

Some of these feelings, in a lower degree, are common to an apostate professor, who has left off to be wise and to do good. But the experience of such a man differs exceedingly from the feelings of a backsliding believer: for the judgment of the believer was never drawn over from the Lord’s side, though it was not suffered for a time to be heard; and he has enjoyments to look back upon which a stranger never intermeddled with. He can remember not only the dreadfulness of a state of utter distance from God by nature, but also the blessedness of being brought nigh by the blood of Christ. He knows what it is to live under his smiles and by his influences. And, now that the charm which deceived him is dissolved—now that he has leisure for reflection—now that he is separated from his very idols; no wonder he resolves, if possible, to return to a state in which it was better with him than now.

And let those who have been led astray and have fallen by their iniquity, adopt immediately the same resolution. While you consider the melancholy change that has taken place in your experience—remember two things—

First, that it cannot be better with you than it is till you return to God; since it is by your departure from him that you have sustained all these losses and incurred all this misery. “Set thee up way-

marks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart toward the high way, even the way which thou wentest; turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn to these thy cities."

And, Secondly, while with weeping and supplications you are disposed to seek him again, guard against that despondency which would tell you that it will be in vain. It is not in vain. There is hope in Israel concerning this thing. He waiteth to be gracious, and is exalted to have mercy upon you. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel."

Have any of you been restored? Turn not again to folly. Has it not cost you enough already? After all this, will not the very appearance of evil terrify you? Live near to God: your welfare depends upon it.

And as for those young converts who have just subscribed with their own hand and surnamed themselves by the name of Israel, let these also beware. Now perhaps you think there is very little danger of this caution. Such at present is your attachment to the Saviour and his way, that it seems to be impossible for you ever to forget the one or forsake the other. But how many who once had the same confidence with yourselves, have since denied him or followed him afar off! "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you 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.”

DISCOURSE XXXV.

THE END OF THE SAVIOUR'S EXALTATION.

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” ACTS V. 31.

ELEVATION is necessary to influence. Of what advantage is “a candle under a bushel”?—but place it “in a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house.” While the sun is below our earth, all is dark and cold—but when he arises, there “is healing under his wings and from his loftiness in the skies he scatters his enlightening and enlivening beams. When the shrub rises up out of the ground, it rather requires than affords support and assistance—“but when it is grown, it becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” A man in the obscurity and contractedness of private life may feel dispositions prompting him to do good—but he can only pour forth benevolent wishes and shed ineffectual tears. But give him pre-eminence, place in his hands the reins of empire and at his disposal the treasures of the state, and, lo! thousands are refreshed by his shadow, protected by

his power, and enriched by his bounty; his fame spreads encouragement: prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. Thus Jesus "ascended far above all heavens, that he might till all things."

Or take another illustration. The life of Joseph is not only affecting as a history, but also important as a type. Joseph was hated of his brethren; and they sold him as a slave to a company of Ishmaelites in order to prevent the fulfilment of his dreams. But the means used to hinder his advancement terminated in the promotion of it; and in process of time he was made ruler over all the land of Egypt. And it is worthy of our regard, that his elevation was—not only the aggrandizement of himself—but also the preservation of thousands, and in a peculiar manner the salvation of his father's house. He was the only dispenser of supplies to those who were perishing with famine—and "Go unto Joseph" was the order given by Pharaoh to every petitioner.

But a greater than Joseph is here. Thus Jesus suffered from the hands of sinners: and they acted only as enemies—but the curse was turned into a blessing. His sufferings led to his exaltation; and this exaltation was—not only a personal reward—but a relative glory. He is made head over all things "unto his body the Church." He has power given him over all flesh, "that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him." And him, says the Apostle, to the Jews, "him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

Thus he is advanced, as mediator, to the grandeur

and resources of his present station, not only to govern, but to save; and to save by governing. Some are exalted as princes who are by no means saviours. They do not study to secure the common lights of mankind. They do not set examples of temperance, humanity, and social affection. They do not cultivate harmony and peace. They seem only raised up to oppress and to destroy. Murder and desolation mark their progress. The ruins of towns and villages, the tears of widows and orphans, are the materials of their glory. They sacrifice the lives of their subjects to save their own: yea, they frequently sacrifice them to gratify their pride, their vanity, their avarice, their revenge. But *he* sacrificed himself for the welfare of his subjects—"I give my flesh for the life of the world" They are princes of war—but he is "the Prince of peace." They are princes of death—but he is "the Prince of life." They are princes and destroyers—but he is "a Prince and a Saviour." He takes us under the wing of his protection; redeems us from the curse of the law; delivers us from the wrath to come; saves us from our sins. He makes his subjects holy and happy—For "he gives repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

Let us take three views of these blessings.—Let us consider—their MEANING—their CONNEXION—and their SOURCE.

I. Let us consider their MEANING.—What is *repentance*? Every one will see the propriety of making this inquiry, who only reflects—that every thing excellent admits of counterfeit—that there are specious resemblances not only of every moral virtue, but of every Christian grace—and that Pharaoh, and Ahab,

and Judas, and others, are said to have repented, and after all died in their sins. Perhaps a better definition of repentance was never given than by an old divine, one excellency of which is, that it is easily remembered. He tells us that "Genuine repentance consists in having the heart broken *for* sin, and *from* it."

Be it then remembered, that the subject of repentance is convinced of sin. He sees that it is the greatest evil in the universe—not only as it is the cause of his sufferings, and has exposed him to the miseries of hell—but because it is the pollution of his soul, and the degradation of his nature, and has rendered him vile and abominable in the eyes of God. Hence he feels shame, self-loathing, abhorrence, grief, and contrition—especially when he apprehends the goodness of God, which has spared him under all his offences, provided for him a ransom, and through a suffering Saviour is willing to receive him graciously. This dissolves the heart, and makes him "sorrowful after a godly sort." For the tear of evangelical penitence drops from the eye of faith; and faith while it weeps stands under the Cross. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

The pressure of these various feelings constitutes what we mean by having the heart broken *for* sin. But the man has now new dispositions and resolutions; and hence a new course of life. He is de-

livered from the love of sin, the love of *all* sin, however dear before. He is freed from the dominion of sin—so that it no longer “reigns in his mortal body, that he should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yields he his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yields himself unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” He avoids also the occasions of sin, and “abstains from all appearance of evil.”—And this is what we mean by having the heart broken *from* sin.

And what is *forgiveness*? It is simply the removal of all obligation to punishment. It does not render a man innocent of the crimes which he has committed; for a man can never appear otherwise to God than he really is; and it will be everlastingly true, that Job cursed the day of his birth, and Peter denied his master. But sin contracts guilt, and guilt binds over to punishment: now forgiveness cancels this obligation, and restores the offender to safety. And frequently, at least among men, forgiveness extends no further. But it does with God. He takes pleasure in those whom he pardons as if they had never sinned, and indulges them with the most intimate friendship.

When two individuals have been at variance, the hardest to believe in reconciliation is the offender. The blame is his: and, judging under a consciousness of his desert, he can hardly be persuaded that the party he has injured does not feel like himself. History informs us that when a man had offended Augustus, the emperor, to show his greatness of mind, declared that he pardoned him. But the poor creature, who expected only destruction, astonished

beyond measure, and fearing the declaration was too good to be true, in all the simplicity of nature, instantly desired his majesty to give him some present as a proof that he had really forgiven him. Thus anxious is the awakened mind. Such a free and full forgiveness after all his heinous provocations seems incredible; he therefore desires a token for good: and many pledges of the most perfect reconciliation the God of all grace affords in his dealings with his people. He hears their prayer; he is with them in every trouble; he delivers them and honours them; he makes all things to work together for their good, and engages to receive them to glory.

II. Let us glance at the UNION OF THESE BLESSINGS. Repentance and forgiveness of sins are mentioned together. Now let it be observed, that this is not a meritorious connexion between repentance and forgiveness—as if the one deserved the other—for they are both given—and how can one gift merit another?

But there is between them, First, a connexion of propriety. It would not accord with the wisdom of God to deliver from hell a man who would be miserable in heaven; to forgive one incapable of enjoying or serving him—yea, one who abhors him. Without repentance, we should never value the blessing of forgiveness, and therefore we should neither be happy in nor thankful for the possession of it. If a servant or a child were to behave improperly, though goodness may incline you to pardon, you would naturally require a proper state of mind, and signs of sorrow, confession, and reformation; otherwise your forgiveness would look like connivance at the transgression, or indifference to the offence, and encourage a repetition of disobedience.

Hence there is between them, also, a connexion of certainty. They are indissolubly united—no one ever really enjoyed forgiveness without repentance; mid no one ever truly exercised repentance without forgiveness. And hence it follows, that the best way to ascertain our state before God is—not a reference to dreams and visions, sudden impulses, and accidental occurrences of Scripture to the mind—no—but an examination of our character; a comparison of ourselves with the features of pardoned sinners portrayed in the Gospel. To know whether we are justified, let us inquire whether we are renewed in the spirit of our minds; and be assured of this, that he is not the partaker of Divine forgiveness who is not the subject of genuine repentance.

On the other hand, as there is an inseparable connexion between these, if you have been humbled for your sins; if your hearts have been broken for them, and from them; you should not despair of acceptance, but view this experience as the authorized evidence of Divine favour. “Believe in God.” He cannot deny himself: and he has said, “He that confesseth, and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

III. We remark THE SOURCE OF THESE BLESSINGS—“*He gives* repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

Some think repentance a very *legal* subject, and are ready to condemn the man who preaches it, as a stranger to the Gospel. But there never was a greater mistake than this. For, not to mention that

our Lord "came to call sinners to repentance," and that the Apostles "went forth preaching everywhere that men should repent"—I would observe, that repentance is a subject peculiarly evangelical. The Law has nothing to do with repentance—it does not even command it—all it has to do with the transgressor is to condemn. It allows him neither liberty nor ability to repent—but the Gospel gives him both. And indeed to little purpose would it give us the one without the other. But here is our encouragement—the Gospel not only gives us *space*, but *grace* for repentance. What in one view is a duty, in another is a privilege: and what is commanded is also promised. The "broken heart and the contrite spirit" is not only a sacrifice which he will not despise, but it is also a sacrifice which he must provide!

And he does provide it. He "gives repentance unto life." For having ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, "he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The chief of these was the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. By his influence the understanding is enlightened and the conscience awakened; the heart of stone is taken away and a heart of flesh given; and sinners, before weak and averse to holiness, are enabled to "walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments to do them." Thus the word is rendered effectual; and the events of Providence are sanctified: afflictions make them "acknowledge their offence; and the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance."

And if repentance be not derived from ourselves—can forgiveness of sins? If the former be a gift—can

the latter be a purchase?—"He gives repentance unto Israel, *and* forgiveness of sins." And hence two things follow.

First, if we possess these blessings—we learn to whom we are to address our praise. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

Secondly, if we want them—we see to whom we lire to address our prayers. Betake yourselves to the Friend of sinners, and say, "Lord, remember me now thou art come into thy kingdom.' 'Heal me, und I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.' 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou oanst make me clean.'—And hast thou not said, 'him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out'? behold a sinner that wishes to have nothing more to do with sin. O save him from the bondage of corruption, as well as from the burden of condemnation. 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.'"

Oh! be induced to do this, and to do this immediately. Here is a Saviour exalted to bless you with nil spiritual blessings—and especially to bless you, by "turning every one of you away from your iniquities"—and there is no blessing like this. Seek hi in while he may be found: call upon him while he is near. For there is a time when if you call he will not answer, and if you seek him early you will not find him. The season for obtaining these blessings is short and uncertain. Surely you need not be informed that you are sinners—"but the wages of sin

is death." While you are strangers to pardon, you are only "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." You are open to all the miseries of life, the sting of death, the torments of hell. Yea, you are exposed to a double condemnation: one from the Law, which you have transgressed; and another from the Gospel, which you have despised. And how is it that you do not lay these things to heart! How is it you do not fear lest every moment "the earth should open its mouth," and your souls "go down quick into hell!" How will you contrive to sleep to-night—when you know that if you die in your present state, God is under an oath to destroy you!

But "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." He is blessed in his duties, for he is assured of acceptance and assistance. He is blessed in his enjoyments, for he tastes the loving-kindness of God in them. He is blessed in his trials, for they flow from love, and are designed for his profit. Now he is delivered from the curse, he can bear the cross. He will not endure his troubles long; and he does not endure them alone.

Here are some whom he has pardoned. He gave them to see, and feel, and confess their sins. He discovered to them the scheme of salvation revealed in the Gospel. He enabled them to come with all their unworthiness, smiting upon their breasts, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner"—and, believing, they passed from death unto life. They found rest unto their souls. They are now serving him; and they find his "yoke easy, and his burden light."

“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given *you*: seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth: and he that seeketh findeth: and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Amen.

DISCOURSE XXXVI.

RELIGION MAKES US PROFITABLE.

“I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.” PHILEMON 10, 11.

THE Epistles are of three classes. Some are addressed to Christians at large—some to particular Churches—and some to single individuals.

The Epistle before us is of the third class.—And us it is inscribed to one person, so it is limited to one subject. It furnishes none of those glaring scenes which the pencil of the historian requires: but it is full of importance to a Christian teacher. It says nothing of the intrigues of statesmen, the contentions of senators, the exploits and mischiefs of heroes; but IT YIELDS TOPICS OF REFLECTION MUCH MORE INTERESTING AND USEFUL TO A SERIOUS READER. These are concisely expressed in the words which I have read.

We will therefore STATE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CARE TO WHICH THEY REFER: and DEDUCE SOME REMARKS FROM THEM FOR OUR INSTRUCTION AND EDIFICATION.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE may be thus briefly stated. At Colosse lived Philemon. He appears to have been a person of some respectability, if not distinction. The Apostle calls him a fellow-labourer. He had a church in his house; and by his liberality often "refreshed the bowels of the saints."

With this Philemon lived a servant whose name was Onesimus. Onesimus, like too many servants, was ungodly, though he lived in a pious family and enjoyed religious means and privileges. He robbed his master, and with the purloined property made his escape. As it is usual for such criminals to go to some large populous place to avoid detection, Onesimus hastened to Rome, the capital of the world.

Thither Paul had arrived a little before in consequence of his appealing unto Cæsar; and having hired a house, "preached the kingdom of God, and received all that came in unto him." As he was the subject of conversation in the city, Onesimus is informed of him; and, from curiosity or some other motive—(perhaps he had heard his name or seen his person at his master's house) he goes to the Apostle's lodgings and attends his ministry. Probably Paul preached against thievery. However this may be, "the word was quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and was a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Onesimus is convinced and alarmed. He feels his guilt: and now dreads not only human, but divine justice. He cannot get rid of his distress; but walks about the city crying to himself, "What must I do to be saved?"

At length he resolves to go and open his case to Paul—"He may afford me instruction and relief." He waits upon him. "Sir, I lately heard you preach, and I am one of the characters you described and condemned."—What is your name? "Onesimus."—What are you? "I was a slave."—And who was your master? "Philemon of Colosse."—Him I know. But what, Onesimus, brought you here?—Onesimus weeps—"Oh! I cannot deny it, I cannot conceal it—I robbed my master and fled hither from justice. And ever since I heard that sermon, I can find no rest. My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I cannot look up. My sin was the most heinous and aggravated: it was a good master I injured! How often did he admonish me! How earnestly did he pray for me!"

See here what a victory grace obtains over nature! Onesimus goes and confesses himself a thief!—For he was now remote from the scene of action; no person was there to impeach him; and if he had not acknowledged the crime himself, it could never have been known. This was no pleasant task. Nothing could be more irksome to the pride of the human heart. It is as common to cover as to commit sin. Men, such is their injustice and self-love, wish to appear better in the eyes of their fellow-creatures than they really are; even better than they know themselves to be. But when the Holy Ghost lays a burden upon the conscience, no diversion can remove it. Divine grace produces self-abasement; and a line penitent will not only confess his sin to God, but, when called by circumstances, he will own it also to men, to his fellow Christians, to ministers. And such a disclosure may sometimes ease the mind

of a load of anguish, and teach the person to whom the communication is made how to speak a word in season, and apply the remedy of the Gospel. We are therefore commanded to “confess our faults one to another, and to pray one for another, that we may be healed.”

Be it remembered, however, that when such a penitent thus acknowledges his sins—he will not do it as if he were relating heroic deeds or even actions of indifference—he will not, like some, speak of his former wickednesses with a kind of pleasure, arising from the apprehension that they magnify divine grace, and render his conversion the more marvellous and certain, or at least with a tone and countenance far from expressing deep humiliation and godly sorrow; but he will evidence, by his feelings and his manner, “a broken heart, and a contrite spirit which God will not despise.” To return.

Persuaded of his sincerity, the Apostle would have taken Onesimus into his service, had it not looked like detaining what was deemed another man’s property. He therefore conscientiously resolves to send him back to Philemon. And, influenced by the same principle, Onesimus wishes to return—but fears the displeasure of his offended master; and is conscious that if he demanded reparation, it would not be in his power to make it. The Apostle therefore undertakes to plead his cause, becomes his surety, and sends along with him a letter of recommendation full of the most persuasive eloquence—and this is the principal subject—“I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.”

Hence let us derive the following REMARKS.

First. Observe the humility, the tenderness, the kindness of the Apostle Paul. Great as he was, he exemplifies in his own practice what he recommends in his doctrine to others—"mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." He does not think it beneath him to attend to the wants and wishes of this poor slave, and to write a whole epistle on his behalf. The more the mind is raised by intelligence and religion, the less will it be impressed with those adventitious distinctions which dazzle the multitude. True greatness is always condescending and sympathetic. Are we mistaken? What do we see yonder? Let us draw near. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself: after that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So, after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent, greater than him that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." And who does them? Some imagine themselves humble because their condescension has never been put to the trial. Others have proved how very little they resemble our Lord and Saviour by declining those instances in which their condescension ought to have appeared.

Alas! how many are there who “hide themselves from their own flesh who would think it beneath them to perform personally an office of humanity and charity for the poor and needy; who would never stoop to write a letter for a menial domestic; who treat their servants no better than brutes—and often not half so well!

But servants should be considered as fellow-creatures and as humble friends. It is a scandal to a Christian, to suffer a servant to leave his house unable to read. Are you not to do good as you have opportunity? Shall we call that contemptible which God deigns to honour? Did not He who made thee in the womb make them? Has he not endued the low-born child, the beggar, the slave, with a portion of reason and immortality? Are they not the care of his providence? Are they not the purchase of the Saviour’s blood? And has he not assured us that “it is not the will of our Heavenly Father, that one of these little ones should perish”?

Secondly. Let us learn how impossible it is to hinder the work of God, or frustrate the purposes of his grace—“whom I have begotten in my bonds.” Nothing comes to pass by chance. What appears to be chance among men is nothing less than the providence of God permitting, appointing, arranging, overruling all events. “He doth according to his own will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou? His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.” And what a complication of occurrences and circumstances sometimes enters into the execution of his design; some of them apparently inconsistent with it, others seem-

ingly subversive of it! But he grasps and guides them by an unerring hand: he harmonizes them, and gives them a unity of tendency! they reach their end: none of them are superfluous; none of them could be spared. The very wrath of man praises him, and the remainder of it he restrains.

Can a man stop the rolling tide? Can he retard the progress of the sun? The cause of God is in motion, and will crush every obstacle. Nor is this all—he makes opposition an advantage: his enemies intend one thing and he another; and they serve an interest they despise and labour to repress: their schemes fulfil his plan; he turns them from their natural currents into secret channels prepared to receive them, and in which they flow along into “the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Paul, persecuted in Judea, is driven to Rome. But though he “suffers as an evil doer, even unto bonds, the word of God is not bound.” In these bonds he did wonders. His sufferings turned out to the furtherance of the Gospel. There he wrote many of his epistles. There he re-activated the timid by his example. He filled the capital with the savour of the Redeemer’s knowledge. How many were called by his instrumentality we know not; but we find that his name was known “in the palace,” and we read of “saints even in Cæsar’s household.” And, Onesimus! you will have reason to bless God for ever for his confinement and imprisonment there!

Do we lay too much stress upon this circumstance?

The salvation of one soul, the soul of a poor slave, is an event of far greater importance than the deliverance of a nation from civil bondage. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one*

sinner that repenteth." Besides, Onesimus became a minister; the Apostle speaks of him as such in his epistle to the Colossians: Ignatius, in his epistle to the Ephesians, speaks of him as pastor of their church immediately after Timothy: and the Roman martyrology assures us that he was stoned to death in Rome under the reign of Trajan the Emperor. There he entered a state of grace, and there also he entered a state of glory! How wonderful! At one time this man was there a wicked fugitive slave—and a few years after a preacher of the Gospel, a martyr for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ!

Thirdly. Therefore let us learn to despair of none of our fellow-creatures. Whatever time has elapsed; whatever means have been useless; whatever lengths a man has run; let us encourage ourselves with this thought, that other seasons may prove more favourable—that other instruments may prove more successful—that he is not gone beyond the reach of the Divine arm; of the mercy of God to pardon; of the grace of God to change and sanctify.

This observation is for you, O parent, whose heart is bleeding over those undutiful and ungodly offspring, who despise your authority, your prayers, and your tears. "God is able, even of these stones, to raise up children unto Abraham."

This observation is for you, O minister, whose sabbath-day evenings are embittered by the exclamation, "Lord, who hath believed our report!"—who are looking with despondency on that hearer who, after all your faithful warnings, is rejecting the counsel of God against himself. The desire of his eyes may be torn from him. Sickness may recall him from the wanderings of health. He may go into a new neigh-

bourhood; he may meet with very different companions; he may hear another preacher; and he may so hear as that his soul may live. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? He can vary his means. His resources are endless. We are prone to give up characters too soon. Persons have been considered as abandoned of God at the very time he was going to display his power and the riches of his grace in their conversion.

This observation is for you, O sinner, who have to this hour been unhappy, or rather criminal enough to live without God in the world, but, now that you feel a willingness to return, are concluding that it will be in vain. No. "There is hope in Israel concerning this thing." And "where sin has abounded, grace shall much more abound. That, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Fourthly. Conversion makes a man useful. "Who was in *time past unprofitable*, but is *now profitable*." This is the case with every regenerate sinner. To render us profitable is the design of religion, and it is easy to see that it must be the effect of it. Religion is social and diffusive. According to our Saviour's language, the possessors of divine grace are the salt of the earth to keep it from corruption. They are the lights of the world to keep it from darkness; and this light is not to be concealed "under a bushel," but to be fixed "on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house." And their light is "so to shine before men, that they may see their good works, mid glorify our Father which is in heaven." The talents they receive from God look beyond themselves.

The blessings they enjoy they are to communicate. They are to “comfort others with the comforts where-with they themselves are comforted of God.” Of their fortune they are only stewards, not owners. —They are commanded to “bear one another’s burdens.” And even in their prayers they are taught brotherly love—they are to plead for others as well as for themselves; they are to say, “*our* Father—forgive us *our* trespasses; and give us this day *our* daily bread.” Divine grace never leaves us as it finds us. It produces a change the most wonderful and glorious and beneficial. “The wolf also dwells with the lamb: and the leopard lies down with the kid: and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child leads them. Instead of the thorn comes up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree. The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.”

Divine grace destroys those vices by which we are injurious to others. For the best charity I can exercise towards my fellow-creatures, says a good man, is to leave off sinning myself. It subdues the selfishness which is so common to our depraved nature; it enlivens and expands the affections; it leads us to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. It teaches and enables us to act with propriety in every capacity and relation in life. Every company and neighbourhood is the better for us: we are as “a dew from the Lord.” And thus the promise is fulfilled in every child of Abraham by faith; “I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing.”

Finally. We remark, that our being useful does

not depend upon our abilities and station. See Onesimus—a slave—profitable—even to such men as Philemon and Paul—profitable to “thee and me.” It is with the community as it is with the body. “The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” Thus we behold, in the world and in the church, difference of rank, of office, of talents; but there is a connexion between the whole, and a dependence arising from it. And from this none are exempted; even “the king is served by the labour of the field.”

Every man, whatever be his condition and circumstances, is of some importance in society—and we should labour to impress our minds with this reflection—especially in three cases.

Let us remember it—when we are in danger of pride and disdain with regard to any of our fellow-creatures. The idol you adore is not every thing, and the wretch you despise is something. Perhaps he is more necessary to you than you are to him.

Let us remember it—when discouraged from exertion. Oh! if I had such opportunities and means, I would serve my generation. But if great faculties were necessary, they would be more frequently bestowed. Situations calling for ten talents are rare—

those which require five are more common—but those which demand only one are to be found every where and every day. And in nothing are we so likely to be mistaken as in such conclusions. He that is “not faithful in little,” has no reason to believe that he would be “faithful in much.”

We should also remember it—when we are tempted to do good in unlawful ways. What I mean is this. Some suppose that they can only be useful in such a particular station or office, and hence they are ready to leave their present condition to rush into it. But, says the Apostle, “Let every man abide in the calling in which he is called of God.” Things are so constituted, that if *any* man wishes to do good, he *may* do it in the circumstances in which he is placed; he has some influence. For instance—and to refer to the case before us—are you a servant? Jacob was a servant, and Laban, his master, said, “I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for thy sake.” Joseph was employed by Potiphar, “and it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that 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.” Hence, says the Apostle to Titus, “Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” And hence he says to Timothy, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.” Here we see how much de-

pend upon Christian servants: they may either recommend their religion or disgrace it. For the people of the -world are not quite so blind as we sometimes suppose them to be: although incapable of entering into Christian experience, they can estimate the value of principles, by the goodness of their effects. And what can they think of the gospel, if the professors of it are as bad, or even worse than others; inattentive to the duties of their places, idle, gossipers, busy-bodies, heady, insolent, unfaithful to their trust? On this principle, I am sorry to say, there are some who have expressed a determination to have nothing more to do with religious servants. But they surely mean, servants who are religious only *in pretence*—who raise hopes by their profession, which they disappoint by their practice—and thus cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of:—for, as to those servants who are *really* religious, they *must* be better than others—they must be “profitable.”

Let us therefore conclude with two reflections.

First. If religion renders people, in all situations, valuable and useful, how deserving is it of encouragement! Let therefore all unite together to promote it.

Let governors and magistrates promote it. This is the way to have good subjects and citizens. Innumerable are the advantages which communities derive from it in civilizing, restraining, and sanctifying mankind. Human laws cannot extend far enough, in a thousand cases interesting to the peace and welfare of a nation. They can never reach the heart. But religion lays hold of the conscience, and places a man, even when alone, under the eye of God, and in sight of endless happiness or woe.

Let masters of families promote it in their households. This is the way to have obedient servants, and dutiful children. Piety is the firmest basis of morality: secure God's claims, and you will not miss your own.

Let this influence those who have companions to choose; and also those who have connexions to form. Oh! young man, "favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Oh! young woman, devote thyself to nothing profane, sceptical, irreligious; marry, but "only in the Lord."

Secondly. If religion be profitable to others, it is much more so to ourselves. It sanctifies all our mercies. It sweetens all our trials. It teaches us, "in whatever state we are, therewith to be content." "Its ways are pleasantness. Its paths are peace." "Yea, it is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." No wonder therefore it should be called wisdom, and that Solomon should speak of it as he does: "Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding."

DISCOURSE XXXVII.

THE CURE OF BLIND BARTIMEUS.

“And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way-side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? and he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God.”

LUKE xviii. 35-43.

To read the Scriptures superficially will not answer the purpose of a man who is desirous of being made “wise unto salvation.” He will peruse them with reverence, he will explore them with diligence, and feel all anxious and prayerful to have the end for which they were given realized in his own experience. —And what is this end? The Apostle tells us. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were

written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.”

Our Saviour made every misery he beheld his own. “He took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” As he moved from place to place, he restored friends to the bereaved, and health to the diseased. He raised the dead. He made the lame to leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. He gave ears to the deaf, and eyes to the blind.

These things, even in a temporal view, cannot fail of exciting in us a sympathetic joy with the poor wretches who received relief, and adoring praise to the Author of their deliverance; but as intended to convey spiritual instruction, they acquire additional importance. For if these miracles are not to be considered as types, they furnish us with illustrations in explaining the disorders and cure of the mind.

Let us therefore review THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE HISTORY BEFORE US—and endeavour to derive SOME USEFUL ADMONITIONS FROM IT.

The subject of the miracle was “a blind man.” We are not informed whether he was born blind, or whether the calamity had befallen him by disease or accident. This however was his melancholy condition; and a more pitiable one perhaps cannot be found. It is worthy of compassion even when found in circumstances of affluence and ease—but how much more so when it is attended with indigence and want! And this was the additional affliction of blind Bartimeus—“He sat by the way-side begging.” Poor people should be thankful to God for the preservation of their limbs and senses. If they have no patrimony nor independence, they can labour; and while they have hands and eyes, they should scorn

habits of beggary. But the helpless are not to starve; nor are we indiscriminately to reject every application we meet with upon the road—Though, blessed be God, there is less need of this in our highly-favoured land than in most other countries, owing to the legal provision made in all our parishes for the poor and needy who are unable to gain a subsistence by labour.

One of the characters of our Saviour's miracles was publicity. Impostors require secrecy and darkness. There have been miracles designed to delude the ignorant and credulous—but where have they been manufactured? In cells, convents, deserts. Before whom have they been performed? A few selected, interested witnesses. But says our Saviour, In secret have I done nothing. He wrought his miracles in the face of day; in the most open and exposed situations; before crowds of spectators, and among whom were found not only the curious, but malicious. Thus he recovered this man before a multitude in the high-way, and close to the city of Jericho.

Several of our Saviour's miracles seem to have been unintentional. Thus it is said, "As he entered a certain village, there met him ten men, that were lepers, who stood afar off." Thus again we read, that "when he came nigh to the gate of the city of Nain, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." And so here: "It came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way-side begging" You may ask then. Was his finding these objects accidental or designed? Unquestionably, designed. He was not taken by surprise. He saw the end from the beginning. His plan was formed;

and he was “working all things after the counsel of his own will.” But he would show us that he is master not only of events, but of occasions, and of circumstances; and that, though these circumstances appear loose, irregular, and contingent to us, they subserve his pleasure, and all occur in their proper time and place. Thus the bow “drawn at a venture” carried the arrow which fulfilled the purpose and the word of God in the death of the king of Israel.

The occurrence, however, was casual to Bartimeus himself; and when he rose in the morning, and was led forth by some friendly hand to the place where he was accustomed to beg, little did he imagine that before the evening he should obtain his sight, and be walking at the distance of some miles from home without a guide! This was the most successful of all his begging days. Boast not, despair not—of tomorrow; for thou knowest not, either as to good or evil, what a day may bring forth.

Imagine him then sitting under the shadow of some hedge or tree, against the side of the road—listening to apprehend if any travellers were approaching, of whom he might ask a small pittance of alms. For though he could not see, he could hear—this was an alleviation of his distress; and it has been remarked, that scarcely ever was there an instance of a man being naturally both blind and deaf. And in many cases, we find the loss of one sense in some measure made up by the greater perfection of another. Blind people are generally very quick of hearing; as may be observed by those who visit their asylums. Well, while musing—a noise strikes him, and the sound draws nearer and nearer. He asks what it means; and being told that “Jesus of Nazareth was passing

by," he cried, saying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!' Though I am not deserving, my case is distressing. O pity me. O help me! "

But whenever was it known that a poor suppliant met with no hinderance in coming to the Deliverer for mercy? "They which went before rebuked him that he should hold his peace." From what principle could this proceed? Knowing that silver and gold the Master had none, did they suppose that he was clamorous for alms? Did they conclude that his entreaties would be deemed noisy and troublesome? Did they deem him beneath the Saviour's notice, and suppose that the Son of David would have nothing to do with him? Alas! they discovered too little tenderness themselves, and were too little acquainted with their Lord and Saviour, who never did, and never will consider such importunity unreasonable or presumptuous; never did and never will break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Nor was Bartimeus to be discouraged. He felt wisely. "This is my opportunity, and it may never return. I have addressed thousands who could give me bread—but never did I meet with one before who could give me eyes. And, oh! in a moment he will be out of hearing—and when may he pass by again?—'He cried so much the more. Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

Such a cry arrests our Lord in his journey: he cannot take another step—"He stood." What cannot prayer do? Once the sun of nature stood still at the desire of Joshua, who was eager to complete his victory. And, lo! now, "the Sun of righteousness " stands still, with "healing under his wings," at the desire of Bartimeus, who begs a cure. "He stood."

And has thereby taught us never to think it a hinderance in our journey to pause to do good. To do good is our *chief* business; and to this every thing else is to be rendered subordinate and subservient.—“And commanded him to be brought.” By this circumstance he administered reproof and instruction. Reproof—by ordering those to help the poor man who had endeavoured to check him; instruction—by teaching us that though he does not stand in need of our help, he will not dispense with our services; that we are to aid each other; that though we cannot recover our fellow-creatures, we may frequently bring them to the place and means of cure.

Our Saviour is acquainted with all our sins, but he requires us to confess them; he understands all our wants, but he commands us to acknowledge them; he is always graciously affected towards our case, but he would have us properly affected with it ourselves. He knew the desire of this man—the case was too plain to be mistaken—but he would know it from him himself; and therefore, when he was come near, he asked him, saying, “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?—And he said. Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.” Wherein did this man’s faith appear? I answer, in his confession—calling him the Messiah, and Jesus, the Son of David: and also in his application—for had he not believed in his power as able, and in his goodness as willing, to succour and relieve him, he would not have addressed himself so earnestly to him. Thus his faith honoured Christ, and Christ honoured his faith. Thus his faith excited prayer, and prayer brought him relief. Thus his faith produced a unity of

design and a correspondence of disposition between the giver and the receiver, the agent and the subject, the physician and the patient. It is in this way that so much is ascribed in the Scriptures to the influence of faith.

And what would be the feelings of this man as soon as he received sight! O what joy, what ecstasy, what gratitude would he discover! How would he look and gaze—all things are become new!—But the first object upon which he would fasten his eyes would be his Benefactor and Deliverer. He would admire—and weep—and adore—and kneel—and arise—and resolve never to leave him. Thus the man lame from his mother's womb no sooner received strength in his feet and ankle-bones, than he, "leaping up, stood and walked, and entered" with his deliverer "into the temple—walking—and leaping—and praising God how exquisitely natural is all this! But what follows is no less so: it is said—"The lame man which was healed *held* Peter and John, while all the people ran together unto them, in Solomon's porch he *held* them, grasping their hands or their garments—it was a grasp of affection—of gratitude—perhaps also of fear, lest the malady should return, and he should not be near those who alone could cure him.

So here: as soon as Bartimeus received sight from the Lord Jesus, "he followed him in the way, glorifying God." We may view this two ways. It was first an evidence of the reality and perfection of the cure. In other cases where human skill has removed blindness by couching, the restored orbs cannot be immediately used; light is admitted into them by degrees; the man cannot measure distances, nor judge with accuracy; and he is not fit to be left to himself.

But it is said our Lord "did all things well." His manner distinguished him—the man saw at once clearly; and was able to conduct himself. Secondly, it was an improvement of the greatness of the mercy. "I can never," says he, "discharge my obligations to such a gracious and almighty Friend. But let me devote myself to his service—let me continually ask, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'"

From the narrative thus explained, I would take occasion to bring forward four admonitions.

And the first is this. BE PERSUADED THAT YOU ARE ALL SPIRITUALLY IN THE CONDITION OF BARTIMEUS—and that without divine illumination, you are no more qualified for the concerns of the moral world than a blind man is for those of the natural world. It may be as difficult as it is important to convince persons of this truth. For "vain man would be wise, though he be born like a wild ass's colt and many, like the offended Pharisees, ask—"Are we blind also?" But to the law and to the testimony. There is no image under which the Scripture more commonly holds forth our natural condition than blindness. We read of our being "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts and we are told that "the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." Our Saviour sends Paul "to open their eyes;" the Apostle prays for the Ephesians, "that the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened and David prays for himself, "Open thou mine eyes,' that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

If a blind person were to say, "I see," we should be disposed to censure or pity him; we should sus-

pect that he was influenced either by pride or insanity; and be satisfied that if a trial were made, the result of it would prove that what he affirmed was false. "Let him work—see where he seeks for his instruments, and how he uses them. Let him walk—see whether he can escape that stumblingblock or that pitfall. Desire him to pull a mote out of a brother's eye. Show him a fine painting, and ask him to mark its beauties." Men may deny their ignorance; but their lives and actions prove it. For instance: "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." And do men love God? Is he in all their thoughts? Is their meditation of him sweet? Are they inclined to speak of him? The Saviour is "fairer than the children of men; yea, he is altogether lovely"—but they see "no form nor comeliness in him; no beauty that they should desire him." "Though destruction and misery are in their paths," they see them not "and the way of truth, though revealed in the Scripture, have they not known." Is not this blindness?

Though Bartimeus was surrounded with landscapes, they were nothing to him. Though the sun shone upon his head, he saw nothing of its lustre. He saw not the guide that led him to and fro: he never saw his own features; and had he been possessed of the finest mirror in the world, it could not have shown him what manner of man he was. Thus blind is man; thus unacquainted is he even with himself: thus ignorant is he, under all the advantages of external helps and even of the Bible too—without divine teaching. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spirit-

ual judgeth all things; yet he himself is judged of no man."

Secondly. BE PERSUADED THAT, WITH REGARD TO THE REMOVAL OF THIS BLINDNESS, YOU ARE IN AS HOPEFUL A CONDITION AS THIS POOR MAN. In all these miracles our blessed Lord holds himself forth as the all-sufficient helper of sinners. By the cures which he wrought on the body, he shows how *able* he is to save the soul; and they were performed and recorded on purpose to lead us to him for spiritual and everlasting deliverance. Hence, says the Evangelist, speaking of the signs which Jesus did truly in the presence of his disciples—"These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." Rejoice, therefore, that He who raised the dead can quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins—that lie who healed the leper can cleanse the soul from all unrighteousness—and that lie who opened the eyes of the blind can lead inquirers into all truth.

Did he refuse this man? Did he ever refuse any who applied to him in distress? Had he rejected but *one* suppliant, it would have been the means of discouraging some to the end of the world; they would have feared that there was something similar in their own case. But what can we say now? We see that his actions spoke the same language with his gracious lip—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."—"Come unto me, ALL ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is to characterize him in *every* age: he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He is therefore equally *willing*.

“But I am so poor and mean. Many of my fellow-creatures, who are only raised a little above me in circumstances, despise me. And will the King of glory concern himself in my affairs?” Yes; he condescends to men of low estate. He preached the Gospel himself principally to the poor—and to show you that your mean condition is no disadvantage in applying to him—behold him pausing, and listening to a beggar in the road. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his trouble.”

But you say, he is no longer here. Oh! were he now on earth, dwelling among us, how happy should we be to betake ourselves to him in all our difficulties and distresses! but the heavens have received him until the restitution of all things. Yet though no longer visible, he is still accessible; though not to be seen, he is to be found—to be found in his word, and upon his throne, and in his house: we read of “the goings of our God and King in the sanctuary he is now passing by, “full of pity, joined with power address him. Bartimeus only heard that he was passing by; he did not see him when he addressed him. Address him, then, in the same circumstances, and you will soon find that he “is nigh unto them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.”

Take therefore a Third admonition. Be **PER-SUADED TO IMITATE THE IMPORTUNITY OF THIS BLIND BEGGAR, IN CRYING FOR MERCY.** For this purpose icllect upon the sadness of your present condition. Think what a degraded, uncomfortable, unsafe state you are in, and how certainly, unless you are delivered from it, you will soon pass from the darkness of sin

into the darkness of hell. And then consider the happiness of those who have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted; for thou art the glory of their strength, and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted." Pray therefore that you may be made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

And especially let your importunity, like this poor man's, appear with regard to two things. First, like him, seize the *present* moment. Let not the opportunity afforded you be lost by delay. You know not whether you will have another. Your indifference may provoke him to withdraw in anger, resolving to return no more. Your heart may be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. You may be deprived of reason. This very night your souls may be required of you! How many are falling around you in the bloom of life! How many are called away without warning! And are you secure? "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Secondly, like him, be not silenced by discouragement and opposition. Many may try to check you. Infidels may tell you to hold your peace—and say, "It is all delusion." Philosophers may tell you to hold your peace—and say, "It is all enthusiasm." Physicians may tell you to hold your peace—and say, "It is all nervous depression—away to company and the theatre." Even divines may warn you to be sober-minded, and to avoid being righteous overmuch. Formalists may tell you, "It is needless to be so warm." Companions, friends, relations, may surround

you with objections, entreaties, insults, threatenings—And you—what will you do under all this? Do!—why say, “This is a case in which another is not to judge for me. It is a personal concern—and it is an affair infinitely, everlastingly important. I must succeed or perish. Lord, help me!”

Fourthly, If he has healed you!—if you can say, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see”—LIKE BARTIMEUS, BE CAREFUL TO FOLLOW THE SAVIOUR.

This is the best way to evidence your cure. None follow him blind: but those whose eyes he has opened see so much to admire and so much to desire in him; they feel such a dependence upon him, and such an attachment to him; that they are willing to forsake all, in order to follow him whithersoever he goeth. And every proof of your conversion, separate from this adherence to the Saviour, is fallacious and ruinous.

This is also the best way to improve your deliverance. Thus you will “show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” Follow him, then, as an imitator of his example. Follow him as a servant, to obey his orders and to bear his reproach. Follow him, to spread his fame and to be a witness of his power and his goodness.

What an affecting sight must it have been, in the days of his flesh, to see him moving about, followed by a number of persons whose complaints he had removed, and who acknowledged that to him they owed all the happiness they enjoyed—to hear one saying, He restored my son—another, He unstopped my deaf ears—and a third, He opened my blind eyes!

He is not alone now in our world. There are some who are following him in the regeneration. They are the trophies of his free and almighty grace. They were once sinners, but are now renewed in the spirit of their mind. They were once darkness, but they are now light in the Lord, and are all looking to him and saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake!"

But what will it be, when he will be seen in company with all his people on the heavenly plains! What a day when the Redeemer will be seen with all his captives; the Physician of souls with all his patients; and all of them acknowledging that by his grace they are what they are! What a multitude! How full of joy, and how full of praise! And on his head will be many crowns! He will inhabit all the praises of Israel! "Then he shall come to be *glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe!*"

DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

WINTER

“Thou hast made winter.” Ps. lxxiv. 17.

AND he makes nothing in vain. Winter therefore is as worthy of our attention, as either of the former seasons which have passed under our review.

The scenes indeed all around us, which we lately beheld, have assumed a new and chilling appearance. The trees are shorn of their foliage. The hedges are laid bare. The fields and favourite walks have lost their attractions: and the garden, now it yields no perfumes and offers no fruits, like a friend in adversity, is forsaken. The vegetable creation looks dead. The tuneful tribes are dumb. The cattle are grave, and no longer play in the meadows. The north wind blows. “He sendeth abroad his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold?”—We rush in for shelter.

But let us take some particular views of this subject.

And First, Winter belongs to the plan of heaven,

and is a season indispensably necessary. It aids the system of life and vegetation; it kills the seeds of infection, and destroys pestilential damps; it refines the blood; it gives us vigour and courage; it confirms the nerves, and braces up the relaxed solids.

Snow is a warm covering for the corn; and while it defends the tender blades from nipping frosts, it also nourishes their growth. Isaiah remarked this long ago; and speaks of "the snow—coming down from heaven, and watering the earth, to make it bring forth and bud." The case is this. When the snow thaws, it melts into genial moisture; sinks down into the soil, and leaves the nitrous particles with which it is charged in the pores. Thus the glebe is replenished with that vegetable nutriment which will produce the bloom of spring and the fertility of autumn.

Winter therefore is only the needful repose of Nature, after her labours for the welfare of the creation. But even this pause is only to acquire new strength; or rather it is a silent and secret energy of preparation to surprise and charm us again with fresh abundance. Nor has the Creator forgotten our well-being and comfort during this period:

For Winter is, Secondly, a season which has its pleasures. I love to hear the roaring of the wind. I love to see the figures which the frost has painted on the glass. I love to watch the redbreast with his slender legs, standing at the window and knocking with his bill to ask for the crumbs which fall from the table. I love to observe the husbandman carrying forth the provender for his harmless charge—while the creatures of his care, not with boisterous impa-

tience, but with waiting eyes turned towards the place of their supplies, ask for their “meat in due season”—and I here see one of the many ways in which “HE openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.”

Is it not pleasant to view a landscape whitened with snow? To gaze upon the trees and hedges dressed in such pure and sparkling lustre? To behold the rising sun labouring to pierce a fog which had enveloped the heaven and the earth, and gradually successful in dispersing these vapours—so that objects by little and little emerge from their obscurity, and appear in their own forms, while the mist rolls up the side of the hill and is seen no more?

A few things also brave the rigour of the season and remain evergreen. The box, the laurel, the yew-tree, the laurustinus, are grateful exemptions from the law of desolation. Nor should we forget the curling ivy, nor the crimson berries of the wild hawthorn.

Winter affords recreation for the understanding, as well as for the senses. If we are less abroad, we have more intercourse within. If rural pleasures are diminished, social ones are increased.

“O Winter!

I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art!”—

“Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gath'ring, at short notice, in one group
The family dispers'd, and fixing thought,
Not less dispers'd by daylight and its cares—
—I crown thee king of intimate delights,

Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness,
 And all the comforts that the lowly roof
 Of undisturb'd retirement, and the hours
 Of long uninterrupted evening, know."

Yes, there are amusements to be found, without having recourse to noisy, public dissipations, in which health, innocency, and peace, are frequently sacrificed; where vicious passions are cherished, and persons are rendered incapable of relishing genuine pleasure—

"—Cards are superfluous here, with all the tricks
 That idleness has yet contrived
 To fill the void of an unfurnish'd brain,
 To palliate dulness, and give time a shove."

"Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
 Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
 Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth:
 Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
 Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
 That made them an intruder on their joys,
 Start at his awful name, or deem his praise
 A jarring note."

Thirdly. Winter is a season in which we should peculiarly feel gratitude for our residence, accommodations, and conveniences. Things strike us more forcibly by comparison. Let us remember how much more temperate our climate is than that of many other countries. Our winter is nothing, when we turn to the Frigid Zone. Think of those who live within the Polar Circle: dispersed; exposed to beasts of prey; their poor huts furnishing only a miserable refuge; where linger months of perpetual

night and frost; and, by the absence of heat, almost absolute barrenness reigns around.

When the French mathematicians wintered at Tornea, in Lapland, the external air suddenly admitted into their rooms, seizing the moisture, became whirls of snow; their breasts were rent when they breathed it; and the contact of it with their bodies was intolerable. We read of seven thousand Swedes who perished at once, in attempting to pass the mountains which divide Norway from Sweden.

And while our Winter reigns here with great comparative mildness, how many blessings distinguish our portion from that of others around us, and demand our praise! We have a house to defend us; we have clothes to cover us; we have fire to warm us; we have beds to comfort us; we have provisions to nourish us;—"What shall we render? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Fourthly. This season calls upon us to exercise Benevolence. Sympathy is now more powerfully excited than at any other period; we are enabled more easily to enter into the feelings of others less favoured than ourselves. And while we are enjoying every conveniency and comfort which the tenderness of Providence can afford—O let us think of the indigent and miserable. Let us think of those whose poor hovels and shattered panes cannot screen them from the piercing cold. Let us think of those, whose tattered garments scarcely cover their shivering flesh. Let us think of the starving poor, who, after a struggle which to relinquish, give up their small pittance of bread to get a little fuel to warm their frozen limbs. Let us think of the old and the infirm; of the sick

and the diseased. When the evening draws on, let us reflect upon the scene so exquisitely touched by the pencil of sensibility—

“Poor, yet industrious; modest, quiet, neat;
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warm’d while it lasts, by labour all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad, and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood blazing clear,
But dying soon like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well:
And, while her infant race, with outspread hands
And crowded knees, sit cowering o’er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warm’d.”

Let “the blessing of them that are ready to perish come upon us.” Who would not “labour, that he may have to give to him that needeth”! Who would not deny himself superfluities, and—something more—that his bounty may visit “the fatherless and the widows in their affliction”!

Ah! ye unfeeling, ye worldly-minded, that “stretch yourselves upon your couches—that chant to the sound of the viol—that drink wine in bowls, and anoint yourselves with the chief ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph”—oh! ye who can repair to every avenue of dissipation, and trample on so much distress, and shut your ears against so many groans in your way thither—on what do you found your title to humanity?—“Thy judgment is to come.” Or do you lay claim to religion?—Merciless wretch, can knowledge or orthodoxy save thee? “Whoso hath this world’s good, and

seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? even so, faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone."

To conclude. Winter should improve us in Knowledge.

It affords leisure, and excludes many interruptions—it is therefore favourable to application. Let us read, and study, and prepare for action and usefulness in life.

And let us not pass heedlessly by these subjects of reflection and improvement, which the very season itself yields. How instructive, for instance, is the goodness of God, not only in the preservation of the human race, but in taking care of all the millmps of animals during a period which threatens to destroy them! What a number of retreats does he provide for them! Some of them, by a singular instinct, change the places of their residence. Some of them are lulled into a profound sleep for weeks and months. Some live on the fat they have replenished themselves with during the summer. Some carry their provisions beforehand, and lay them up in their cells. "God takes care for oxen; and hears the young ravens that cry."

And all this teaches us, First, to resemble him, and be kind to every being. If we learn of him, we cannot be cruel to the brute creation. We cannot be

indifferent o their shelter and nourishment, when we remember, that “his mercies are over all his works.”—Secondly, to trust in him. He who provides for animals, will not abandon children. “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”

The season is also instructive as an emblem. Here is the picture of life—thy flowery spring, thy summer strength, thy sober autumn, are all hastening into winter. Decay and death will soon, very soon, lay all waste. What provision hast thou made for the evil day? Hast thou been laying up “treasure in heaven”? Hast thou been labouring for “that meat which endureth unto everlasting life”?

Every thing decays except Holiness. This therefore is the true character of man; and this shows us that he was designed for a religious state rather than any other. Pursue this then as “the one thing needful; and choose that good part that shall not be taken away from you.”

Soon Spring will dawn again upon us, its beauty and its songs. And “we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” No winter there—but we shall flourish in perpetual spring, in endless youth, in everlasting life!

‘Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry;
We’re marching through Immanuel’s ground,
To fairer worlds on high.’

DISCOURSE XXXIX.

CHRISTIANS NOT OF THE WORLD.

“They are not of the world.” JOHN xvii. 14.

MANY have a form of godliness while they deny the power thereof. Many also walk very unanswerably to the demands of their holy profession. And these things very much disparage the Gospel, and perplex the minds of inquirers.

What in such a case are we to do? Let us abide by the judgment of God, which is always according to truth. Let us examine the Scriptures. There—real religion is held forth in its unbending dignity and matchless purity. And let us remember too—that in every age there have been some, though comparatively few in number, and generally little known, who have embodied their principles in their lives, and “adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” And the Saviour sees them, and knows them, and confesses them: and said of them all, in his intercessory prayer—“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they

are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

It is the middle clause only of this passage to which we would now call your attention.—*Christians are not of the world.* Let us, I. EXPLAIN AND ESTABLISH THE TRUTH OF THE ASSERTION; and, II. APPLY THE REFLECTION TO SOME USEFUL PURPOSES.

I. When our Saviour says, “They are not of the world,” we can hardly suppose that he intends a total abstraction from the world, or rather a separation from it, in all respects. What then does he mean? A consideration of four articles will be sufficient to answer this question.

First. They are not of the world, because they are not attached to their party. We should be exceedingly mistaken were we to suppose that religion requires us to seclude ourselves wholly from society; for many of its instructions suppose various connexions with our fellow-creatures, and are designed to regulate our intercourse with them.

In many cases therefore it is lawful to associate with the people of the world. Such are cases of necessity—when we are compelled by our situations to live among them. Such are cases of business—in which we are called to trade with them. Such are cases of charity and piety—in which we endeavour to relieve their temporal distresses, or to awaken their minds to religious concerns. Such also are cases of civility and affinity—for godliness does not make us rude: nor does it banish natural affections; nor disband the relations of father and child—husband and wife—brother and sister, which have been established by nature and Providence.

But further than this a Christian will not go. He

cannot choose the people of the world as his companions and friends; he cannot seek after intercourse with the world when it depends upon his own option, and none of the afore-mentioned reasons can justify the familiarity. The authority of God forbids it. "Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The peace of his fellow Christians forbids it. Such bold intimacies with the world would grieve the strong, and throw a stumblingblock in the way of the weak; and, "when ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weals: consciences, ye sin against Christ." He therefore cannot say as some do, in justifying his worldly freedoms—"I do not regard what others think of me, my own conscience does not condemn me." He considers others as well as himself; and never supposes his conduct innocent in the sight of God while it is censurable in the eyes of men. Oh! what a noble, what a delicate, what a self-denying disposition does the Gospel produce! "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." The welfare of his own soul forbids it. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" Why did God warn the Jews of old not to mingle with the surrounding nations? Because he foresaw that such intercourse would seduce them—and so it

fell out—"They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works; and they served their idols, which were a snare unto them." And it is owing to such intimacies with the people of the world, in our day, that "the love of many waxes cold that they are drawn off by degrees from the house of God; and yield up one thing after another, to avoid giving offence, till their profession becomes not only their disgrace, but their burden, and they completely throw off the restraint.

And here, my young friends, I would particularly address you! Beware of wicked company; beware of infidels; beware of sceptics; beware of those who deride the leading doctrines of the Gospel, or even the infirmities of the people of God. Your seducers generally begin very remotely from the place where they mean to leave off. While they are endeavouring to obtain your regards, they often conceal what, if divulged at once, would shock your feelings: but, when they have engaged your affection and confidence, they will draw you on, till you look back with horror upon the distance you have passed; or, what is worse, be given up to "a reprobate mind"! Break off, therefore, such connexions—your safety requires it. If the associate be as a right hand, cut it off; or as a right eye, pluck it out. Love nothing to the prejudice of your souls. Cultivate no friendships that will end in everlasting ruin. Join those that have abandoned the City of Destruction, and are pressing into the kingdom of God. Take David for your example, and be able to say as he did—"I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked. I am a companion

of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”

Indeed, if you are partakers of the grace of God, your disposition will forbid all unnecessary alliance with the world. You will feel new wants and desires, and these will impel you to new associations; you will readily leave the vile and the vain, in search of those who are travelling your road, and can be helpers of your joy; you will “take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

And this reminds us of a Second particular. They are not of the world, because they are not actuated by “the spirit of the world.” And this is the grand thing—to have a temper of mind, a moral taste, different from the world. Indeed every thing else is vain without this. Your forsaking the world in profession; your leaving it in appearance, by your apparel, your discourse, your manner of life; is nothing unless it be animated by internal principle. It is *in the heart* that the separation must take place. And when the heart is detached from the world, these two advantages flow from it.—First, even in the midst of all your secular concerns, whether in the field or in the shop, you will maintain your distinction. Though in the world, you will not be of it—because the heart is elsewhere—and God looketh to the heart. And, Secondly, when the heart is withdrawn from the world, every thing else will follow of course.

Then you will not be governed by the maxims and opinions of the world. You will not ask, what are the sentiments of the multitude, but what says the Scripture? I do not wish to be “conformed to this

world, but to be transformed, by the renewing of the mind, that I may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." You will not be attached to its amusements and dissipations. The sun arising conceals the stars—not by spreading gloom, but by diffusing lustre. The child becoming a man, resigns without reluctance or regret the toys and trifles of infancy. It is a poor thing to be dragged out of the dissipations of the world, against inclination, while we still look back with Lot's wife, and inwardly sigh, Oh that I were permitted to enjoy them still ! But it is a glorious thing to leave these diversions from the discovery and possession of superior entertainment and sublimer joys. You will not be led by the conversation of the world: for speech is governed by affection; "and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." In a word, you will not "walk according to the course of this world the tide of your actions and pursuits will flow in a direction perfectly opposite.

Thirdly. They are not of the world, because "they are not natives of the world." Hear what our Lord said to the Jews—"Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world." The expressions are explanatory of each other: because they were from beneath, therefore they were of the world; and because he was from above, therefore he was not of the world. Their respective extractions determined the country to which they belonged. Now the believer may adopt the same language. He is here only as "a stranger, and a foreigner," not a native: he derives his being from heaven—if not as a man, yet as a Christian; and as a Christian we are speaking of him. And as he is born from above,

no wonder that he “seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

And, therefore, in the Fourth place, they are not of the world, because “they do not choose their portion.” We read of some “who have their portion in this” life; and they are called, as well they may be, “men of the world.” But, in distinction from them, says David, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.’ They lay up treasure here—but my treasure is in heaven. They make earth their home—but I regard it only as my passage. They confine all their hopes and fears within the narrow compass of mortality—I seek a country beyond the swellings of Jordan. Death ends their happiness, as well as their lives—but it secures and completes mine.”

Hence it is that the Christian feels an indifference to present things, and learns in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. This never can be the case with the man who makes the world his portion; if present things constitute his all, he cannot be moderate in his joys or sorrows. But a Christian can be moderate in both, because they are not his all. His inheritance is reserved in heaven for him. He therefore weeps as those that weep not; and rejoices as those that rejoice not; and buys as those that possess not. He feels worldly trials—but he is not miserable. He is thankful for temporal indulgences—but he is not exalted above measure. He does not want much, he does not expect much, while here. All he requires of the world, as did the Israelites of the king of Edom, is permission to pursue his peaceful course towards the land flowing with milk and honey:—“Let

us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells; we will go by the king's high-way; we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders. We will go by the high-way; and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it; I will only," without doing any thing else, "go through on my feet."

Thus Christians are not of this world: for they are not attached to their party—they are not actuated by their spirit—they are not born in their country—they do not choose their portion.

II. What does this truth teach us? Why, First, it enables us easily to account for the world's persecution of real Christians. "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world: if ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." They are not willing indeed to acknowledge that this is the cause of their hatred. No: they resemble their old predecessors; who, when our Saviour said, "Many good works have I showed you—for which of these works do you stone me? the Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not: but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." So these say now—It is not for your holiness we condemn you—but for your pride, your censoriousness, your hypocrisy.

But let me ask you—Do you not load them with these charges in order to justify your malignity?

Do you not magnify infirmities into crimes? Do you not reproach a whole body for the faults of a few?—Besides, while living in sin yourselves, is it possible for us to imagine that you can be grieved because professors of religion are not blameless? And why do you not hate these things universally—why connive at them in others? You say—Why these things are much worse in *them* by reason of their religious pretensions—There is indeed much truth in this—and we see with what circumspection professors should act, lest they should furnish cause for offence! But, after all, this will not reach the reason of this malignity. For how is it that the most holy and zealous Christians have been the most obnoxious to the men of the world? How is it that when they have been unquestionably free from those blemishes, and have had even the recommendations of birth, learning, liberality, amiableness—still they have been the scorn of the world? And to remark a much stronger case—How was it that the Lord and Saviour was much more abhorred and opposed by the world than any of his followers? Was he proud, censorious, false? Was he not incarnate virtue—perfect lowliness? Do we not clearly learn from his example, that real godliness, whatever endearments it possesses, can never be welcome to “a carnal mind, which is enmity against God”? And what our Saviour said to the Jews of old will apply to many Christians—falsely so called now—“The world cannot hate you”—you are so much like it—“but me” me “it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.” Bear the same decisive testimony by your words and actions, and be assured a portion of the same rancour will follow.

The case is plain. Resemblance is a ground of affection; but unsuitableness, of dislike. The people of the world wish to be in darkness—and Christians shine. They wish to sleep undisturbed—and Christians, by their exertions, rouse and alarm them. One wicked man does not reproach another—but the holy example of the righteous always upbraids and condemns.

Hence, says the Apostle, “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” of one kind or another; either the persecution of the hand, of the tongue, or of the heart. It began early: Cain slew his brother Abel; “and wherefore slew he him?” He doubtless alleged other reasons himself—but this was the true cause: “his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” It prevailed also, in the family of Abraham; “and as it was then, so it is now: he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.” “Marvel not therefore,” says our Saviour, “if the world hate you.” You marvel at something new, something unexpected. But is this the case with the opposition of the world? Have you not been apprized of it from the beginning? Is it not the way in which all your brethren have trodden—and even your “elder Brother” too?—Then do not murmur: you suffer in the noblest company; and your enemies can neither hinder your present peace, nor destroy your future happiness. Yea, “blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so

persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Secondly. If the distinguishing badge of a Christian is this—that he is “not of the world”—then are there few real Christians to be found. Do not say, This conclusion arises from severity of mind. “The Lord our God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundred fold!” But it necessarily follows from a regard to the truth of God. If we abide by the decisions of his word—is there not enough to justify our fears with regard to thousands who bear the Christian name? Look around you. It is true, He who knoweth all things may discover a difference which eludes our view: but surely there ought to be a visible, as well as a real difference between the citizens of earth and the citizens of heaven. Surely, Christians should “*declare plainly*” that they seek a country, and that this is not their rest.

We often judge of our fellow-creatures by a wrong standard: thus we “bless the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth;” we condemn a drunkard and an adulterer, and very deservedly—but what say we against those that “mind earthly things?” Who recollects that “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”?

Judge yourselves, I beseech you, by this test. Ask yourselves wherein you differ from the men of the world: whether you are not labouring more for “the meat that perisheth than for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;” whether you are carried down the stream by the vices or follies of the age, or whether you “rise up for God against the evil doers, and stand up for him against the workers of iniquity;” whether you are “serving

your generation, or sleeping as do others;” whether any speak evil of you, or you are the favourites of those who are enemies of God?

Thirdly. See how little we should be affected with the charge of preciseness and singularity. By persons of good sense and liberal minds singularity is never valued for its own sake; and there is also an assumed, unnecessary singularity in trifling things, which is by no means praiseworthy. But there is a certain singularity which does the Christian honour, and without which you cannot belong to the Saviour; for “He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world: He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And why then should we be so terrified at the charge? You would not be afraid of being peculiarly wise, or beautiful, or wealthy. Why then wish to escape the praise of being singular in religion? What wisdom, what beauty, what riches, can be compared to this?

Fourthly. If Christians are not of the world, no wonder they are more than reconciled to a withdraw - ment from it. No wonder they love solitude, enter their closets, and shut to their doors—there they exchange the world for God. No wonder they prize the Sabbath—it is a day of retreat, it is an emblem of the heavenly rest. No wonder if death be no longer formidable—it is a leaving the world—but what world? a vain world, a vexing world, a defiling world. Such a departure may be painful to those who have lodged all their happiness on earth—but the Christian is not of the world—and the wonder is, that he is not more eager to be gone out of it.

Let me conclude with an admonition. Let me address Christians. Let me call upon you “not to fashion yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; nor to walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of your minds.” Stand on your own hallowed ground. Maintain your separation from the world. Do not venture too far, even in lawful things: the line which divides good and evil is only an hair’s breadth—and may therefore be easily, and sometimes insensibly passed. Be not ambitious of worldly honours; nor covetous of worldly riches—“Seekest thou great things to thyself? seek them not.” Be thankful for such a degree of temporal good as will help; but never be anxious for such a degree as will hinder. One staff is useful to a traveller; a bundle of staves would be an incumbrance. “Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.”

But what shall I say to those of you who are still “of the world”? Let me remind you, that there will soon be a full and an everlasting separation between the righteous and the wicked—yea, that the division is already made—that the parties are receding from each other—and hastening to their respective stations. Oh! be prevailed upon to leave the world before the world leaves you—for leave it you must, either by choice or compulsion; and is it not better to leave it by the allurements of grace than by the violence of death? Oh! leave the world, while it is in your power to prove that you relinquish it for conscience’ sake. Oh! leave it, as you will wish you had renounced it when you enter an eternal state;

and now show yourselves in the class in which you hope to appear at the clay of judgment. View the world as an object of solitary contemplation. View it as an object of dying contemplation. And “arise and depart hence.”—If you remain in the world, with the world you will perish’.

How I pity certain individuals who seem to have their everlasting welfare at heart, but cannot since for all resolve to give up the world! They are for ever purposing, but never decide. They seem to yield to every thing we advance, until we touch the subject of separation from the world—then they immediately shrink back; and, if pressed, employ all their ingenuity to excuse or palliate their attachments and compliances. Are you of this number?

Perhaps you imagine your withdrawal from the world will be a very miserable thing. Now, even allowing it to be irksome, still, if it can be proved to be necessary, you ought to submit to it. You act thus in other pressing cases. But we are bold to affirm that, if you detach yourselves from it, you will be infinitely more happy than in connexion with it. What liberty, what satisfaction, have the votaries of the world? Are they not the most pitiable of all beings? Are they not always disgusted or disappointed?—And still more peculiarly wretched is a state of suspense, between the world and religion; where you have the inconveniences of both, without the pleasure of either. But, says Solomon, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” “My soul,” says David, “shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.”

Good Matthew Henry said, as he was expiring, to his friends in the room; You have heard and read the words of many dying men—and these are mine: I have found a life of communion with God the happiest life in the world. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way.” But hear Bishop Beveridge: If the way be narrow, it is not long; and if the gate be strait, it opens into endless life.

DISCOURSE XL.

WEAK GRACE ENCOURAGED.

“For who hath despised the day of small things?” ZECH. iv. 10

IT is not indeed easy to determine always what is small. Things, at first apparently trivial and uninteresting, often become very great and momentous.

It is so in nature. The oak, whose branches cover the side of the mountain, and whose strength defies the storm, grows from an acorn which we could trample under foot. Broad rivers and streams, which fertilize the countries through which they roll, and become a sea, would, if retraced, be found to spring from obscure, if not imperceptible sources.

It is so in science. There was a time when Johnson was learning his letters. Sir Isaac Newton, sitting in a garden, saw an apple fall from a tree; and this led him to speculate on the power of gravity: he saw a boy blowing bubbles, and this led him to investigate the subject of light and colours. And from such hints was derived much of the grand

scheme of philosophy which distinguished this illustrious genius.

It is so in political affairs. As we read history, how often are we forced to exclaim, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" What an inconsiderable incident has sometimes set a whole nation in a blaze! How wonderful the difference between many of the revolutions of empires in their rise and in their effects!

It is so in moral concerns. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" Our Saviour teaches us that there may be murder in an angry word, and adultery in a wanton look. Hence the wisest part we can act is to stop beginnings, yea, to avoid the very appearance of evil. "Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

And what inference should we derive hence? Why this. A philosopher will not despise the day of small things; a statesman will not; a moralist will not—and should a Christian? God forbid. "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Let us then apply this question entirely to the subject of religion.

And here it will be necessary, First, to observe, that the work of grace in the soul is frequently small in its commencement—I say frequently, for it is not always so. The various graces of the Holy Ghost seem to have been, at once, perfectly produced in the Apostle Paul: so great was his unwavering faith, his lively hope, his inflexible courage, and his unconquerable zeal.

But in a general way it is small in its beginning. The soul resembles the field, where we see "first the

blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear." God could instantly produce the fruits of the earth in their maturity, but we know from the event that it does not accord with his wisdom. He therefore advances them from very small principles, and by a gradual process, to their perfection. Our Saviour spake a parable, which will apply to the grace of God in the heart, as well as the gospel in the world, and which serves to illustrate and confirm the truth of this representation. "The kingdom of heaven," says he, "is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which is indeed the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

The Christian is a soldier; and the beginning of his career is naturally the day of small things. He is a raw and awkward recruit; he can neither march well, nor easily and gracefully use his arms. And then, when he has acquired the theory of his exercise, he has the practical part to learn; and it is actual experience only that can make the warrior.

The Christian is a scholar; and when he enters the school, it is of course a day of small things. He begins with his rudiments; and though he has many things to learn, "he cannot bear them now." Or, to speak less figuratively: he has some light, and such as flesh and blood could never reveal; but it is indistinct. "He sees men as trees walking." It terminates for the present rather in desires and admiration than any thing else. It is "marvellous light it leads him to wonder and exclaim—"Where have I been? How was it that I did not see these things before?"

Whence is it that I perceive them now? How can I acquire them? How can I ensure them?" Thus he longs, and prays, and waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.

He has some hope; but while it excludes despair, it also admits of doubts and fears. He does not question the power of the Saviour, but his will; nor the truth of his promises, but their application to himself. His affections are warm, but his faith is weak. Little stumbling-blocks throw him down; as even a wrinkle in the carpet will occasion the fall of a child. He is easily perplexed and distressed. His afflictions embarrass him, and lead him to say. If I am his, why am I thus? He cannot bear the frown of Providence; and because God chastises him, he fears that he is going to condemn. And this, according to Solomon, is another mark of a weak state of religion; "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small."

But, Secondly; weak, unpromising, and even discouraging as all this may appear, it is not to be despised. And for this THREE REASONS MAY BE ASSIGNED.

First. Our Saviour does not despise the day of small things. Observe what is said of him in prophecy. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:" but, in this flock, all are not sheep: there are lambs; and these are weak and tender, and unable to travel fast or far. And "he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom"—not on his shoulder—an emblem of strength, but in his bosom—the image of affection—"and shall gently lead those that are with

young. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.”

Let us look after this lovely character in the Gospels. We shall soon find him.—There came “a ruler, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.” He thought Christ could cure him—there was his faith: but he could not believe that he was able to do it by his word, or without his bodily presence—there was his weakness. What does our Saviour? He takes him at his desire, and goes away with him. What were his own disciples, after all the education which he had given them? His Cross scandalized them; and his resurrection appeared to them like a dream. Even to the hour of his ascension they had some expectations of a temporal kingdom. But they loved him, and had forsaken all to follow him; and he did not cast them off. He bore with their infirmities, solved gradually all their doubts; and, “loving his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”

He rose from the dead with the same disposition he had discovered in life. What poor wavering creatures were the two disciples going to Emmaus! They were ready to bury their last hope, and drew melancholy conclusions from circumstances which were really in their favour. He knew their state, and joined them in their sorrowful walk. He enlightened their minds, confirmed their faith, and enlivened their affections; so that “they said one to another, Did not our heartburn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?” When he ascended, he carried the same heart with

him to heaven: we “have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” Hear what he said, long after he had entered his glory, to the Church of Philadelphia: “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my Name.”

O blessed Saviour! thou receivest the weak as well as the strong—thou dost not despise the day of small things. May we be followers of thee as dear children!

Secondly. We should not despise the day of small things, because it is precious. Real grace is infinitely valuable. It is the work of God; it is the image of God; it is the glory of God; it is the delight of God. “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.” The individual who possesses it is raised in the eye of an angel, yea, in the eye of God himself, above heroes, and philosophers, and kings. When the God of heaven and earth surveys our world, “To this man,” says he, “will I look, even to him who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word.” This renders the righteous more excellent than his neighbour. This gives the heirs of faith such importance, that “the world is not worthy of them.” This enlightens, this frees, this sanctifies, this dignifies the soul. In prosperity, in adversity; alone, in company; in life, in death—this is the one thing needful. And wise and happy is he who even resigns all to make it his own. “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise, of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more

precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." A little grace then is too precious to be despised.

And Thirdly. We should not despise the day of small things, because it will be a day of great things. That child will become a man: contemn not his infancy. Suppose he is now only a babe—he is an heir, and when of age will possess an inheritance reserved in heaven for him—he is a prince, and will reign for ever and ever. What is the dawn to the day? But we do not despise it: and why do we not? Because it is the pledge and the beginning of noon. And "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Yes; Divine grace shall assuredly increase. "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "He has life, and he shall have it more abundantly." What is sown in weakness shall be raised in power. What Eliphaz said of Job may be applied with peculiar force to the Christian: "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase." Oh! what will that poor, meek, doubting, distressed Christian be, when God, who has already "begun the good work," will "accomplish in him all the good pleasure of his will"! In a few years he will be upon a level with the angels of God. In a few months he will be presented faultless before the

presence of his glory, with exceeding joy! “It is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

Seeing therefore that the day of small things is so much regarded by our Lord and Saviour—is already so valuable—and will so certainly increase, “with all the increase of God let us beware of despising it.

We conclude the subject with a QUESTION; an ADMONITION; and a CAUTION.

The QUESTION is this—Is it even a day of small things with you? You have had your day of rebellion—do you know any thing of a day of reconciliation? You have wandered from God—have you ever returned to him? You have been ignorant of Divine things—can you say, at last, “Whereas I was blind, now I see”? You have been dead to the things of God—are you now alive to them? and do they impress and govern you? Have you any new and holy bias given to your will and affections? Do you “hunger and thirst after righteousness”? Are you praying, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me”?

Can this be a useless inquiry? Will it be a waste of time to retire this evening, and ask yourselves—whether you have “received the grace of God in truth”?—What will you do without it?

The ADMONITION calls upon you not to overlook or undervalue imperfect religion, whether in yourselves or others. If you are upright in heart, you will be in most danger of despising it in yourselves. Judging of your grace by the degree of it, you may conclude you have not the reality. Comparing yourselves with others who are more advanced in the Divine

life, you may shrink into nothing, and imagine you have no part or lot in the matter.

But beware of any rash conclusions. You may be travelling in the same road, though not with equal steps. You may be of the same species, though not of the same stature. While you mourn for what you want, you should rejoice in what you have. While you ought to be humble, you ought also to be thankful; and in taking shame to yourselves, you should acknowledge what God has done for your souls. If you are not what you would be, you are not what you once were; if you are not like some of the Lord's people, you are not like the rest of the world.

But you are also in some danger with regard to others. You may think too little of a real work of grace. Yea, from inattention, or from prejudice; from the manner in which it commences, or from some peculiarities in the subject; you may suppose God has done nothing, where he has been doing much.

Guard against this. And remember also, that it is not enough that you do not despise the day of small things; you must cherish it. Ministers should cherish every promising impression made upon the minds of their hearers. Parents should cherish every tender and pious disposition in their children. Friends should cherish every favourable appearance in their acquaintances. And "ye that are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please yourselves. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way: but let it rather be healed. Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men."

But it is necessary to mention a CAUTION: it is this. Let not the subject we have been considering cause remissness in duty, or lead any "to settle upon their lees." Were you, from what has been said, to rest satisfied with any present attainments, it would be an abuse of encouragement; it would be an evidence that you know nothing of the power of Divine grace in reality. For

"Whoever says, I want no more,
Confesses he has none."

Those who have "seen the Lord," will always pray, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Those who have once "tasted that the Lord is gracious," will always cry, "Evermore give us this bread to eat." Besides, more is *attainable*. There is a fulness from which you may receive, "and grace for grace." There is a command; "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." There is a promise; "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

And more is *desirable*. There are particularly two reasons why you should seek after a growth in grace. The first is taken from usefulness. For supposing you are safe—ought you to have no concern for the welfare of your fellow-creatures, and the spread of the Saviour's cause around you? Ought you to wish merely to creep to heaven, without doing any good upon earth? Should you not wish to recommend religion every step of the way; and to honour God, who has done such great things for you, both in the life that you live, and in the death that you die?

And the other is drawn from comfort. It is with grace as it is with other things: when little, it is not

easily seen; but by growing, it becomes more visible. There are richer and higher consolations in religion which some never taste of; they see them—but are not tall enough to reach them. For these depend—not upon the existence, but the degree of grace. In a word, to use the language of an old divine, “A little grace will bring us to heaven *hereafter*, but great grace will bring heaven to us *now*.” Weak faith may be compared to a small infirm leaky vessel, which does indeed carry the passenger safely over, but subjects him to many a restless anxiety, and many a dreadful fear: while strong faith is a firm and well-constructed ship, that enables him to smile at the waves, to defy the storm, and gloriously enter the desired haven.

Therefore, “giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore therather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

DISCOURSE XLI.

MARTHA AND MARY.

“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath lett me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” LUKE X. 38–42.

BIOGRAPHY IS a species of history peculiarly interesting and useful. And in this the Bible excels. The sacred writers describe to the very life. They fear no displeasure; they conceal no imperfection; they spare no censure.

And while they discover their impartiality, they equally prove their wisdom and prudence. This appears from the examples they delineate. What are philosophers, politicians, heroes, to the generality of mankind? They may excite wonder, but they cannot produce imitation. They may indulge curio-

sity, but they cannot furnish motives, encouragements, cautions. But here we are led into private life; we contemplate ordinary scenes; we see goodness in our own relations and circumstances. We behold blemishes which *we* are to shun, excellences which *we* are to pursue, advantages which *we* are to acquire.

Thus the Scripture becomes not a glaring comet, but “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.”

Pass we to the narrative before us.

But previous to our advancing some general reflections from the whole passage, it will be necessary to take notice of the characters here mentioned; and to see wherein the one was to be censured, and the other to be commended.

Perhaps it is needless to premise that both these females were good women. It is expressly said, that “Jesus loved Martha,” as well as Mary. And we are informed that when our Saviour was coming to Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, “Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him, but Mary sat still in the house.” These two sisters did not differ in their religious character, as Jacob and Esau; Saul and David; Peter and Judas: but only, one of them was less influenced by her principles in this instance than the other; for our Lord does not condemn her general conduct, but her present action; and even this he does not censure absolutely, but comparatively. Some things may be said in commendation of Martha, and others in extenuation.

She discovered a noble freedom from the fear of man—“she received him into her house when it was well known that he was pursued by the heads of

the Jewish nation. His entrance could not be hid; he had many with him. She also discovered her kindness and hospitality in her concern to provide for our Lord and his disciples, and in deeming nothing too good for them. I like also her attention to the affairs of her own household. Though she was a woman of some consequence, she does not deem it beneath her to attend even to the economy of the table; yea, even to serve with her own hands when an emergency required. An affectation of state and of delicacy in the mistress of a family, has occasioned disorders, wastes, and embarrassments, which have ended in the ruin of many houses. The mother of Lemuel, in characterising a wife, even for a prince, in those days, tells him, among other things—that “she riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens—that she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.”

Some things also may be said in her excuse. She was the mistress of the house, and it was her province to provide. This appears to have been a sudden occurrence; many came in unawares; and perhaps she was unfurnished—and this would naturally create hurry, confusion, uneasiness. But, after all that can be said in justification of Martha, our Saviour reproves her. She was therefore blameworthy; for his judgment is always according to truth. He could read the state of the mind; he could weigh motives; he could distinguish circumstances.

And from what he has mentioned, we may conclude that there was in her, a considerable share of domestic vanity. I advert to that vanity which makes Religion exclaim over thoughtless profusion, “Why is this

waste?" Are there no charities to sustain—are there no hungry wretches to feed—no naked ones to clothe? I advert to that vanity which descends lower than pride in dress or furniture, which commonly attends wealth newly acquired, and adheres to vulgar minds, incapable of discerning that simplicity is essential to elegance: a vanity whose empire is as large as the table; a vanity which collects all its praise from sordid appetite; a vanity which, while it entertains the body of a visiter, generally starves the mind.

The Shunamite discovered much more good sense than Martha on a similar occasion. She wished to entertain Elisha: but she considered character; she would not even suppose that a prophet of the Lord required splendour or luxury; she therefore said unto her husband, "Behold, now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in hither." But Martha, instead of a plain repast, "was cumbered about much serving and was all anxiety to furnish an entertainment which, while it was rendered unnecessary by the plainness and piety of the visitants, allowed her no degree of leisure, and engrossed all her time and attention. Thus she deprived herself of an opportunity to hear our Saviour's discourse. This she should have prized. He was no ordinary teacher; his stay was not likely to be of long continuance; she knew not when the blessing would come again in her way.

This was not all. She rudely breaks in upon the devotion of the company, interrupts our Lord's

discourse, condemns her sister as idle, and tries to involve our Saviour in the quarrel: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." Here we see ill humour, fretfulness. She is "troubled about many things and, in her haste and heat, she loses the command of her temper and the government of her tongue.

But behold Mary. All reverence, all attention, all composure, feeding on the doctrine of eternal life—she "sat at his feet." She wisely and zealously improved the opportunity given her for the good of her soul. "This is my summer, my harvest; let me redeem the time."

It must have distressed Mary to hear her sister so passionately complain of her; and many a one in her circumstances would have replied, "Why could she not have called me aside, and have spoken to me alone? Why expose me before the whole house? If I have not been so attentive to other things, surely the occasion will plead some excuse." But not a word of this nature. The calm silence of this good woman seems to say, "I leave my defence to him. 'He is near that justifieth me.'" Nor was she mistaken. He more than vindicates;—he applauds her preference: and tells Martha that he will not comply with her demand, to send Mary to her assistance, but will suffer her to remain listening at his feet, and still enjoying the privilege she had chosen. It is the meaning of his declaration when he said—"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

But what is here said of a particular instance of pious disposition will apply to Religion at large. To render this passage of Scripture therefore more generally useful, let me call upon you,

I. TO CONSIDER THE DILIGENCE OF THE SAVIOUR IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME. He goes about doing good. His lips drop as the honeycomb. He always pays for his entertainment. In the parlour as well as the temple, he furnishes admonition and counsel. No sooner does he enter this house than we find him teaching.

Let us follow his example. Ministers should not be backward to speak unless before large and public assemblies. The Apostles, like their Saviour, not only taught publicly, but from house to house. Christians should labour to be useful wherever they are: every place, every company, should be the better for them. They should render friendly, and even ordinary visits edifying. Religion is not to be confined to the Church or the Sabbath. It is not to be a dress, which you may assume or lay aside at pleasure: it is a nature; a life. It is to keep us "in the fear of the Lord all the day long to enter business with us; to attend us in all our common actions; and to teach us that "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do it to the glory of God." Hence we are commanded to "comfort one another: to exhort one another; to provoke one another to love, and to good works, and—so much the more as we see the day approaching." But, alas! who does not stand reprov'd and condemn'd? "Are we not carnal, and walk as men?" Do we "redeem the time, because the days are evil"? Does "no communication proceed out of our mouth, but such as is

good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers"? Shall "vain words never have an end"?—"A word fitly spoken, how good is it! it is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

II. OBSERVE, HOW IMPROPER IT IS FOR A FOLLOWER OF THE LORD JESUS TO BE SENSUAL AND SELFISH. Mary who hears his word pleases him better than Martha who prepares his meal: yea, Martha even grieves him by her assiduity to entertain him. He would rather feed than be fed. He pleased not himself. He shunned every kind of self-indulgence. He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And, calling ourselves by his name, are we fanciful? are we finical? are we fond of giving trouble? are we slaves to our appetites? are we desirous of dainty meat? "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

Especially should ministers be like-minded with their Lord and Master. They often at least occasion excess, and draw upon themselves reflection. The preparations made to receive them would imply a fondness for extravagance, variety, delicacy. Let them attest their innocency. Let them show their people that they seek not theirs, but them. Let them, by their words and actions, discountenance parade and excess. Are circumstances of this kind beneath our attention? Is it not one of the lessons which the passage before us is designed to teach? When our Saviour sent forth his Apostles, did not his admonitions turn principally upon this subject? For things, in themselves of unequal importance with

others, become weighty by their connexions, their influence, their indications. A feather, or a straw, may serve to discover the direction of the wind, as well as a tree. What a fatal secret does that preacher betray who shows that he minds earthly things!

III. WE SEE WHAT DIVERSITIES THERE ARE IN THE FOLLOWERS OF OUR LORD. Even the good ground brought forth in various proportion—thirty—sixty—an hundred fold. What a difference was there between the faith of the Centurion and of Thomas! Abraham and Lot were both righteous; but how imperfect does the nephew appear, compared with the uncle!

Many things diversify the degree and the exercises of religion. Thus the stations in which Providence places good men differ; one shall be favourable to devotion, another shall afford less leisure and create more distraction. Constitutional complexion also has its influence. Thus some Christians are more inclined to contemplation and the shades; others are formed for the active virtues. The difficulties which chill the timid serve only to rouse and animate the bold and courageous. Religion, like water, partakes a little of the nature of the soil over which it runs. The very same truth was revealed both to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel—The succession of the four monarchies. Nebuchadnezzar was a king and a conqueror; and admired things in proportion to their worldly grandeur. Accordingly he viewed these empires as an image whose brightness was excellent, the head of which was fine gold, and the subordinate parts of inferior metal. Daniel was a man of peace and of wisdom: and to him they appeared “as four great

beasts, coming up out of the sea, diverse from each other: the first a lion with wings; the second a bear with three ribs in its mouth; the third a leopard with four wings of a fowl, and four heads; and the fourth dreadful and terrible, with iron teeth." Take an illustration from it. Imagine four persons—one phlegmatic, another choleric, a third sanguine, and the fourth melancholic—drop religious truth into each of these—and do you suppose that it will not receive a tinge from each peculiar temperament? In all these cases something of the original character will remain. And I always view it as a considerable evidence of sincerity when religion, if I may use the expression, acts naturally: it shows that people are off their guard; that they have not a particular part given them to act. For, were this the case, they would resemble one another much more nearly; and a dull, constrained uniformity would prevail. Thus it is with pretenders. If a man of humour professes religion without possessing it, he will keep a check upon himself, and, by means of this, appear grave and formal: but if he be really a partaker of religion, we should expect that his natural character will commonly show itself even in his duties; it will indeed be regulated, but not destroyed.

IV. WE MAY MEET WITH HINDERANCES IN RELIGION FROM THOSE WHO SHOULD BE OUR ASSISTANTS. Such are friends and relations. A wife should cherish good impressions, fan the flame of devotion, and be a helper to her husband in spiritual as well as in temporal concerns—but she may prove a seducer: she may lead him into vanity and the dissipations of the world. Michal ridicules the holy joy of David. A brother may discourage a brother A sister may

reproach and repel a sister. Our foes may be those of our own household.

Yea, even by religious friends and relations we may sometimes be injured. Instead of making strait paths for our feet, they may throw stumblingblocks in our way. They may press "hard sayings" before the mind is prepared to receive them. They may discourage us by their expressions of assurance and ecstasy. They may be wanting in sympathy. They may censure and condemn our actions from ignorance of our circumstances and motives.

V. HOW ANXIOUS SOEVER WE MAY BE ABOUT MANY THINGS, ONE THING ALONE REALLY DESERVES OUR ATTENTION:—"one thing is needful." It is, hearing the Saviour's words; it is, an attention to the soul; it is—RELIGION. What! is nothing else necessary?—Yes; many things. But, compared with this, they are less than nothing and vanity. Other things are accidentally needful—this is essentially so. Other things are occasionally needful—this is invariably so. Other things are partially needful—this is universally so—needful for prosperity and adversity; needful for the body and the soul; needful for time and eternity. Some things are needful for some individuals, but not for others; but this is needful for all: needful for kings and subjects; needful for rich and poor; needful for old and young.

If indeed we judge of it by the people of the world, we shall not think so when we look around us. The many seem to be prizing and pursuing every thing in preference to this. Instead of viewing it as essential to man, they seem only to regard it as a circumstance of his being and his welfare, which may safely be dispensed with. But let us take the testimony of

God. What saith the Scripture? "Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." Yes, says the Saviour, "one thing is needful." Hence we find David and Paul reducing every concern into one. "ONE thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "This ONE thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."

Finally. It is worthy of our remark, that READ GODLINESS IS NOT ONLY A NECESSARY, BUT A DURABLE ACQUISITION. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Permanency adds bliss to bliss. Some things are not worth preservation; but an invaluable treasure, a thing absolutely needful, will awaken all our concern, and we shall be anxious not only to possess it, but also to retain it.

And what a difference is there, in this view, between religion and other advantages! Nothing that we here possess can be called our own. What we acquire with so much difficulty it is impossible to secure. If we choose honours, riches, pleasures, friendships, they will be sure to fail us, and to fail us often when we most need their aid. But the blessings we derive from godliness are our own for ever. They are not liable to those numberless accidents which so easily deprive us of earthly possessions. No violence, no fraud, can rob us of them. "Our joy no man taketh

from us." Our treasure "moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal." Even the desolations of death, which strip us of every thing else, cannot touch the believer's portion: he can carry all his goods along with him into another world, where they will be for ever increasing. It is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Surely religion is wisdom—and "wisdom is justified of all her children."

This review should therefore more than satisfy those who, like Mary, *have* chosen this good part. Your choice will bear re-consideration. The more you examine it, the more worthy of all your regard will it appear. Be not ashamed to own it. Let religion be your boast, as well as your comfort. What is there to excite a blush? What, in importance and continuance, are the pursuits and acquisitions of the most admired of your fellow-creatures, compared with yours?

It should also influence those who have *not* made it. And oh that I could induce you to decide, and to decide *this evening!* I say, this evening, because you are not sure of another season. I say, this evening, because every delay adds to the difficulty of your choice. I say, this evening, because there is nothing so urgent; nothing that can equally claim or reward your attention.

Should you be induced to neglect this great salvation, what will be your reflections in a dying hour, and before the bar of God? What will you think in endless misery of those follies and vanities for which you sacrificed eternal life? "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

He who approved and applauded Mary's choice is here this evening to witness yours. He sees you, he hears you; he is waiting to be gracious, and exalted to have mercy upon you. You must sit at his feet as a disciple, or be made his footstool as an enemy. What is the choice you intend to make? "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

DISCOURSE XLII.

GOD ABANDONS THE INCORRIGIBLE.

“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” Hos. iv. 17.

NOTHING seems so absurd as idolatry. I low surprising is it that a man should make a figure with his own hands, and then fall down and adore it! How wonderful is it that a being endued with reason should worship reptiles and even vegetables! Nevertheless, this was the case for ages. “They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things ... they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed for ever.”

Let us rejoice that the darkness is past, and that the true light now shineth. It is our privilege to live in a land of vision, where we are informed of a Being who made all things by the word of his power; who possesses unbounded excellences; and who deserves our supreme devotion. We know God; but, alas! we do not glorify him as God. Every unregenerate sinner is a little pagan world in himself:

he has his gods, his temples, his altars, his sacrifices. And as the Jews of old were more criminal in their idolatry than the heathens, because they were favoured with a revelation of the only living and true God—so it is with those who call themselves Christians; their sin is increased by the means they possess of knowing and serving him.

What! you say, would you prove Christians to be idolaters!—Why not?—What is idolatry? Is it not the transferring to the creature the homage due to the Creator? If therefore we love or fear any thing more than God; if we make it our portion, and depend upon it for our happiness; we are chargeable with idolatry.

What do you think of the man who is more ambitious to obtain the applause of dying worms than “the honour that cometh from God only”?—He is an idolater.

What do you think of the man who devotes himself to the lower gratifications of sense, or the more refined dissipations of fashion, and “loves pleasure more than God”?—He is an idolater.

What do you think of the man whose thoughts and affections daily encircle the throne of mammon; whose earth-born soul cannot pass by a particle of shining dust without kneeling and praying; who, to acquire it, rises, and grinds the faces of the poor, and transgresses the laws of God; whose highest aim, and whose only business, is to amass his thousands?—Such a man, to use the words of Job, “says to gold, Thou art my hope; and to fine gold, Thou art my confidence.” “His wealth,” says Solomon, “is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.” “He trusts,” says the Apostle, “in un-

certain riches." The covetous man therefore is expressly called "an idolater," and stands in this Book, "excluded from the kingdom of God."

Nations who depend for their protection and prosperity upon navies, armies, commerce,—and forget God,—are idolaters. And families are idolaters who suspend their subsistence and welfare upon one individual, and suppose that if he were removed their eye could "no more see good."

All this is "trusting in man and making flesh our arm and, in proportion as we do this, "the heart departeth from the Lord." And this is the essence of man's inconstancy. Something besides God has his admiration and attachment, his hope and dependence; and whatever this be, whether an image or an angel, it is, in the language of Scripture, "an idol."

Men may pretend to regard God, and to adore their idols too; but this is pronounced to be impossible. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Ye adulterers and adulteresses! know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

They may not adore the same idols with others, for their dispositions and circumstances are various; and they may sometimes change their idols. But while any thing detains the heart from God, the man is in a state of perdition. And such is the infatuation of the sinner, that though always deceived and often con-

founded, he still goes on; he holds fast deceit; and refuses to return—till God, rising in displeasure, resolves to abandon him—and cries; “He is joined to idols—let him alone.”

There is something in this declaration tremendously dreadful. And this will appear—

First, if you DISTINGUISH THIS DESERTION FROM ANOTHER, WHICH MAY BEFAL EVEN THE SUBJECTS OF DIVINE GRACE. Of this God speaks when he says, “I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.” Thus God sometimes leaves his people when they are becoming high-minded, to convince them of their dependence upon him. He leaves them to their own strength to show them their weakness; and to their own wisdom to make them sensible of their ignorance. By their embarrassments they are soon made to feel how unable they are to manage their own affairs; and no longer exercise themselves in great matters, or in things too high for them. Thus, to convince the child who is regardless of your counsel that it is not safe for him to go without your guiding and sustaining hand, you leave him where the danger is not great, or where you could seize him as he falls—though you would not say, “Let him alone,” if you saw him climbing up a ladder, or crossing a deep river on a narrow plank.

Thus God may leave his people—but this differs exceedingly from the abandoning of the incorrigible. The one is from love; the other is from wrath. The one is the trial of wisdom, varying its means; the other is the decision of justice, after means have been used in vain. The one is to reform, the other is to destroy. The one is partial; and always leaves some-

thing of God behind, which will urge us to seek after him: the other is total and final.

Consider, Secondly, that THIS LEAVING OF THE SINNER IS A WITHDRAWING FROM HIM EVERY THING THAT HAS A TENDENCY TO DO HIM GOOD—"Let him alone."

Ministers! "Let him alone." He has complained of your fidelity. He has called you the troublers of Israel. Disturb him no more.

Saints! "Let him alone." Withdraw your intercourse. Cease your reproofs.

Thou all-quickenng word! "Let him alone." Rise not up in his remembrance. Place before him no promises to invite nor threatenings to alarm.

Conscience, thou internal monitor! "Let him alone." Before the commission of sin—never warn: and after the commission of sin—never condemn. Let him enjoy his crimes. Never mention a judgment to come. Never let him hear that the end of these things is death. Never try to refute those false reasonings by which he would reconcile his creed to his practice.

Providence! "Let him alone." Ye afflictions, say nothing to him of the vanity of the world. Let all his schemes be completely successful. Let his grounds bring forth plentifully. Let him have more than heart can wish.

Does the judge order a man to be scourged who is going to be executed?—Does the father correct the child that he is determined to disinherit? Is the tree pruned and manured after it is ordered to be cut down, and the axe is even at the root?

Take a third view of this dreadful sentence—Consider THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BEING WHO THUS GOD ABANDONS THE INCORRIGIBLE.

ABANDONS. It would be much better if all your friends and neighbours; if all your fellow-creatures, on whom you depend for assistance in a thousand ways, were to league together, and resolve to have nothing to do with you—than for God to leave you, “in whom you live, and move, and have your being.” Oh! to be abandoned by him in whose favour is life—to hear him say. As for the others, I will teach them, but I will not teach thee; I will sanctify them, but I will not sanctify thee—thee I disown!—Oh! IF the God of mercy will have nothing to do with us, who will? If the God of patience cannot bear with us, who can?

While God is with us, we can spare other things. While passing through the water and through the fire, if he be with us, we need fear no evil. Yea, under the most distressing revolutions in our own affairs, and in the world around us—it is enough, if we can sing, with the Church, “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

But what is every thing else without God?—How lamentable was the speech of Saul—“I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me!” When the enemy is approaching; when the day of death draws nigh—and you have no God!—every creature to whom you call for assistance will reply, with the king to the woman, “If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?” When he goes, away goes all our protection, and our blessedness, and our hope. Well therefore did he say of old—“Woe unto them when I depart from them!”

For, Finally, consider WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS DETERMINATION. It will be a free-

dom to sin; it will be the removal of every hinderance in the way to perdition; and thus give the unhappy wretch an unchecked passage along the road to hell. When God dismisses a man, and resolves he shall have no more assistance from him—he is sure of being ensnared by error, enslaved by lust, and “led captive by the devil at his will,” down to the regions of everlasting woe!

For what would be the consequence of saying to a blind man approaching a precipice—Let him alone? What would be the consequence of saying to a man asleep while the house is in flames—Let him alone? Their destruction. And so it is here. We are such poor insufficient creatures, that it is not necessary for God *to do* anything—he has only to let us alone. It is not necessary for him to strike a blow—the disease is undermining our frame. We have taken poison, and all that is necessary to its killing us is not to counteract its malignity.

Such is the judgment here denounced. Let us conclude by remarking,

First, The justice of this doom. Why does he say, “Let him alone”?—Because “he is joined to idols.” “My people would not hearken unto my voice; and Israel would none of me: so I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.” All the punishments he inflicts are deserved; and he never inflicts them without reluctance. “O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had I by peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.”—But may not God abandon those who have renounced him? Is he compelled

to force his favours upon us? Has his patience no bounds? Is he not righteous, as well as gracious? Is there mercy with him, that he may be feared?— or insulted?

Your condemnation entirely turns upon a principle that will at once justify *him* and silence *you*. “Ye *will not* come to me that ye might have life. Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

Secondly. Let me call upon you to fear this judgment. And surely some of you have reason to be alarmed. With some of you the Spirit of God has long been striving. You have had a pious education. You have heard the admonitions of friends. You have seen good examples. You have attended the preaching of the Gospel, and have sometimes been deeply affected, and sometimes even compelled to pray. And after all this you turned again to folly; and have “done despite unto the Spirit of grace.”

Now you know what he has said. “He that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” And you

know what he has done. You know that, provoked by the continual rebellions of Israel, "he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." And you know the master of the feast, incensed by the ungrateful refusal of his kind invitations, gave his servants a new commission, and said, "none of the men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." And what if after all your disobedience and perverseness he should say this of you! What if, remaining the same after all the methods employed for your conversion, he should say, "lie that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still!"—"He is joined to idols: let him alone."

If you say, you have no forebodings of this, the symptoms are so much the worse. Spiritual judgments are the most awful, because they are insensibly executed. It is a principal part of them to take away feeling; to lull us to sleep in the very lap that kills; to make us cry, Peace, peace, when destruction is coming upon us; to dispose us to embrace error easily; and to delude us so strongly as to believe a lie.

Thirdly. Perhaps some of you are saying, "I am afraid this is my doom already. My convictions seem to have been stifled. The serious impressions I once experienced are worn off—nothing seems to do me any good—I derive no advantage from the Sabbath—or the word."

Perhaps this is true. And if so, God forbid that I should say any thing to hinder or weaken your alarm. If any thing can save, it must begin with this reasonable and salutary terror.

But it may be also a groundless apprehension. And should this be the case, as the most safe are

always the most anxious, I would observe—First, that this fear is a good sign that he has not *yet* said this. Secondly, that it will be a good means to keep him from *ever* saying it. Thirdly, to use the words of an old writer, it is a blessed proof that God does not let you alone, if you cannot let him alone; but continue to pray; and though discouraged by delays, “wait for him more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning.”

And if this be not your unhappy case, be thankful; and cheerfully acquiesce in his dealings with you. Christians! he who has given you so many proofs of his care will never leave you nor forsake you. His eye is upon the righteous. His ear is open unto their cry. All his saints are in his hands. He will guide them with his counsel, and afterwards receive them to glory. Perhaps many things have been taken away—but he has not withdrawn himself. Perhaps you have been left alone of friends and relations—but with the Saviour you can say, I am not alone; because the Father is with me.

Do not therefore groan under your exercises—If I am his, why am I thus? You are thus because you are his. He chastens you because he loves you. He will not let you alone because you are not bastards» but sons! He destroys the cisterns to bring you nearer to himself—the fountain of living waters. He hedges up your way with thorns, that you may not pursue those paths which lead you astray from him, your “exceeding joy.”

And, rather than you should stop short of the prize of your high calling; rather than you should sit down satisfied with a portion in this world—he will spoil

your prospects—turn every pleasure into a pain—
and embitter or dry up every spring of comfort.

Heavenly Father! who knowest what things we
have need of before we ask thee, express thy concern
in what way thou pleasest; but never treat me with
neglect! Chide me if I err; take peace from me
when I sin; fill me with painful reflections and
apprehensions when the world is drawing me away
from thee; but never—never say; “He is joined to
idols: LET HIM ALONE!”

DISCOURSE XLIII.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR SAVIOUR.

“Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”

JOHN XX. 17.

IT is not necessary to inquire—Whose language is this? No sooner do we hear it, than we exclaim, with one of his followers on another occasion, “It is the Lord!”

The words are addressed to Mary Magdalene, as a reward for her constancy in adhering so firmly to him, and for her affection in seeking so early after him. He appeared to her before he showed himself to his Apostles. The relation is singularly interesting. But we have only to remark, that she was so transported with the sight of her Lord and Saviour, that she was going to embrace his feet and bedew them with tears of joy. But he said unto her, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father—but shall soon; and there is no time to lose—private satisfaction is to be relinquished for public service—I employ you immediately as my herald; what you

have seen I wish others to hear—use no delay; but ‘go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.’”

There are two things in the words which require our attention. I. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE MESSAGE IS ADDRESSED. II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE INTELLIGENCE.

I. It may be asked—Why was not this information sent to the scribes and pharisees and chief priests? Why did he not thus convince his enemies, and render his resurrection undeniable? Because—“who-soever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.” He never refused explanation to any humble inquirer—but he was surely not obliged to force information upon those that “hated knowledge.” To what purpose is it to adduce evidence to those that shut their eyes and will not see? They had seen him heal the sick with a touch, and raise the dead with a word. They knew the report of the guards, and had given them money to propagate a known falsehood, “saying, his disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept.” But his own followers only laboured under infirmities. They loved him, and had forsaken all to attend him. They wished to be established in the truth; they were willing to come to the light, and had doubtless been praying, “That which I see not, teach thou me.” And, “Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the

morning: and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." And thus enlightening, and thus refreshing, was this message to the perplexed and desponding disciples.

But what I wished to observe here was not only his sending this message exclusively to his disciples, but also his addressing them under a particular name—"my brethren." This is more than he could have said of angels. He is only their Lord; but he is our brother. "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Thus he is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." "Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Many an elder brother has stood between the affections of the father and the rest of the children, and by engrossing the whole of the inheritance has reduced the younger branches to dependence, if not to want; but Jesus pitied those who were less happy than himself, pleaded for them, shared with them in all their miseries, and determined to make them partakers of all his honours and riches. Thus they have fellowship with him; they are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

By using this name he would show that his elevation had not made him forgetful of those he was to leave behind. Though he was now rich, and they were poor; though he had now a glorious body, and

they were groaning under the burden of the flesh; though he had now all power in heaven and in earth, and they were weak, despised, and persecuted—he calls them brethren. Yea, he will not be ashamed to do this even in the great day when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations. In the presence of men, of angels, and of God, he will say, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

His addressing them in this message, as brethren, would comfort his disciples. One had denied him; the rest had forsaken him and fled, They had acted a very unworthy part, and their consciences made them uneasy. And had they heard only of his resurrection, it would have filled them not merely with surprise, but with terror; and, afraid of his rebukes, they would have hid themselves from him rather than have approached him. When therefore he sends them word that he is risen from the dead, he calls them “brethren;” and by this he seems to extend his arms to embrace them again; by this he seems to call after them, and say, “‘Return, ye backsliding children;’ I am ready to pity the weak, and to pardon the penitent.” Thus he dispels their anxiety, and fills them with hope. And thus he realizes his illustrious type when he made himself known to those who had treated him with baseness and cruelty. Joseph saw what confusion, and anguish, and dread, the discovery of himself had produced in those who were now in his power, and at his mercy; and therefore with his name he is eager to mention his relation, and to give them encouragement to trust in him. “He said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my

father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."

And did not our Lord, by using this endearing name in these circumstances, convey to them an intimation of duty? "Since I do not disown the relation in which you stand to me; since I acknowledge you as brethren notwithstanding your imperfections—follow my example; acknowledge each other as brethren; 'love as brethren; let there be no strife between you, for ye are brethren.' Disclaim me for your brother, or receive as such every follower of mine. Whether strong in the faith or weak; whether young men or babes—they all stand in the same relation to me, and in the same relation to you."

II. Hence he adds, "Go to my brethren, and—say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."—LET US TAKE SOME VIEWS OF THIS INTERESTING INTELLIGENCE.

It may be necessary to premise that this ascension was real and local. He had a body, and this, he assured his disciples after his resurrection, had flesh and bones, and could not only be seen, but touched and handled. With this he ascended. Heaven therefore is a place, as well as a state: his body cannot be everywhere; but wherever it be, there is heaven, at least—there is the Christian's heaven. Let us now consider this ascension—in reference to HIMSELF—HIS ENEMIES and HIS PEOPLE.

If we view it in reference to HIMSELF, we may observe—that in ascending he returned to the place whence he came, and assumed the glory which he had laid aside, or rather obscured. Did you never observe with what ease and freedom from surprise he always spoke of heaven? Prophets and Apostles seemed to labour for expressions when they spoke of it—to them heaven was new as well as vast; but *He* speaks of it familiarly—as one to whom there was nothing in it novel or wonderful. And this *was* the case. He *was* the Prince of heaven—and the palace was only his home. “What,” says he, “and if ye shall see the Son of man ascending up where he was before!—I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

He also ascended to enjoy the reward of his humiliation and sufferings. For our sakes he became poor. He was born in a stable, and laid in a manger. As he grew up, he appeared “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” After a life of contradiction and anguish, he “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” His humiliation and death are not to be opposed to his glory—they were the road that led to it. There was “a joy set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame:” and what he died to procure he now ascends to possess. What a change in his condition! Ye who have sympathized with him in the garden, come rejoice with him upon the throne. “He dieth no

more: death hath no more dominion over him." The head that once wore a "crown of thorns," is now "crowned with glory and honour!"—The hands once nailed to a tree now wield the sceptre of universal empire. And he who was once surrounded by blaspheming men is now worshipped by all the angels in heaven!

We may consider the ascension of our Lord in reference to his ENEMIES. Thus he is a conqueror. He had foes, but he vanquished them; "and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly." "He triumphed over them." It was customary for a Roman general, after a successful and glorious termination of a war, to return to the capital of his country. This he entered in triumph. He rode in a lofty car. Some of the spoils were suspended from on high. A number of the captives were fastened to the axletree of the chariot wheels. Myriads gazed and shouted; while the conqueror scattered largesses among the admiring and applauding multitude.

Behold the triumph of our Redeemer! "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He has conquered the conquerors, and bound those who had enslaved us. Sin, the devil, the world, death—these are the enemies he has overcome. And to-day he enjoys his triumph. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;

and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.”

O Christians! what have you to fear? You behold your chief in triumph, and your enemies in chains. We can easily imagine how a Roman could fear the enemy while they waged the war, and before the victory was obtained—but would he tremble, think you, when he saw these foes defeated, spoiled, and exposed to view, to prove the reality of their subjection? What emotions were excited in all parts of England, through which the Spaniards were led, after the destruction of their invincible armada, and when the instruments of their cruelty were carried along with them! How fearless of enemies now taken captive—what joy at having escaped from their teeth! And shall not we rejoice in him who has “saved us from our enemies, and from the hand of them that hate us”? How certainly would they, and how nearly had they proved our destruction!

But as he triumphs, he also bestows upon us various and inestimable blessings. “Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 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.” There is another gift, without which we should still have perished, and this also descends from a glorified Saviour. “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 hear." He had said to his disciples, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." This promise was soon fulfilled, not only in miraculous, but also in saving and sanctifying operations; and continues to be accomplished in the enlightening, conversion, and establishment of every real believer.

But this has led us to anticipate the Third view we are to take of the Saviour's Ascension. It regards HIS PEOPLE.

And thus he ascended as the High Priest of their profession. "If he were on the earth," says the Apostle, "he should not be a priest." He means that, had he continued here, he could not have completely fulfilled the office that typified him. To understand this, it is necessary to observe, that the high priest was not only to offer sacrifice: when he had slain the atoning victim, he took the blood into the holy place, and sprinkled it upon the mercy-seat, and also burned incense. Whether on this occasion he used any words we are not informed—but the action spake loud enough. Thus Jesus having suffered on earth, produces and pleads his sufferings in heaven: "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with

hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." There he maintains our cause; there, as our intercessor, he offers much incense with the prayers of all the saints, and obtains for us the acceptance both of our persons and services. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." How eloquent are his wounds! How vocal is his sacrifice! "Blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel"! speak not only to God, but to our souls, that hearing thy voice we may enter into rest; and, though unworthy and imperfect in all our duties, we may have "boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of thee"!

He ascended as their head and representative. Two characters had ascended before, Enoch and Elias. But they ascended as private individuals; and it did not follow, because they ascended, that others would ascend too: they were not so connected with others as to move them by their influence. But he attracts; he draws millions. His glory is the pledge of our own. By virtue of an intimate and inseparable union which no event can destroy, no distance can weaken—because he lives, we shall live also. He is the master, and we are the servants; he is the head, and we are the body. We are therefore said to be "raised up, and made to sit together with him in heavenly places." The apostle, speaking of the Christian's hope, says, "Which hope we have as

an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." You see even heaven would be no refuge for us, if he were not there. When our hope penetrates heaven, there is nothing on which our hope can fix but himself. But he has entered, and not for himself only, but for us—to procure a passage—to prepare a place for us—and to insure our following after. When he entered his glory, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. And the gates he left open—saying, "More are coming: I am only the forerunner of a 'multitude which no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.' I saw them loosening from the world, and asking for a better country. Some were coming from agreeable scenes, and many from great tribulation. They are now upon the road, at unequal distances. I have made provision for their guidance and safety, and here in due time will they all arrive."

He ascended as their protector and governor. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." His situation and capacity are sufficient to relieve all the wants, and accomplish all the hopes of those that are under his care. He has universal sovereignty and boundless resources—and he has all this for them. "He is head over all things unto his body the Church." Their present and everlasting welfare is secured; since he has all creatures under his control, and can make all things work together for their good.

And now what remains but that we translate this article of our creed into our lives, express his govern-

ment in our subjection, and, by being the most obedient of all servants, declare him to be the greatest of all masters?

And, First; follow him where he now is. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Is not he your portion and your treasure? Why then are you so attached to earth? Why seek ye the living among the dead? "He is not here: he is risen; he is ascended." Far above this vain world is your Saviour and your exceeding joy. How strange is it that you do not more long to depart to be with him! When a most beloved friend has removed from you to a distant part of the kingdom, has it not weakened your attachment to your own situation, and made you think much of his? You have buried a relation; you have a child in heaven. How you follow him thither in your thoughts and desires! You have something to render heaven more endearing and attractive. And, oh! how much less has the world to charm and to chain you! But the body is deposited in yonder grave—thither you go—feel an interest, and claim a property in the dust—this *was*—it *is*—mine. But nothing of the Saviour remains here—Not even his dust—for he saw not corruption: his body forsook the tomb, and was "received up into glory." Away then from earth—and follow after him to heaven.

Secondly. "Seeing that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Let not those who know where he is, be ashamed of their connexion with him or dependence upon him. Boldly avow his truth, and openly employ yourselves in his

service. If you disown him, you are far worse than Peter. Peter denied him—but he was then at Pilate's bar, and going to be crucified. But you deny him now he is Lord of all, and coming to judge the world!

Thirdly. What encouragement can you want to rejoice in him? You have a brother at court. He says to you, as Elisha said to the Shunamite, "Wilt thou be spoken for to the king?" In every difficulty you can go to him, and say, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." His ear is open to your prayer; his eye views all your walking through this great wilderness; his arms are underneath you; he will make you more than conquerors over all your enemies. And by-and-by he will "come again and receive you to himself, that where he is, there ye may be also."

"But where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Beware of opposing, beware of neglecting him! It is unreasonable. It is ruinous. He is now "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins." If you seek him, he will be found of you. But if you make light of these things, how can you escape? Remember that he is ascended to be *your* Judge. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth?"

DISCOURSE XLIV.

THE PRAYER OF NEHEMIAH.

“O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king’s cupbearer.” NEHEMIAH i. 11.

THIS book partially records the history of the children of the captivity after their return from Babylon, in consequence of the decree and proclamation of Cyrus. The Persian empire now flourished in all its grandeur; and Greece and Borne were rising to eminence in the world. But “the Lord’s portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”

We find therefore the attention of the Scripture principally confined to the Jews; and the affairs of the surrounding nations are no otherwise mentioned than as they have some connexion with the concerns of the Israel of God. And Nehemiah, in the view of the Supreme Being, was a far more illustrious character than Demosthenes the orator, Xenophon the commander, or Plato the philosopher, who lived about the same time.

The eye affecteth the heart, and so does the ear. Nehemiah was at too great a distance to see the ruinous condition of Jerusalem—but he heard of it, and the effect it had upon his mind did him honour. “It came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me. The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.” And thus he concludes his humiliation and devotion: “O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king’s cupbearer.” These words furnish us with the following remarks.

I. GOD HAS HIS SERVANTS IN ALL CONDITIONS AND OCCUPATIONS OF LIFE. In his Church, “there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither rich nor poor.” We behold Zenas the lawyer, Erastus the chamberlain, Paul the tentmaker, Luke the physician, Zaccheus the publican, Peter the fisherman, Joseph the carpenter, Amos the herdsman, Daniel the minister of state, Nehemiah the cupbearer—all standing in the same relation, swayed by the same influence, rejoicing in

the same hope, and destined to live together in the same everlasting kingdom.

This is by no means a useless remark. Let it teach us two things.

First, not to condemn bodies and professions of men indiscriminately. All such reflections are not only illiberal, but dangerous, and often produce very mischievous consequences. For too many are governed by opinion, rather than principle; and what they know they are commonly supposed to be, they are very likely to become; concluding that, since they are doomed to wear the scandal of the character, they may as well have the profit of it. There may be exceptions: but in general we shall find, that if we honour those with whom we have to do with our confidence, they will feel a responsibility, and be concerned to repay us. But when we indulge suspicions, and behave towards our fellow-creatures as spies and enemies—is it likely that they will feel towards us as friends?

Secondly; let us not make our business an excuse for ungodliness. Some lines of life are indeed much less favourable to morality and religion than others; they afford fewer helps, or more hinderances, than others: and this consideration should powerfully influence those who have the disposal of youth. But where the providence of God places us, the grace of God can keep us. And hereafter you will see many of the glorified taken from the same employments with yourselves. “These,” says God, “these had the same nature, were partakers of the same infirmities, and placed in the same circumstances with yourselves. But they ‘escaped the corruption of the world through faith.’ They found time to serve me.

They distinguished between the duties and the vices of their calling, and so performed the one as to avoid the other. They ‘followed me in the regeneration, and I appoint unto them a kingdom.’—‘Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!’”

II. IF WE HAVE ACCESS TO SUPERIORS, WE SHOULD USE IT FOR GOOD. Many of the Jews could not approach Artaxerxes: but the office of Nehemiah gave him an introduction; and he resolves to intercede for his country and his people. In this way some have opportunities of usefulness which are denied to others: they have the eye, the ear, the favour of the rich and great. And they should lay hold of these opportunities—not to indulge and aggrandize themselves—but to mention truths which persons in elevated circumstances seldom hear; to recommend religion, of which they generally entertain mistaken notions; to place before them scenes of distress, which are not often noticed in the high places of the earth.

Should it please God to call them by his grace—though their souls are no more valuable than those of the meanest slaves, they can be more extensively exemplary and beneficial than others: or, if not—it is well to remove their prejudices; it is well to moralize them; it is well to derive from them external assistance in relieving the poor, and maintaining the cause of God.

Let us remember that we are answerable for all our talents, and one of them is—the influence which in various degrees we have over others. How are we using it? Are we followers of him “who went about doing good”? He made this the grand business of

life. It was his leading aim in every situation and company. To this he rendered every thing subservient. May the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus!

III. THE BEST WAY TO SUCCEED IN ANY ENTERPRISE WITH MEN IS TO COMMEND THE MATTER TO GOD. So did Nehemiah: "Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." And the propriety of this action fully appeared in his management of the undertaking, and the success with which it was crowned. Every thing is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. Nothing is too little to bring to the throne of grace. Our intercourse with God will best prepare us for our dealings with men. It will repress every unhallowed purpose; it will give decision and vigour to good resolutions; it will inspire rectitude and dignity in action; it will enable us to bear disappointment or success.

When we have thus commended a concern to God, the mind is set at liberty, and feels satisfaction and composure. Hence, says Solomon, "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established:" as if he had said, "An enterprise will necessarily give rise to much thought and solicitude; but when we carry it to God, and leave it with him, the mind is fixed, and no longer driven hither and thither, troubled and perplexed." And in unison with this is the admonition of the apostle: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

When we have thus addressed ourselves to God, difficulties vanish. We know that if the affair be injurious, he can easily hinder it; and if it be good for us, he can as easily promote it. "His kingdom ruleth over all." Every event is under his direction, and every character under his control. When Herod had imprisoned Peter, the Church assembled together to obtain his enlargement—But what did they? Did they draw up a petition, and address it to the king, signed with their names? No; they applied at once, not to the servant, but to the Master: they applied to One who had Herod completely under his check: "Prayer was made, without ceasing, of the Church unto God for him."

And what was the consequence? "What were bars and fetters to God? "When Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands." Solomon has told us, and not without reason, that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." Eastern monarchs were absolute: they consulted nothing but their own pleasure: yet God had them more under his command than the husbandman has a direction of the water in a meadow. Now the husbandman can easily give it a new current by digging a new channel—and in this case it is worthy of our observation that the nature of the water remains the same, and no violence is offered to impel it along—it

flows as freely as before. Admirable image this, of God's overruling providence in making use of princes and heroes and politicians, to accomplish his own designs, while their dispositions are unchanged and unrenewed, and they willingly follow the leadings of their pride, avarice, or revenge!

There is a twofold dominion which God exercises over the mind of man. The one is by the agency of his grace. Thus he can enlighten the most ignorant understanding, and subdue the most rebellious will; he can take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh. We see this exemplified in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, in his way to Damascus. From a furious persecutor, he becomes at once a disciple and an apostle, and from that hour the language of his life was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" But there is another empire which he exercises over mankind—it is by the agency of his providence. History is full of this. He can give another heart, when he does not give a new one. Where he does not convert, he can check: he can raise up a diversion; he can indispose the mind by dejection; he can disorder the body; and, in consequence of the movement of one of those circumstances which are all dependent upon his pleasure, the whole state of an affair will be changed. Jacob was convinced of the dominion and influence of God over the affairs, and even the dispositions, of men: and therefore, when he was returning home, and had to meet his exasperated brother Esau—though he used all the means which prudence could suggest, he trusted in God for his safety and success: he therefore retired and prayed—ho earnestly committed the whole concern to God—and behold the result! Though Esau set off with

a determination to kill his brother, his heart was softened upon the road, and he fell upon Jacob's neck, kissed him, and wept. For "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

IV. It is worthy of our notice, HOW NEHEMIAH SPEAKS OF THE GOVERNOR OF ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN PROVINCES—"This man." Artaxerxes, it is probable, seldom thought of himself in a manner so humiliating. Grandeur threw a lustre which dazzled him; and a thousand flatterers were employed to make him believe he was more than human. But he was really no more than a "man." He had only five senses; he was made of the same dust with his slaves; he was vulnerable, frail, mortal,—a pain in the least member would tell him so; an accident or a sickness would speak out; death and worms would end the dispute. "I said, ye are gods; but ye shall die like *men*."

It would be well for those who are placed above others in circumstances to remember in how many respects, of far greater importance, they are only upon a level with them. And it would be well for us all to remember it; for we are prone to idolatry; we are always making flesh our arm: and this leads to a succession of disappointments, by which God says to us, "Cease from *man* whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is HE to be accounted of?"

Let us not however suppose that Nehemiah "despised dominion," or "spoke evil of dignities." We are far from supposing that the destruction of the various ranks in society would increase human happiness; and it is certain that the Scripture takes these distinctions as they are, and even requires us to

“render to all their due; honour to whom honour is due, fear to whom fear, and tribute to whom tribute.” It commands us to “fear God, and honour the king;” and to be “subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” But Nehemiah was now before the God of heaven and earth; and what is the greatest monarch in the world compared with him? Less than nothing and vanity. This is the way to reduce worldly impressions: the world strikes and conquers you when it meets you absent from God. Bring it into his presence—view it there—and what is it? What are the smiles of men to the favour of God? What are their frowns to his anger? What can drive you back from duty, while he is near to support you? “I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a *man* that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass? And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? And hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?” When Ahab and Jehoshaphat were going up to Ramoth Gilead to battle, they sat each upon his throne, arrayed in their robes. Four hundred prophets appeared before them—but the god of this world had blinded their minds; they could not see afar off; they only beheld these two monarchs, and therefore feared and prophesied smooth things. But Micaiah is called in—and he dares to speak the truth; and what emboldened him? He “saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.” And in view of him—what were these two *men*? Had Moses

seen only Pharaoh armed with power and rage, he would have shrunk from the execution of his commission—but he saw a greater than Pharaoh: “by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.” And what was this *man* to him? “And I say unto you, my friends, be *not* afraid of them that kill the body, and after that *have no more* that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear *him* which, after he hath killed, *hath power to cast into hell*; yea, I say unto you, *fear him*.”

Finally, OBSERVE HOW THIS GOOD MAN CHARACTERIZES HIMSELF AND HIS BRETHREN—“*Thy servants who desire to fear thy name*.”

This is striking—and it teaches us, that modest, diffident language best becomes us, especially before God. Even an Abraham says, “I that am but dust and ashes have taken upon me to speak unto the living God.” Jacob says, “I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies.” David says, “So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was like a beast before thee.” And Paul, “I am less than the least of all saints: I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.” I would rather hear a person expressing a humble hope, than a towering assurance. Zion’s travellers are represented as coming “with weeping and supplication.” We are now in a world of action and of trial—not of rapture and triumph. “Blessed is the man that feareth always.” Even Nehemiah only speaks of his “desiring” to fear God’s name.

Indeed there are many who must derive their satisfaction from their desires, rather than any thing else. They cannot say they *do* fear him, or love him, or

depend upon him—but they know they “*desire*” to do it. But for all such there is a most encouraging promise: “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” These desires are proofs of something good, and pledges of something better. They are evidences of grace, and forerunners of glory. Desires are the pulse of the soul, by which we may judge of our spiritual life and health. In some respects they are more decisive than actions. Actions may be counterfeited, desires cannot; we may be forced to act, but not to will. And therefore let us have recourse to this. Let us observe the prevailing bias of our minds; the direction in which, and the objects towards which, our desires move.—Let us examine whether we are not restless after the friendship and image of God. Let us see whether we cannot make the language of David our own: “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.”

We may add, that all the people of God while here, must place their religion in desires rather than action. Let me not however be misunderstood. I do not mean to intimate that the desires of the Christian are not active ones—for they are; and in proportion to their degree they will necessarily excite him to strive, to wrestle, to fight, and to use all the means which lead to the end he has in view. And,

I am sorry to say, that, for want of knowing this, many individuals are deceived, to their everlasting ruin—imagining that they have gracious desires, while they are strangers to Christian diligence. Balaam could say, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his:” but he had no concern to live their life. Herod wished to see our Saviour work a miracle, but would not take a journey for the purpose. Pilate asked, what is truth? and would not stay for an answer. There are many languid, occasional, temporary desires, which are far from indicating the existence of divine grace in the heart. The desire of many is like that of the sluggard, of whom it is said, “The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.” Desires then are nothing without endeavours.

But our meaning is this—That what a Christian *does* in this world is very little, compared with what he *ought* to do, and even *would* do. If you view his dispositions; if you judge of him by his desires, he “would attend on the Lord without distraction he would “run and not be weary, and walk and not faint he would equal a seraph in the service of heaven. But if you view his executions; if you judge of him by his attainments; he cries out, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that I cannot do the things that I would. When I would do good, evil is present with me, and how to perform that which is good I find not. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Christian! This will not be the case always. He who has given you the *will*, which once you had not,

has promised, in due time, to give you all the *power* you now want. You will soon drop every burden, and escape every impediment. You will soon appear before his throne, and serve him day and night in his temple: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins:
The work that Wisdom undertakes
Eternal Mercy ne'er forsakes."

DISCOURSE XLV.

AN ADDRESS TO YOUTH.

[THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR.]

“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?” JER. iii. 4.

IT is a lovely view which the Supreme Being has given us of himself in the words of Ezekiel, “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” His mercies are over all his works. But if there be any of his creatures for which he seems more peculiarly concerned than another—they are you, my dear children—they are you, my young friends.

Hence, to engage you in his service betimes, he has laid hold of every principle of action; he has addressed every passion of your nature—your hope and fear—your joy and sorrow—your honour and disgrace. He *commands* you as a sovereign—“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” He *promises* you as a God—“I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me.” He

expostulates with you as a father—"Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

These words teach us—I. That YOUTH NEED A GUIDE. II. That GOD IS WILLING TO TAKE THEM UNDER HIS DIRECTION. III. That THE WAY IN WHICH THEY ARE TO ENGAGE HIS ATTENTION IS BY PRAYER. And, IV. That THERE ARE PARTICULAR SEASONS IN WHICH HE EXPECTS TO BE SOUGHT BY THEM, and from which he dates the expostulation—"Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

I. Yes, my dear youth, you need many things. For whatever amiableness and attractions you may possess, you are fallen creatures. You are guilty—and want pardon. You are depraved—and need to be renewed in the spirit of your minds. And you are wanderers—and NEED A GUIDE. Let me try to convince you of this.

Now we are expressly assured by the prophet, "That the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." And if this be true of old travellers who have long been moving Zion-ward, how much more is this the case with those who are only beginning to start! There is nothing we are so unwilling to own as our ignorance—but though "vain man would be wise, he is born like a wild ass's colt. He goes astray from the womb, speaking lies." The human mind is naturally dark. We bring no knowledge of any kind into the world with us—it is all originally external, and drawn in through the senses. It is the consequence of instruction, and is obtained by slow degrees. And as to religious knowledge, we should have been entirely

destitute, but for a revelation from God. And when this light is given, it is like the sun shining on a blind man; it affords the medium but not the faculty of vision. Another work therefore is necessary to make us wise unto salvation—and hence David prays for himself: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law and hence the Apostle prays for the Ephesians: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened; that they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”

Again. There is one kind of knowledge, in which you must be deficient—that which is derived from trial, and which we call experience. You have not had opportunities to observe, to compare, and to distinguish things. You have not remarked the difference there is between appearances and reality; between the beginning and the end of enterprises. You are therefore liable to imposition and delusion. The less experience we have, the more needful is a guide—but, alas! that which ought to make youth diffident renders them presumptuous:

For they are full of confidence. We read of “the meekness of wisdom.” And it is certain that intelligence produces modesty; it brings to view difficulties which never strike the superficial observer; it shows us that, so far are we from all claim to infallibility, we are not only liable, but likely to err. For advancing in knowledge is like sailing down a river, which widens as we proceed, until the prospect expands into an ocean, and we see no land. But ignorance

and inexperience generate and cherish rashness and forwardness. A quickness of growth is often in proportion to the shallowness of the soil, as we see in the stony ground—but young people often mistake a readiness of apprehension for a depth of judgment and a comprehensiveness of mind. Hence they will speak with decision on subjects which perplex others; are positive, where the wise are uncertain; and flounder on, where talents and years are afraid to step.

Now, too—the passions and appetites begin to rage in their violence. These becloud the understanding, and prevent reflection; and rendering them averse to reproof and impatient of control, urge them on, and plunge them into a thousand improprieties and embarrassments.

Let us also remark their situation and circumstances “in this present evil world.” If, thus ignorant and inexperienced; if, thus full of confidence and eagerness of desire; they had to travel through a smooth and safe country—it would not be so dangerous. But they have to journey through regions full of pits and snares; where enemies are concealed in ambush; where by-paths perpetually present themselves; where seducers “lie in wait to deceive and where fruits grow on the sides of the road fair to the eye, but deadly in the taste. And here—what can be done here—without a guide—who will cry, “Forbear—There is danger—These ‘steps take hold on hell.’ ‘This is the way, walk ye in it.’”?

And, to close the whole—Let us remember the consequences which will arise from wrong steps taken in youth. Some of these will make work for bitter repentance hereafter. With regard to others,

repentance itself will be unavailing: you must endure the connexions you have formed; and carry the infirmities you have entailed upon yourselves down to the grave. What you now do will give not only a colouring but a character to the whole of your future life.

Youth then needs a guide. But whom will you choose?—We have to remind you,

II. That GOD IS READY TO BECOME YOUR LEADER, and that it is your duty and privilege to place yourselves under his direction. He would have you cry unto him, saying, “Thou art the guide of my youth.”

The Israelites of old, in passing through the wilderness to Canaan, found in God all that their situation required. They were exposed to danger—and he was their defence. They were destitute of provisions—and he furnished them with supplies. They were in a trackless desert—and knew not the way they should take—and he was their guide. By the fiery cloudy pillar he determined all their encampments and journeyings: as this rose they rose; as this turned they turned—till by a right way it led them to a city of habitation. And he is equally the leader of his people now. “A good man’s steps are ordered by the Lord.”—“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” And who can express the satisfaction of mind which arises from such a reflection as this!—“Well, I have a dangerous world to pass through, and I wish to pass through it safely and usefully, and to reach heaven at last. This is my aim as well as desire: and I am not a lonely, nor an uncertain traveller. God is with me. I am under the care of his providence. I have the Scrip-

ture for my rule. I have also the promise of the Holy Spirit to lead me into all truth—‘and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’”

And this is surely enough to incite you to apply to him. For, my dear young friends, what properties could you wish for in a guide that are not to be found in God? He is infinitely wise, and cannot lead you astray. He has conducted millions; and “the way-faring man, though a fool, has not erred” under his direction. He is infinitely powerful. He can support you under the heaviest burdens, deliver you from every adversary, and “make all things work together for your good.” He is infinitely kind. He will bear with your infirmities, and sympathize with you in all your troubles. And he is infinitely faithful: not a word shall fail of all that he has spoken; and you may say, with David, “This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death.”

Thus “he leads his people, to make himself a glorious name.” And thus all who have been under his guidance have extolled their leader—especially after they have finished their course. When they looked back upon his dealings with them, the review furnished them with peculiar songs of wonder and of praise; and their language has been, “To him that led his people through the wilderness—for his mercy endureth for ever.”

And this is He who is willing to become your guide; and who proposes himself as your guide—only,

III. Remember, How YOU ARE TO ENGAGE HIS ATTENTION—you are to “*cry to him.*” “Wilt thou

not from this time *cry unto me*, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

This familiar expression intends prayer and supplication; and it prevents you from using as an excuse for the omission of the duty—that you are not masters of words, and cannot deliver yourselves in proper language. For what is prayer? Is it not the desire of the heart towards God?—If you cannot pray—cannot you cry unto him? He can hear the voice of your weeping. He knows the meaning of a sigh; of a look. "My desire," says David, "is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee."

And let me here remark two things—the first is—that you are not to expect this guidance without prayer. His own declaration is sufficient to decide this—"For all these things," says he, "will I yet be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." And the second is—that you are not to despair of this guidance with it. It is God's way to produce in us conviction of our need, and to draw forth our desires after the influences and blessings he has to bestow; but he that commands and inclines us to call upon him will not suffer us to call upon him in vain. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Therefore "let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." And if unhappily you have lived without him in the world; if other lords have had dominion over you—but you are now willing to abandon them, and to make mention of his name only, saying, "Lord, I am thine, save me

“Grant me thy counsels for my guide,
 And then receive me to thy bliss;
 All my desires and hopes beside
 Are faint and cold, compar'd with this”—

—be assured he will in no wise cast you out; but will receive you graciously, and love you freely. We have therefore only to observe,

IV. That THERE ARE PARTICULAR SEASONS IN WHICH HE EXPECTS TO BE SOUGHT AFTER BY THE YOUNG, and from which he dates the expostulation—“Wilt thou not from *this time* cry unto me. My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?”

And first, this is the case when they leave the house of their friends, and the wing of their relations. Behold a youth removing from home—to go to school—to learn a business—to travel. He departs. The fond mother views him from the window—and turns away—to weep. The father accompanies him to a distance—having left him—looks back again—and prays—“The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad, and let my name be named on him, and let him grow into a multitude.” Though in such circumstances he still engrosses affection and solicitude, he is no longer immediately under the notice of parents. They have given him instruction; they can maintain a correspondence by writing—but they are no longer near him; and he may fall into mistakes, which will decide his condition before they can know the danger or offer advice. To such a youth God says, “Wilt thou not *from this time* cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?”

Secondly. When the young are bereaved of their parents, and will see their faces and hear their voices

no more for ever. This is no uncommon affliction—but it is an awful one—and sometimes the most distressing consequences ensue. There dies a father—and—behold, the widow descends from the sofa of ease to the oar of labour—and the children lose the caresses of the neighbourhood; are scattered; oppressed; injured. For few in our world act according to the laws of genuine friendship, or inquire, like David, “Is there any left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” But the moral hazards of such bereavements are still more dreadful. Deprived of a correcting, restraining, and directing hand—left to himself, with evil propensities, and surrounded with error and vice—what wonder is it that the young traveller is drawn aside, and led the downward road? Are there any here this evening who have been deprived of their relations, and are thus exposed? Say, with David, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” Yes—if you cry to him, he will not leave you orphans: he will be to you all that you need; and you shall prove that “it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.” Returning therefore. from such a grave—hear him saying, Wilt thou not from “*this time* cry unto me. My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?”

Thirdly. This is the case at the commencement of a new period of life. Such is the day on which I now address you. God has preserved you through all the perils of another year, and has thereby laid you under a thousand fresh obligations to love and serve him. You now stand on the threshold of a new division of time—and are you determined to enter it without God? Would you think of living another year of

vanity, of irreligion, and of danger? Let this day be distinguished by the surrender of yourselves to him who cries, "My son, give me thine heart." Then you will begin the year with every advantage his presence and favour can afford; then he will say to you as he did to the Jews of old, when they had laid the foundation of the temple, "From this day will I bless you." From this first day of the year he asks you—"Wilt thou not *from this time* cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Fourthly. This is the case when the young see any of their friends and companions carried off by a premature death. Every death is instructive and impressive: but the death of one cut down in the flower of his days is peculiarly so; especially to the young themselves. And the reason is this. It attacks their presumption; it expels them from their favourite refuge of lies. For there are very few of the young who resolve to have nothing to do with religion at all; but they leave the concern to a future season, and in the mean time make no doubt of their safety. They expect to live to old age, and then—when they have carried various points, and their relish for liberty and pleasure is abated—then they resolve to mind the salvation of the soul, and to dedicate to religion a season good for nothing else. Now, not to observe the baseness of this conduct, and how likely it is to provoke God to cast you off—not to observe, how few are ever called in old age—not to remind you that your disinclinations to religion will grow with your years, that the disease by continuance will grow inveterate, and that as soon may "the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots, as those learn to do good who are accustomed to do evil"—let me refer

you to an early grave, to convince you of the absurdity of your hope and resolution. Here you see—that “*all flesh is grass; and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field that life is a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away; that youth is no security from the stroke of death; and therefore that nothing can be more unwise than to depend, in a business so momentous, on events so precarious.*”

Now you glory in your vigour and strength; and promise yourselves many years—when perhaps this night your soul may be required of you; when perhaps there is but a step between you and death; when perhaps the feet of them that have carried out your associate are ready to carry you out. “For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.”

Again. This is the case at a season when the young have peculiar convictions and impressions. And where is the youth who has not?—Have you not sometimes, like Felix, trembled when you have heard of the powers of the world to come? Have you not sometimes deplored feelingly the poverty of earthly pleasures and resources, and sighed and asked for a better country? When you have seen believers tranquil in affliction, and happy even in dissolution, have you not prayed, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his”?

These are cords of love, by which he would draw you to himself—and will you cut them off? These are so many ways in which he addresses you—and will you refuse him that speaketh from heaven? Oh!

cherish these emotions. "*To-day* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Wilt thou not from *this time* cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

In a word: this is the case with the season of youth in general. For if you ever mean to attend to the things which belong to your peace, the time of youth is unquestionably the best season. Let me mention only two things. First. If you wish to befriend others, it is the best season. "One sinner destroyeth much good." His example and his influence in a course of years will produce injuries to society, which, if brought to repentance, he will deplore, but will not be able to repair. And how painful will it be when he is advancing to heaven to see some of his fellow-creatures going down to hell, and reflect that he was the means of leading them astray! If a thought could embitter the happiness of heaven, it would be this.

On the other hand, one real Christian may do much good, especially if he begin young. And here let me quote a passage from that devoted man of God, Richard Baxter. In the place where God made him most useful, which was at Kidderminster, "my first and greatest success," says he, "was among the young: and so it was that when God had touched the hearts of the young with a love of goodness, in various instances their friends, their fathers, their grandfathers, who had lived in ignorance and sin before, became religious themselves, induced by their love to their children, who now appeared so much wiser, and better, and more dutiful, than before. In a little time religion spread through many families, and after a few years there was scarcely

a house in which the worship of God was not maintained."

Secondly. If you wish to befriend *yourselves*, this is the best season. For "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace." Should you succeed in the world, it will keep your tribulation from destroying you. Should you moan with deep pointments, it will comfort you in all your tribulation for to "the upright there arisuth light in the darkness." Should it be said to you as it was to one of old, "This year thou shalt die," death will be your eternal gain. Or should your time be lengthened out to a number of years, life will be a blessing, and your "hoary head will be a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness." Indeed a preparation for death is the only preparation for life; and were you sure to live the age of Methuselah, it would be your wisdom and interest to commence the course here recommended immediately, and to enjoy as soon as possible all those incomparable advantages which can be derived only from divine grace. And therefore—"Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me. My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Such is the question with which God addresses you this evening. And what answer do you return?—I cannot imagine any thing more awful than tills moment of suspense. Your relations; your Christian friends; the enemy of your souls; the angels of God, and God himself—are all waiting to hear what reply you will make to the solemn inquiry. Whether your pious connexions shall rejoice or be miserable; whether you shall be the plagues or the blessings of

society; whether you shall add to the safety or danger of your country; whether there shall be joy in heaven or hell; whether you shall be saved, or perish for ever—all—all depends upon the nature of the answer you return!

But, solemn as all these circumstances are, I forebode from many of you a negative reply. For such efforts as these have already been made in vain.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”—Already perhaps some of the desires of the flesh and of the mind have gained an ascendancy over you. Already perhaps you have armed yourselves with sceptical principles, or loose notions of religion. The temper of the times in which we live is peculiarly discouraging; for the days are come, foretold by the Apostle, when “men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” To all this we may add, that the heads of families do not second the endeavours of ministers by adding private instruction, discipline, admonition, and example, to public means of religion.

Hear then the answer of these youths to this all-important question—“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?” Some, less daring, hesitate a little, and say, “I pray thee have me excused.” But others, more bold, reply—No. They “say unto God, Depart from us: we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” Such is the language of your dispositions,

pursuits, and lives. Ah! who could have thought that you could act such a disingenuous, such a foolish, such a shameful, such a destructive part?

But so it is. You have refused the terms of peace, The armistice is broken—and from this hour God and you are at war. And who will prevail? “Who ever hardened himself against him, and prospered? Hast thou an arm like God? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?”

But are all here like minded? No. While the generality are gone in another direction—I see some “asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward.” Here, O Lord, they are, ready to “join themselves to thee in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” Take them under thy guidance: and say unto their souls, “I am thy salvation. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

DISCOURSE XLVI.

THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS.

[EASTER.]

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God!” JOHN XX. 24–28.

WHETHER the sacred writers be themselves the characters they record, or whether they describe the lives and actions of others; in all their relations we discover an impartiality that cannot fail of being highly acceptable to a lover of truth. Every thing is expressed without prejudice. The failings of good men are exposed as freely as their excellences; and

we are equally instructed and edified by their wisdom and folly, by their faith and their unbelief.

Witness the history of Thomas contained in the narrative which I have read, and from which I would derive a few reflections suited to a season which commemorates the Saviour's victory over his enemies, his deliverance from the reproach of the cross, and his acknowledged glory as "the resurrection and the life."

Following the order of the words, we shall consider, I. THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS. II. THE MEANS EMPLOYED TO ESTABLISH HIS FAITH. III. THE NOBLE CONFESSION HE MAKES IN CONSEQUENCE OF HIS CONVICTION. May He who favoured these disciples with his bodily presence, be in the midst of us, by the influences of his Holy Spirit! May He reveal himself to us not as the object of sense, but of faith; and enable us to receive the kingdom of God as a little child, that we may share in the blessedness of those who have not seen and yet have believed!

I. Let us consider THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

The occasion which drew it forth was this. Our Lord rose early in the morning of the first day of the week. In the evening he suddenly appeared to his disciples. The disciples were assembled together, and had shut the door for fear of the Jews. But it was easy for our Lord and Saviour, who had all power in heaven and in earth, to open himself a passage. He did so, and came unobserved, and stood in the midst of them, and having blessed them, withdrew. "But Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus came." We are not informed of the reason of his absence—but no sooner had he returned, than his fellow apostles said unto him, with a rap-

ture becoming the discovery: "We have seen the Lord!"

Upon hearing this, who would not have expected that Thomas, after some inquiry, would have exclaimed, "Happy you who have been privileged with the sight of a risen Saviour! Oh that I had been with you! Could I have foreseen that he would have honoured this place with a visit, nothing should have induced me to quit the sacred spot." But, in place of these emotions which were so natural, he cries out, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Thus he will not only have the evidence of sense, but he will trust no one's senses but his own. He is not even satisfied with the sight of his eyes—his very hands must minister to the wants of his faith. He not only disbelieves himself, but he seems willing to shake the confidence of his brethren. He accuses them, not indeed of lying, but of mistake: he supposes that they had not exercised proper caution, but had been deceived by a phantom, which their imaginations had taken for reality; or rather by an apparition, which they had supposed to be the body of our Saviour. Two things it is probable made him think so. First, the Jews had adopted the notion, that souls occasionally appeared after death, clothed in subtle bodies. From whatever quarter this prejudice originally came, or whatever degree of truth was to be attached to it, it seems the disciples, as well as their countrymen, had embraced the belief. Hence, when our Lord walked upon the water, they believed that they had "seen a spirit," and were filled with fear; and hence also these very

disciples drew the same conclusion when our Lord appeared to them after he was risen from the dead: "And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Secondly, what strengthened the prejudice of Thomas was, that he showed himself to them in the night—the very season in which ghosts and spectres were supposed to appear.

If we pass from the occasion of this unbelief to the evil of it, we shall find that the behaviour of Thomas at this season was rash and foolish and obstinate—and every way blamable. For consider only the importance of the truth disbelieved. It was the foundation of the Christian religion—and of all our hopes—for "if Christ be not risen, our faith is vain: we are yet in our sins." Consider also the greatness and force of the evidence he had to resist. Jonah had typified this resurrection; David had clearly foretold it; Job had rejoiced in it; and our Saviour himself had more than once affirmed that he should not only be crucified, but be "raised again the third day." Here was a number of witnesses—for, not to mention that Mary Magdalene had seen him, that Peter had seen him, that the two disciples going to Emmaus had seen him—here were ten united testimonies; and these witnesses were his companions, and fellow-Apostles, of whose integrity and capacity he was conscious: and their witness was eye-witness and ear witness; and the disciples had doubtless told him, that they had not only heard and seen him, but that he had shown them the marks of his passion, and had even eaten with them: for this was the fact,

as another Evangelist has informed us—"And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb: and he took it, and did eat before them."

Yet after all this, says unbelieving Thomas, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." But all this is very instructive. Let us learn from it—

The value of Christian fellowship. With this the Apostle was well acquainted; and therefore he exhorts us "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." He does not only refer to a total forsaking of social devotional exercises, but to a partial and an occasional one. Circumstances will sometimes arise to prevent our attendance; but we should be careful that they are *reasons*, and not *excuses*, that detain us. What an injury did Thomas sustain in consequence of his absence!—and had he not been with the Apostles the Lord's day following, he might have continued still in his unbelief. We know not what we lose by neglecting even one opportunity of going to the house of God when it is in our power. There might have been perhaps something in the sermon peculiarly suited to our condition: something which might have

scattered our doubts or relieved our distress. Has not the Saviour said, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"? Is he not "known in his palaces for a refuge"? Do you not long to "see his power and his glory, so as you *have* seen him in the sanctuary"?

We learn, also, how prone we are to establish improper criterions of truth. How often do we judge of things exclusively by our experience, our reason, our senses! But what can be more foolish than this? To how small a distance do these powers extend! How many things are certainly true, the truth of which falls not within the compass of either! How many things can a man relate which appear impossible to a child! Tell the inhabitant of the sultry climes that, at a certain season of the year, water, which he has only seen in a fluid state, becomes solid, and hard enough to walk upon—and it will seem to him an idle tale: he has witnessed no such thing; and, reasoning from what he knows, he deems it incredible. If Thomas had constantly judged according to the rule he professed, how little could he have believed at all! He could not have believed that ever there was such a lawgiver as Moses, or such a prophet as Isaiah. He could have believed nothing recorded in the Jewish Scriptures—for nothing of all this had he seen and heard. And it is worthy of inquiry, whether many of the objections commonly urged against several of the leading doctrines of the Gospel do not very much arise from a similar source. It would be easy to prove that they are clearly revealed; but ignorance and pride rise up and ask, "How can these things be?" It is improbable; impossible. Whereas, having ascer-

turned the Bible to be the word of God, we should implicitly embrace all its contents. Our belief should not be rendered easy or difficult by the probability or improbability, by the plainness or the abstruseness of the subject; but be always and simply determined by "the authority of the revealer." This obtains even with regard to human testimony: and if we believe the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater. To believe no more than we can comprehend, or reduce to some of our modes of knowledge—is not to honour the authority of God at all—yea, it is a reflection upon his wisdom and his veracity: upon his wisdom—as if he could tell us no more than we know; and upon his veracity—as if he were not to be trusted, if he could.

We also remark, that it is possible for a good man to be overtaken in a fault. He is "sanctified but in part." He may be checked in his course, and chilled in his zeal. His hope may decline; his faith may stagger through unbelief. Indeed, where is the believer who has not reason to cry out, with the father of the child, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief"? The Apostles themselves prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." But there is a difference between impressions and principles; between a wrong step and a wrong course. Let us not judge of a character by a single action. Thomas had true faith, notwithstanding this instance of unbelief. And he soon recovered from his infirmity.

Yea, it was overruled for good. It ended in the humiliation and zeal of this disciple; and in the greater confirmation of thousands ever since. For if those who have attested the things reported unto us in the gospel had been men of easy and hasty per-

suasion, their deposition would have been suspicious—but we find that they were men full of pertinacious doubts; they admitted nothing, till evidence extorted conviction. His unbelief therefore is the means of strengthening our faith. To which we may add, that it serves also to honour our Lord and Saviour, not only by evincing more fully the truth of his resurrection, but also in discovering the excellency and amiableness of his character.

II. OBSERVE THE MEANS EMPLOYED TO ESTABLISH HIS FAITH. “And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”

It is hence observable, that though Thomas did not believe the declaration of the disciples, he still associated with them, and thus placed himself in the way of Divine manifestation. This was well. Let us remember it. And, bad as our present frame may be, let us always resolve to repair to the means of grace. For “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” Flow often have the people of God been pleasingly disappointed in holy exercises! How often, before they have been aware, have they passed from darkness to light, and from fears and sadness to confidence and joy! Therefore “wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” Eight days however elapse before Thomas is released from his perplexity. And what days of dreadful suspense were these—while he was uncertain

all the time whether Jesus was the Messiah or an impostor—whether the curse of the law was removed, or left in all its force!—But “he will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before him, and the soul that he has made.” He comes again—not armed with vengeance—but crying, “*Peace.*” Thomas would doubtless be afraid—and he had reason to expect a severe rebuke—but Jesus instantly forbids all uneasy apprehensions, saying, “‘Peace be unto you.’ I am not come to destroy, or to condemn—but to save and to reclaim; to restore and to comfort.”

Behold the condescension and kindness of our Lord and Saviour in dealing with this man. Instead of abandoning him, he pities his errors and infirmities: “the bruised reed he does not break, and the smoking flax he does not quench, but brings forth judgment unto victory.” He seeks after the poor strayed sheep, and with unspeakable tenderness brings it back. He suffers Thomas to prescribe, and complies with his unreasonable demand: “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”

But while all this marks the compassion of our Lord and Saviour, it also serves to show his all-pervading knowledge. Thomas little thought that Jesus knew his offence, or had heard the language of his incredulity; but our Lord here reminds him that he was perfectly acquainted with his disposition, and that though unseen, he had heard all which had passed. He therefore answers him word for word—yea, he repeats the very terms which Thomas had used. He had said, “Except I shall see in his hands

the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe;" and, lo! Jesus, the moment he appears, though no one had informed him of this, says—"Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Let *us* also remember, that his eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good; that "he compasseth *our* path and our bed, and is acquainted with all our ways; and that there is not a word in *our* tongue, but he knoweth it altogether."

We have only to observe, further, that it hence appears evident, that our Lord retained after his resurrection the memorials of his passion—there were the marks of the nails and of the spear. And did his ascension erase them? John saw him as "a lamb that had been slain." These not only served at first to prove the truth of his resurrection, and the materiality of his body, but will for ever remind us of the way in which our happiness was procured; and will excite us to everlasting adoration and praise. He challenges the complete salvation of his people: "Father, I will that they which thou hast given me be w'ith me where I am to behold my glory." Do any ask for the justice of his claim? See his appearance; behold the proofs of his sufferings and death: "neither by the blood of goats nor calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." See how he delights in the deliverance of his people! Had he looked back upon his sufferings with regret, he would have abolished the impressions of them: but he reviews Calvary with pleasure; he

“sees of the travail of his soul, and is SATISFIED.” And shall we be ashamed of the marks of the dying of the Lord Jesus!—The scars of a general, wounded in the defence of his country, are viewed by his fellow citizens with admiration and applause. And “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

III. Let us pass to the CONSEQUENCE of all this. It produced a full persuasion of mind in the wavering disciple. It does not appear that Thomas complied with the liberty the Saviour gave him to handle him and see—and which had been required before as an absolute condition of faith. No. Conviction flashed into his mind. He is satisfied with the evidence afforded, and is ashamed of his own perverseness and unbelief. He weeps for joy as well as sorrow, and he not only believes with the heart, but confesses with the mouth. “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God!” Few words, but very interesting.

It is the language of dedication and devotion—“my *Lord*.” By calling him his Lord, what does he but acknowledge him as his Master, and resign himself to his service—saying, “‘What wilt thou have me to do?’ Thou hast an undeniable right to my obedience. At thy disposal I am resolved to live. And if I have offended and dishonoured thee—the more concerned will I be to please and to serve thee.”

It is the language of faith; of faith, not only in his resurrection, but in his divinity; of faith, not only in his dominion, but in his deity—“my Lord and my *God*.” How is this evidence to be baffled? The

title was given him by “a good man”—and what good man upon earth ever did or ever will call a magistrate, a teacher, an angel, his *Lord* and his *God*? Besides, Thomas was brought up in the Jewish religion, and could not be ignorant of the unity of the Divine nature: he knew what Moses and the prophets had said against idolatry; and how solemnly God himself had declared, “My glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images.” As *he* would have been backward to give this title, so our *Lord* would have been backward to receive it, unless it had been his due: yea, he ought peremptorily to have refused it; and to have reproved him for it—as the apostles rebuked those who spoke of them as “gods” come down from heaven, and would have done them homage. This was the more to be expected, because he was the prophet that should come into the world to bear witness to the truth, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. But he accepts—he commends the confession! One resource is left. It is to consider this confession as an exclamation produced by a sudden surprise or fright—“O Lord God—it is he!” But this is making Thomas not devout, but profane. Besides, it is remarked, that it was *an answer*; and, that he did not exclaim *about* him, but spake *to* him: “Thomas *answered* and said *unto him*, My Lord and my God!” He was therefore the object of his address.

While therefore others dispute and doubt, let us adore and rejoice. Let us give him the glory which is due unto his holy name. Let us say with confidence, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have

committed unto him against that day." For we should not be satisfied with a speculative belief of this truth. Thomas uses the language of appropriation: "*My* Lord and *my* God." Were it not for this possessive pronoun *my*, the devil may use the creed as well as the Christian. For he "believes and trembles." He knows that he is Lord and God—but not *his*, either to serve, or to enjoy. And without this, such a Being is terrible, especially when we know that unless he is our friend, he is our enemy. But to hear him saying, "I am thine, and all that I have to take hold of his covenant and say, All these blessings are mine; to "encourage ourselves in the Lord our God," and say "thou art my portion and refuge in the land of the living; whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee"—what peace! what joy must such a blessed confidence inspire!

"My Beloved is mine, and I am his. He loved me, and gave himself for me"—what then can trouble me! What can alarm me! What can I want! He is able to do for me exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or think. His perfections are mine, his providence is mine, his promises are mine—mine is the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Till we attain this blessed hope, we are strangers to some of the most pleasing parts of the Christian life. But how can we attain it?—Be his, and he will be yours. Call him your Lord in a way of service, and he will own himself to be your God in a way of privilege. For there is a connexion between these—if you have chosen him, be assured he has chosen you; and if you love him, be assured he has loved

you. For the one is the consequence, and therefore the evidence of the other.

Many are ready to call him their God, who do not honour him as their Lord: they boast of communion with him, but do not live in a state of subjection to him. This is awful. For if you are not his to serve, you have no reason to conclude that he is yours to save.

This is the way—to ascend from that which is more clear, to that which is less obvious. The Christian cannot always say, he is mine—but when is it that he cannot say, I am thine? Thine to seek thee and obey thee—thine only and wholly—and for ever thine?

If for the present you are unable to say, with David, “Thou hast given me the heritage of them that fear thy Name”—go on—praying as he did—and you shall not pray in vain—“Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation: that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.”

DISCOURSE XLVII.

CONTENTMENT WITH LITTLE.

“And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.”

I TIM. vi. 8.

WHEN Jacob was going from Beersheba to Haran, he was indulged with a very remarkable vision. It was designed to encourage him in the dangers and difficulties of his journey. It deeply impressed his mind, and drew forth his devotion; and on this occasion we are told that “he vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; so that I come again to my father’s house in peace: then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”

What we now admire is the moderation of Jacob’s desire with regard to temporal supplies. He does not stipulate for affluence, power, honour, splendid equipage; he does not ask for delicacies or

dainties—but only for conveniences; but only for necessaries—“bread to eat, and raiment to put on.”

His example holds forth a rule by which every good man's disposition should be governed with regard to the things of this life. It is the admonition of the Apostle: “Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.”

Is it then unlawful for a Christian to be rich? Is he bound to refuse worldly advantages when they come fairly in his way? By no means.

But he is not to be worldly-minded—he is not to seek great things for himself—he is not to toil and grasp, and covet, like others—he is not to be fretful and miserable when certain enjoyments are denied him. A Christian is to guard against extravagant desires, and to be satisfied with little. To inspire you with this moderation, let me lead you to contemplate a few objects which have a tendency to enforce it.

I. Let us consider THE NECESSITIES OF NATURE. These are few, and simple, and easily satisfied. For we should distinguish between real and artificial wants. Civilization has rendered the latter far more numerous than the former; and more of our fellow-creatures are employed in providing for the one than the other. We are inspired with false maxims of living; we deem a thousand things indispensable which our welfare does not require. The trial is often made: there are many who pass through life destitute of those things which are commonly supposed to be requisite to our wellbeing: but do they not live as long, as healthily, and as happily, as the heirs of abundance? Yea, do they not in

general live longer, and healthier, and happier? Especially, are they not free from those maladies which arise from indulgence, variety, repletion, ease, and the want of labour? Hence you will find that the rich, if wise, live as much as possible like the poor, confining themselves to the simplicity of nature, and doing many things voluntarily, which the lower classes are constrained to do from necessity.

In reference to happiness, a man only *has* what he can *use*. If he possesses a thousand pounds which he cannot use, it matters not, as to the benefit he derives from it, whether it be in his coffer or in the bowels of the earth. "When his wants are supplied, all that remains is only to keep or to give away, but not to enjoy. What is more than serviceable is superfluous and needless; and the man is only rich in fancy. Nature is satisfied with little; it is vanity, it is avarice, it is luxury, it is independence, it is "the god of this world," that urges us to demand more.

II. We should do well to consider THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE CREATURE. When we see men dissatisfied with what they have, and all anxiety and exertion to amass an abundance of this "world's goods," we should imagine that there was a superlative excellency in these things, and that our happiness absolutely depended upon them. But it is not only our Saviour who has told us, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Happiness is an internal thing. "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." He has a source of pleasure, independent of external events, and which shall survive the dissolution of the globe. It is not the water without the vessel that sinks it, but that which is admitted in. Paul and Silas could

sing praises at midnight in the inner prison, when their feet were made fast in the stocks, and their backs bruised with the scourge. The world promises only to deceive, and fails us when we most need its aid. People have risen to affluence and splendour—but their desires increased with indulgence: and they found themselves no nearer satisfaction than before. Yea, they learned what common sense would have told them before, that hills were more exposed than valleys—that the larger space we occupy, the wider mark are we for the arrows of disappointment—that the longer our robes are, the more likely they are to be torn or soiled. Care is an evil spirit that haunts fine houses and large estates: “in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits.” Solomon had more than food and raiment. A thousand streams emptied themselves into his cup of prosperity. He withheld his heart from no joy. And what is his conclusion? “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity, and vexation of spirit!” What can the greatest abundance do for a man? A pain in the foot or the tooth will destroy all the sense of pleasure the good things of this world can afford. None of them can reach the soul; and the mind is the man. None of them can calm the conscience; purify the passions; fill the desires. None of them can raise us above the fear of death nor the dread of eternity. “Riches profit not in the day of wrath.”

What inference do we draw from hence? Why, seeing these things are so insignificant and worthless as to our chief interest, we should not make them our portion; we should not hang our hopes and fears upon them; we should not suffer them to engage our solitudes. It is the reflection of the wise man: “Seeing

all these things but increase vanity, what is man the better?"

III. To induce you to be satisfied with such things as you have, consider YOUR UNWORTHINESS. You murmur because you have not more—but should you not be thankful for what you have? If a man owes you a debt, you ought to have your demand; and if you do not receive the whole, you may justly complain. But it is otherwise with a beggar who asks alms. You would think it strange were he to prescribe the measure of his benefactor's bounty—or were you to hear him pettishly exclaim, as soon as his friend from pure generosity had relieved him—"This will not do—this is not enough—I must have much more than this—I must have an abundance."

Such is the man who is not satisfied with what God has given him. There is indeed a difference here, but it makes against us. We are under obligation to relieve. Our fellow-creatures have claims upon us from the command of God and the brotherhood of human nature. But is God under any obligation to confer favours upon us? Have we any claims upon him? Whence do we derive them? Have we not eaten of the forbidden tree? Have we not transgressed the holy laws of God times without number? Would it not be a righteous thing with God to take vengeance? Are we not compelled to say, with David, "Thou art justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest"? How much more therefore are we bound to say, with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies"! Cease complaining, Christian. If you have not what you desire, you have infinitely more than you deserve.

Hide your blushing face, and hate your ingratitude. You were a traitor against the King of kings—you strove to dethrone him; you were tried, found guilty, and condemned to die. He of his clemency reprieved you—pardoned you—and gave you a promise that no one should harm you, and that you should not want food or raiment, through life. And you—after all this—you will turn away disgusted? and say—Is this all?—Why does he not give me a mansion? A palace?

IV. Observe WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY IN POSSESSION OR IN REVERSION. When I view the Christian—when I see him blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places—when I see him a son of God, an heir of immortality—loved with an infinite love; redeemed by the blood of the everlasting covenant; called out of darkness into marvellous light; justified freely from all things; holding communion with God; claiming all the exceeding great and precious promises—looking forward to “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away and as certain of all this as if it were actually bestowed upon him already—when I see all this, and find him dissatisfied, and hear him murmuring—because he has not a little more thick clay; because a few pins and straws are denied him—I wonder and I weep. What must angels think! What a scandal is all this to religion! O why do not these blessings absorb us!

Once they did. When we were first induced to seek them—we thought of nothing else. We then said, If I succeed and obtain these—how willingly can I leave every thing else!—if I have only food and raiment, I shall be therewith content. And are these

blessings less in possession than in expectation? Is not the Saviour the same? Is there not enough in his fulness to fill the mind always?

V. Consider THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. Suppose now a voice from heaven were to assure you—that a little was best for you.—You answer, I would try to acquiesce. And cannot God speak by actions as well as words? And does not his providence tell you all this?—By the subversion of your schemes? by the disappointment of your hopes? by the situation and circumstances in which you are placed?

Does any thing come to pass by chance? “Are not the very hairs of your head all numbered?” Does God take care for oxen; does he feed the fowls of the air; does he clothe the grass of the field? And does he abandon friends—children? No: he appoints, arranges, overrules all your concerns. This consideration repressed the ferment of unsanctified passion in David—“I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.” This calmed Job: though the Chaldeans, the Sabeans, and the elements of nature had deprived him of all, he looks beyond them to One whose agency hushed all his passions—“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Realize this principle. See the providence of God determining the bounds of your habitations; the age in which you were to live; the stations you were to fill; the comforts you were to enjoy; and the trials you were to endure. And if you have not much of the world—ask—Whence is it? Is it because my heavenly Father is not able to give me more?—No: “The silver and the gold are his. The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they

that dwell therein." Is it because he has no inclination to indulge me? No: "He takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants." It is therefore to be resolved into the wisdom and kindness of his administration. His wisdom tells him how much I can bear—and his kindness will not suffer him to give me more. His aim is my welfare. The same disposition which leads him to give, induces him to deny. He corrects, and he crowns, with the same love. This loss is to enrich me; this sickness is to cure me. I know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose.

And to his government in providence, as well as grace, I once solemnly, and have since repeatedly, given myself up. Too ignorant, too impatient, too carnal to choose properly myself, I said, "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me." And shall I find fault with his decisions, after beseeching him to decide? And with his guidance, after desiring him to guide?

VI. Consider how MUCH SAFER YOU ARE WITH LITTLE THAN WITH MUCH. Honey does not more powerfully attract bees than affluence generates temptations. Did you never see men ruined by prosperity? Did you never read the verse following our text—"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition: for the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Did you never hear our Saviour saying, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into

the kingdom of God!" And do you wish to make the way to heaven more difficult than it is, and to render your salvation almost an impossibility? If desirous of subduing depraved principles and tempers, what madness makes you try to nourish them? Why do you wish to have fewer motives to live by faith? And to have stronger ties of attachment to earth? If you pray to be preserved from evil, why wish to be led into temptation? Why would you cross the mouth of hell upon a narrow plank? What makes you think that you can sail where others have been wrecked? What confidence must you have in your own strength, to imagine that where so many have fallen you can conquer!

Have you duly considered the duties as well as snares of a prosperous condition? "Where much is given, much will be required." We think it a fine thing to be rich—but we do not consider the awful account the rich will have to give, not only of the manner in which their wealth was obtained, but also of the manner in which it was expended! We do not consider that they will be responsible for all the good they could have done in spreading the Gospel, and in relieving the poor, but which they neglected.

For they are not proprietors of these goods, but only stewards; and the great Lord of heaven and earth will soon say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward."—Produce your account, O ye rich. You had so much intrusted to your care—Have you employed it? And how has it been employed? Oh! the embarrassment, the misery of some! "So much has been wasted in dress. So much in amusements. So much in extravagance of table and furniture." "*Depart!*"

Finally. Consider THE BREVITY OF YOUR CONTINUANCE UPON EARTH, WHERE ALONE YOU WILL NEED ANY OF THESE THINGS. "What is your life? *It is even a vapour* that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away!" And how much of this fleeting period is already consumed! There may be but a step between you and death. Now—

If time be short, your trouble cannot be long. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." These "light afflictions are but for a moment." Behold the pilgrim. He meets with many disagreeable occurrences; he expects storms; he looks for a traveller's fare—but says he, "Why should I vex myself? These inconveniences are only for a time: I have better accommodations at home."

Were you ever so prosperous, it is only the sunshine of a day—the evening shades are beginning to spread, and will hide all your glories from your view. Read the verse before the text: "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Yes, we must leave it all behind; and what will it be to us then? "Behold!" said Esau, "behold! I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me!" So should you say: I am hastening off the stage; the graves are ready for me—of what importance will it be in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, whether I have been rich or poor; whether I have been honourable or despised!

"Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: for when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived, he

blessed his soul; and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

Now of that which we have spoken, this is the sum: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away; for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." "Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever."

Christians! we have been admonishing you to be content with a little of the things of this life. But God forbid you should be satisfied with a little religion—a little grace. Here you should be ambitious.

Here you should be covetous. It is a holy ambition. It is a heavenly covetousness. You are allowed to seek more. You are commanded to seek more. More is attainable. More is necessary. Therefore be not alive only in religion—but be lively—do not only bring forth fruit—but much fruit—that your heavenly Father may be glorified, and that you may appear to be his disciples. Let your faith grow exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you towards each other abound. And say, with the Apostle, “I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

DISCOURSE XLVIII.

OUR DUTY IN RELATION TO THE SPIRIT.

[WHIT-SUNDAY.]

“Quench not the Spirit.” I THESS. v. 19.

THE works of nature and the works of grace spring from the same Author; and the former are designed to explain and exemplify the latter. We can scarcely perceive any thing in the whole compass of creation which will not easily supply us with an emblem, or a monitor of some religious truth.

The Holy Ghost, whose ministry comes this day under our review, is held forth by various images. In our Lord’s conversation with Nicodemus—by the operation of the wind: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” In his address to the woman of Samaria—by the refreshments of water: “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest

have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." For "this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." In the words before us, the Apostle derives the comparison from fire: "Quench not the Spirit."

All the properties and effects of fire are strictly applicable to the Spirit. Does fire penetrate and search?—How piercing and painful are some of his discoveries and influences! Does fire destroy?—He consumes our errors and our corruptions. Does fire refine?—He purifies and sanctifies. Does fire produce both light and heat?—He not only illuminates, but warms. Does fire conduce to our comfort?—He fills us "with all joy and peace in believing."

It is hardly necessary to observe, that the Holy Ghost is not spoken of personally, but in reference to his agency and operations. Now these are two-fold. First, extraordinary and miraculous—these were confined to the apostolical age. Secondly, common and saving; and these will continue to be experienced to the end of the world. And be it remembered, that while these are no less real in their existence than the former, they are far more glorious in their effects. Though they do not heal bodily diseases, they cure the disorders of the mind. Though they do not qualify us to "discern spirits," they lead us to "prove ourselves," and to "examine whether we be in the faith." Though they do not furnish us with "other tongues," they enable us to comply with the admonition: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

These influences of the Spirit are rendered neces-

sary by our depravity and inability. Some of the wiser heathens confessed the need of Divine assistance to enable a man to commence and continue a virtuous course. But what unenlightened reason imperfectly discerned, the Book of God has fully established. There we find all real religion traced up to a Divine agency. If there be a Christian grace to be exercised, it is called "the fruit of the Spirit." If there be a Christian duty to be performed, it is to be done in "the Holy Ghost." We are said to "live in the Spirit;" and "to walk in the Spirit." And that the Spirit is still possessed for these all-important purposes appears undeniable—if we appeal to the testimony of the Scripture. Witness its decisions: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Witness its promises—"I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Witness its commands—"Be filled with the Spirit. Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Quench not the Spirit." Let us examine this admonition.

Fire may be quenched many ways. The most direct way is, by casting water upon it. And this I compare to actual, wilful sin. By this Christians are sometimes seduced, and the consequences with regard to religion are mournful. An example is better than a description. Let us take David as an

instance, and see the injurious effects of his fall. Read his penitential psalm. Some have told us that sin cannot hurt a believer. I am sure it injured David. His fall produced several fractures, and occasioned him the most acute pain and anguish. This is what he means when he says, "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." He is filled with awful apprehensions of being cast away—"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me." He is deprived of the joy of the Lord, which was once his strength—"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." He was struck dumb, and could not speak of God, or to God, or for God, as he once did—"Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." Finally, he had made by his fall breaches and ravages in the Church—"Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem." For in this case it may be truly said that "one sinner destroyeth much good." The sins of a professor cause "the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme;" justify and confirm the wicked in their iniquity; and lead the world to suspect that religion is only the covering of hypocrisy. Nor do they only "affect them that are without:" they also prove a stumblingblock to the weak, and a distress to the strong; and discourage the heart and weaken the hands of those who minister in holy things. Thus they check the cause of God in general, as well as injure the welfare of the individual.

Let us therefore beware. Let us never imagine ourselves beyond the reach of temptation. We carry about us passions and appetites which are not com-

pletely subdued. "The sin that dwelleth in us" renders us susceptible of danger from external circumstances. Indeed, there is nothing with which we have to do, however harmless in itself, that may not prove an occasion of sin. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Let us "watch and be sober." Let us "watch and pray." Let us "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear;" and daily and hourly come to "the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Secondly. Fire may be quenched BY SPREADING EARTH UPON IT. And observe to what we apply this. We do not here speak, as in the former article, of things grossly and unquestionably criminal—but we speak of "minding earthly things; of the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, which choke the word, so that it becometh unfruitful." We speak of an excess of business, which not only employs, but "entangles a man in the affairs of this life." A man seldom, if ever, feels this, in simply pursuing the path of duty; but it results from false aims and wrong dispositions. The man "will be rich he deems a superior style of life necessary; he *must* gain a rapid independence in order to retire and live in a state of ease and idleness, for which God never designed any man. Hence he not only labours, but toils; grasps; schemes; speculates. And what is the consequence? The powers of the soul are limited; and, when full—whatever fills them—can hold no more. And as the water partakes of the quality of the soil over which it rolls, so our minds soon acquire a sameness with the object of our affection and pursuit. When the man immersed

in secular concerns hears the word—"his heart is going after his covetousness he is still planning and getting. When he prays, a number of worldly thoughts rush in, and, by dividing his attention, damp his ardour. He cannot "attend upon the Lord without distraction."

I speak of certain vanities and amusements, in which, after all the wise and warm have urged, some professors, even of evangelical religion, occasionally indulge themselves. Such characters prove the embarrassment of their teachers, and erase the boundary line which should obviously separate the church from the world, by their frequent passing from one into the other. And if they will not admit that these diversions are unlawful in themselves—will they, can they deny that they have a tendency to destroy spirituality of frame, to impair a taste for devotion, to alienate from a life of communion with God, and of preparation for eternity?

I speak of worldly and political conversation, which, so far from tending to "the use of edifying," frets the mind, and genders strife; draws off the attention from the Divine agency to second causes; attaches us to a party, and commits us to approve of all their proceedings; and cools religious ardour. If we talk most of that which we love best; if from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh—where habitually are the thoughts and affections of many professed Christians? Surely it becomes us to live so as to "declare plainly that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth:" surely we should show to all around us, that we only deem "one thing needful," and this is the care of the soul. With

regard, to many things which properly enough belong to others, but would impertinently engage us, we should resemble the devoted Nehemiah—"I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work—so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you?"

Thirdly. Fire MAY be quenched BY THE SEPARATION OF THE PARTS. And this you will apply to our divisions.

With what earnestness does our Apostle enforce connexion and co operation among Christians! "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." The enemy knows the importance of union and harmony: he therefore labours to separate; and, unhappily, he finds too much to favour his wishes in our ignorance, prejudices, bigotry, and infirmities. How comfortable and edifying is it, when believers meet together, not only "in one place," but "with one accord;" when, of "one heart, and of one soul," they look upon each other with cheerfulness, and embrace each other in holy friendship! "Behold, how good

and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" It is fragrant as the richest perfume; and refreshing and fertilizing as the dew of heaven. It peculiarly attracts the Divine blessing. Hence, says the Saviour, "if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." But how changed is the scene where there are whisperings, swellings, antipathies, disorders, in a Christian church! Its beauty is defaced—its worship is perverted—its strength is impaired—and

"The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,
Flies from the realms of noise and strife."

There are some families who are quarrelling all day, and then go to prayer in the evening—but this is not "lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." It were to be wished that some persons would adopt the important duty of family worship—but it would be well for others to lay it aside: and indeed this is likely to be the case in time. Such mixtures and inconsistencies are too shocking to be long continued. If prayer does not induce people to avoid passion, and brawling, and contentions, these evil tempers will make them leave off prayer, or perform it in a manner worse than the neglect of it. The Apostle Peter exhorts husbands and wives to discharge their respective duties, "as being heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered."

We may take another view of this part of our

subject. One truth aids another truth; and one duty another duty. Detach private devotion from public, or public worship from private, and both sustain an injury. Separate practice from principle, or principle from practice; faith from works, or works from faith; promises from commands, or commands from promises—and in the same proportion you diminish and destroy the effect of the whole. The flame burns by keeping these things together.

Fourthly. Fire may be quenched BY WITHHOLDING FUEL. A real Christian will soon feel the disadvantage of disregarding the means of grace. Were he indeed a mere professor of religion, he would be sensible of no such injury; he has no divine principle to watch over and to cherish. You may keep in a painted fire without fuel—but a real one cannot be maintained without it, unless by a miracle. But we have no reason to expect miracles. Is the Divine assistance intended to soothe our sloth, or to encourage our exertion? Is it to be expected in a state of remissness and indifference, or in the use of means? —“The hand of the diligent maketh rich.” “For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” “Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Thus directed and encouraged, believers repair to his word, to his throne, to his house, and to his table; and are not disappointed. They find him in his ordinances, and they know, by blessed experience, that he attends to their complaints, enlivens their devotion, “helps

their infirmities, and supplies all their need from his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." They who desire soul prosperity, who would not only have life, but have it more abundantly, will be found most regular, and serious, and diligent, in the use of those means which God has appointed for this very purpose, and by which he increases their faith, confirms their hope, and makes all grace to abound towards them.

We cannot quench what we have not. The exhortation therefore supposes the possession of the Spirit; and, therefore, I have thus far considered it in reference to Christians. Yet the words may be taken in a more general way. There is a common work of the Spirit that accompanies the preaching of the word, the effect of which may be entirely lost. Thus we read that when Herod "heard John, he did many things, and heard him gladly." But he cherished a criminal passion which destroyed all these fair beginnings. Felix heard Paul. It was his own desire. He wished to be gratified by a relation of the peculiarities of "a sect everywhere spoken against." But Paul, instead of indulging his curiosity, addressed his conscience. He "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." And "Felix trembled." The judge on the bench trembled before the prisoner at the bar. It was not the Apostle's eloquence *alone* that produced this effect. But, instead of aiding this impression, the trembler dismisses the preacher—"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." This season never arrived. He afterwards saw the Apostle, and conversed with him often, but he never experienced again the feelings he had subdued.

Let the hearers of the Gospel remember this.

Beware how you stifle your convictions, and “do despite unto the Spirit of grace.” Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. He has said, “my Spirit shall not always strive with man. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

DISCOURSE XLIX.

THE ASCENSION OF ELIJAH.

“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” 2 KINGS ii. 11.

“BY one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned.” Death is called “the way of all the earth and the grave, “the house appointed for all living.” No distinction of age, of rank, of character, has secured the possessor from the stroke of mortality. The young as well as the old, the rich as well as the poor, the honourable as well as the obscure, the learned as well as the illiterate, have successively gone down to the dust and seen corruption. Yea, the righteous themselves die. Though infinitely dear to God, and distinguished by inestimable privileges, even *they* are not exempted from the afflictions of life, nor the necessity of dissolution.

This invariable law of mortality has, however,

been dispensed with in two cases. Enoch lived before the Flood. "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Two thousand one hundred and twenty-one years after, we behold, in like manner, Elijah the Tishbite received up into glory. "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Observe, First, How he was employed at the time of his removal: they were "going on, and talking." Without this information, many would have concluded, that after he had received the intimation of his speedy departure, he was engaged alone in meditation and prayer. But it is a mistaken sentiment, that a preparation for heaven is to be carried on only by abstraction, contemplation, devotion. No inconsiderable part of it consists in diligence in our stations, and endeavours to be useful to our fellow-creatures to the last. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." It is observable that our Saviour ascended while he was addressing his disciples. "He led them out as far as Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

A little of the conversation is recorded. "And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I

pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." A veil is thrown over the remainder of this interesting discourse. Perhaps it turned upon the heavenly world; perhaps it respected the state of the church he was going to leave; perhaps it furnished instruction and consolation to his successor in office. However this may be, the conversation was doubtless such as became the solemnity of the occasion. For what could be more awful and impressive! He knew that he was standing on the verge of eternity, and expected every moment the signal of his leaving this world. And could he be vain? Could he trifle? And since "you know not the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness! Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

Secondly. Observe how he was conveyed—from earth to heaven. "There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Was he removed by the instrumentality of a luminous cloud approaching and enclosing him, and then rising with a rapid curling motion? Or was he removed by the ministry of angels, disguised under these brilliant forms? This seems more probable. For "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to

minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation?" Is it not said, that "He shall send forth his angels and gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other"? Is it not said that Lazarus died, "and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom"?

Though these glorious beings "excel in strength, they do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." And we know that they have been often held forth under the allusions here employed. "Of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place."

Let us hasten to something less questionable and more important. Let us take several views of this wonderful transaction.

I. Let us consider it as A GRACIOUS RECOMPENCE OF SINGULAR PIETY. Not that Elijah was perfect. We are expressly told, that he was a man of like passions with us. And we read that once he was afraid, and fled, and wished in himself to die. But, in judging fairly of a person, you are to bring forward the whole of his character; and to remember that casual infirmities no more destroy the effect of general excellency than the hills and valleys of the earth destroy its globosity, or a few motes or clouds a solar day. The circumstances also in which he lives should be fairly weighed; for the power and degree of religion are to be often estimated by the unfavourableness of our situation, and the difficulties we have to overcome.

Elijah was a man whose religion was uncommon.

“He was jealous for the Lord of hosts and faithful and stedfast in his adherence to the true worship of God, in times of peculiar defection and degeneracy. He was indeed mistaken when he said, “I am left alone there were seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, and whose lips had not kissed him. But though this was a considerable number, compared with his conclusion, it was nothing compared with the bulk of the country. The nation was gone astray from God; idolatry universally prevailed; all classes pleaded for idols.

He had therefore to oppose numbers. And numbers take off the two common restraints, of fear and shame; and constantly present to the eye familiar and seducing examples. It is no easy thing to avoid following a multitude to do evil.

He had also to oppose superiors, whose influence is peculiarly corrupting. He lived under the reign of the worst of all the bad kings of Israel. “For Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord, above all that were before him. And Ahab made a grove. And Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.”

He had also to oppose the established ministers of religion. Behold him encountering the whole priesthood of Baal. Behold him challenging to a public trial four hundred and fifty of his sycophant prophets—and, with unparalleled firmness, ordering them all to be put to death—though he knew the altar was defended by the throne. “Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal: let not one of them escape. And they took them. And Elijah brought

them flown to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.”

All this naturally drew upon him reproach. Ahab called him “the troubler of Israel.” Jezebel abhorred him, and bound herself in an oath to slay him. But God often appeared for him: he gave him the keys of the clouds; he fed him with ravens; he commanded strangers and foreigners to entertain him; he destroyed captains and their men for his sake—and at last he made an exception in his favour, and took him to heaven without dying; carrying him, more than a conqueror, in a chariot of triumph through the air: and thereby said to a careless and depraved age, and to us also—upon whom the ends of the world are come—“Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Bear your faithful testimony to my cause by your words and actions. Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Dare to be singular. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. If you are losers in my service, you shall not be losers by it. Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth.”

II. Let us consider it as AN INTIMATION OF THE

FUTURE HAPPINESS THAT IS RESERVED FOR THE SERVANTS OF GOD. Instances and facts strike the mind much more powerfully than abstract reasonings. By the example of Elijah's ascension, it was seen that there was another state of being after this life—that there was another place of residence and of happiness besides this earth—that it was to be obtained by leaving this world—and that even the body was to share in it.

This was a circumstance of importance. Nothing of the kind could be inferred from nature. Men were seen to perish by accidents and diseases and decays. They were laid in the grave: cold and silent they remained there. Wives had gone to the tombs of their husbands; children to the tombs of their mothers—but in vain had they implored their return. In time the body became a mass of putrefaction; and, dissolving into its original element, could no longer be distinguished from other dust.

But man is an incarnate being. The body is a constituent and an essential part of human nature. Man *was* embodied in his primeval state, and *will* be embodied in his final state. A state of separation, therefore, is a state of imperfection; and whatever happiness may be enjoyed in a disembodied state, it will not be, it cannot be complete before the morning of the resurrection. To this therefore the sacred writers lead us forward: and while they clearly allow an intermediate separate existence, they tell us that we “shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just;” that “when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” When Paul would relieve the minds of bereaved Christians, he reminds them that their con-

nexions will rise again: and, in reference to himself, he says, "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Yes, the body will be a partaker of endless happiness with the soul; and even "in our flesh shall we see God." And here was a specimen of it. Here they saw a man carried up into heaven embodied. Here they saw what transformation the body was capable of experiencing—it could become light, agile, unsusceptible of danger; it could retain identity, and yet drop those properties which render it a prison and a burden; and become a fit companion for the skies. This was a beaming forth of that glory which has been more fully revealed under the gospel dispensation, and especially in the glorification of the body of our Saviour, which is to be the model of our own. "For he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

III. We may consider this translation as A SUBSTITUTE FOR DEATH. In some such way as this, it is probable, would men have passed from earth to heaven had they never sinned. In some such way as this will those living at the last day be qualified for glory. "Behold," says the Apostle, "I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an

eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Elijah died not, but he was changed. And in whatever way we pass into heaven, a change analogous to death and the resurrection must pass upon us. The reason is obvious. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Were the body removed with its present animal properties, it would require food and sleep and medicine even in heaven. The eye would be unequal to the splendour of the glory, the ear to the melody of the sounds, the taste to the exquisiteness of the joy, the powers to the constancy of the work. Our senses and organs are adapted to our present state, but not to our future condition. We now see how little we can bear. When an angel appeared to Daniel, he was instantly seized with a stupefaction which he could not resist. When John in his exile saw Jesus, though he had been familiar with him, and had leaned on his bosom, he "fell at his feet as dead." And by the way, this regulates the dealings of God with his people, while they are in the body. Moses asked for a sight of God, which would have proved his death—"Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." The disciples, in the mount of transfiguration, "fell asleep." It was not so much a moral, as a natural infirmity: the animal frame was overpowered with the glory of the scene. Were lie to afford to his people such discoveries and communications as they may sometimes desire, it would unhinge them from earth, indispose them for the duties of their stations, and disorder their whole frame.

IV. We may regard it as a mode of transition

much to be desired. Death is not a pleasing subject of meditation. It is called "an enemy." It is said to be "the king of terrors." Even exclusive of the future consequences, there is much to render it formidable. Nature cannot be reconciled to its own dissolution. Who loves to be taken to pieces?

"The pains, the groans, the dying strife,
Fright our approaching souls away;
Still we shrink back again to life,
Fond of our prison and our clay."

Its forerunners and its attendants are dismaying. I have heard of a very good man who often said, he was not afraid of death, but of dying—he was chilled with the thought of corruption and worms. If we saw a viper, and knew that the poisonous fang was extracted, and that it was perfectly harmless—who could put it into his bosom without shuddering?

Let it be remembered, that such feelings as these do not argue an inferior degree of religion. Even the apostles themselves were not strangers to these sensations. "For in this, said they, we groan earnestly; desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." They wished to enter heaven without dying.—But to us this is impossible. To death as an inevitable doom we all look forward. It is the way, and the only way to the city of habitation.

Let us not, however, blaspheme death. Let us rather see what there is to reconcile us to it. Let us compare Elijah's mode of removal with our own, and see whether the difference be so marvelously great.

You have to die. But consider the names attached to death by him who perfectly knows the nature of it. He tells us, "If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death"—it ought to be called something else—so qualified and softened is it with regard to him. Call it a departure—the departure of a prisoner from his prison, of a traveller from his inn, of a scholar from his school—"The time of my departure is at hand. I long to depart." Call it a sleep—sleep is inviting to the wearied labourer, who has borne the burden and heat of the day.

"They sleep in Jesus, and are bless'd :
How sweet their slumbers are ;
From suffering and from sin releas'd,
And freed from every care!"

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth."

You have to die. But the sting of death is removed—for "the sting of death is sin"—"and he bore our sins in his own body on the tree." Death stung him; but, as it is fabled of the bee, left his sting in him. It is harmless now. It may terrify, but it cannot injure.

You have to die. But God promises to be with you there. "For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"—and therefore be assured he will not leave you in this time of need. To this the promise is peculiarly made: "I will be with him in trouble." Hence David triumphs: "Yea, though I

walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

You have to die. But the soul will be immediately disposed of, infinitely to your advantage. Death will carry you from the same vain world, the same vexing world, the same defiling world—as Elijah’s chariot carried him. Death will carry you to the same rest, to the same fulness of joy, to the same glorious company—as Elijah’s chariot carried him. Absent from the body, you are present with the Lord.

You have to die. But the body will certainly follow. Though you do not take it along with you, but leave it in the grave, it shall not be lost there. He will come and inquire for your dust. It is redeemed. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

You have to die. But by death you may glorify God, more than by such a removal as Elijah’s. It affords opportunity to display the influence of divine grace under suffering; to bear witness to the goodness of the Master you serve; to commend the ways of godliness; to convince some; to encourage others. One dying Christian has often made many in love with death. While witnessing such a scene, they have been ready to say, “Let us go away that we may die with him.”

It matters therefore little *how* the believer departs from this world to a better.

But the event is always worthy of our observation.

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.”

And whether he ascend to heaven in a whirlwind, or be removed by a fever or a dropsy, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”

DISCOURSE L.

THE PUNISHMENT OF ADONI-BEZEK IMPROVED.

“But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me.”

JUDGES i. 6, 7.

DESTRUCTION had long been denounced upon the inhabitants of Canaan for their sins. At length the measure of their iniquity is full; and the Jews are appointed to be the executioners of the Divine vengeance. Moses dies before they enter on the dreadful task; but Joshua succeeds him, and becomes the scourge of this devoted race. But even he dies before the complete reduction of the promised land. Immediately after his death, Judah and Simeon assemble their forces, and attack the enemy at Bezek, and gain a dreadful victory. They slew a thousand men, and took Adoni-bezek prisoner. On this bloody tyrant they inflict a punishment, as singular as it was

severe—"They cut off his thumbs and his great toes." This drew from him the words which you have heard. "Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me."

This passage of Scripture is a picture. Let me hold it up to view, and call upon you to mark the principal contents of the representation.

I. SEE IN IT THE INSTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY OF WORLDLY GREATNESS. Look at this man—and behold in what slippery places God sets the mighty and noble. How great was he in the field—where armies fled before him! how great in the palace—where a number of vanquished princes fed under his table! But behold him now—dethroned, insulted, dismembered; and his present extremity of wretchedness embittered by the recollection of the prosperity that once crowned his head. "And seekest thou great things to thyself? Seek them not. Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day will bring forth."

From the eagerness with which mankind pursue the distinctions of life, we should conclude, not only that they were very valuable in themselves, but that no kind of precariousness attached to them. We should suppose that they were able to ensure durable possession—and God, who in his word always gives language to actions, tells us, "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations: they call their lands after their own names." But let not the strong be secure; let not the honourable be vain; let not the rich be high-minded. Connect certainty with the

motion of the wind, or with the waves of the sea—but do not trust this treacherous, this changeable world. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.” “Riches make to themselves wings and fly away.” “Man being in honour abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish.” “What is all history but a narrative of the reverses to which all earthly things are liable, however firmly established they once appeared to be; of the revolutions of empires; the destruction of cities; of the mighty put down from their seats; of counsellors led away spoiled, of politicians disgraced, generals banished, and monarchs put to death!

II. See in it JUDGMENT OVERTAKING THE SINNER IN THIS LIFE. Nor does Adoni-bezek stand alone as an instance of the *present* punishment of sin. Behold Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise. See the Flood sweeping away the world of the ungodly. See the smoke of the Cities of the Plain. Remember Lot’s wife—she looked back, contrary to the Divine command, and “she became a pillar of salt.” The servant of Elisha enters his master’s presence—tells a lie—and goes out “a leper as white as snow.” Ananias and Sapphira utter a known falsehood before the Apostle, and are both instantly numbered with the dead. And of such importance is truth to the welfare of the community—and so hateful is it to the Supreme Being—that not only are all liars to have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death—but in these instances we see “hell from beneath moved to meet them at their coming!”

It may, however, be necessary to observe, that this

is not always the case. The misery of the sinner is principally reserved for a future world, and we are now in a state of probation. But God would confirm our faith in his adorable providence. If *all* sin was punished here, we should look no further; if *no* sin, we should not easily believe in the power, the holiness, the truth of God. He therefore sometimes signally interposes; and will be known by the judgments which he executeth: "so that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."

Present punishment, too, is less frequently executed under the Gospel than under the Law; and the reason is, that a future state of retribution was not so clearly and fully revealed to them as to us. Hence their threatenings are often filled with expressions of temporal evils, while ours only announce miseries beyond the grave. Then, an adulterer was to be stoned; now, he is to be—damned.

We may add that the punishment of sin in this world is sometimes unavoidable. Thus, if nations are punished at all, they must be punished in time—for they have no existence in eternity; there men exist only as individuals. And nearly the same may be said of a family. Hence we read, "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just."

Yea, the present punishment of sin is in some measure natural. Por how frequently do men's sufferings arise from the very sins they commit! Extravagance breeds ruin—indolence, poverty—intemperance, disease. "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath

redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine: they that go to seek mixed wine.” Why are men so unhappy—but because they are unholy? They walk contrary to God, and God walks contrary to them. They transgress his commands, and expose themselves to his wrath; and then they are alarmed with fear. They yield to vile passions and appetites, and then they groan by reason of bondage. They violate all the rules which conduce to the welfare of the community, and then they are expelled from the esteem and regard of their fellow-creatures. And what can hinder all this?

So that sin does not recompense or even indemnify the sinner here. “The *way* as well as the *end* of transgressors is hard.” As the righteous here have some foretastes of their future happiness, so the wicked have here the beginnings of sorrows. As godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, so sin has the curse of this world as well as of another.

III. See in it PUNISHMENT INFLICTED AFTER LONG DELAY. Behold the career of this sinner! “Three-score and ten kings” he had thus inhumanly mangled. Thus he repeated his crime again and again—even until seventy times! What a lengthened course of iniquity was here!—“So long and so often had I done this, that I thought God had not seen, or did not remember. But he has found me out; and I live long enough to be a miserable instance of this awful truth—that however long punishment may be delayed, it will at last be inflicted—As I have done, so God hath requited me.”

The wonder is, not that he was overtaken so soon, but that he was spared so long; and seemed to be

allowed to triumph in his iniquity. The flourishing condition of sinners for a time, and especially for a long time, unchecked by calamity, is an event which has often perplexed even pious minds. Thus Jeremiah exclaims, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" David also tells us: "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped; for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

But what is more to be lamented is, that hereby the unhappy creature himself is frequently deluded. He is apt to mistake forbearance for connivance: and what God does not immediately punish, he concludes that he entirely neglects. "He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved; for I shall never be in adversity." "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." But we should remember the end of Providence in such a dispensation. He frequently spares the ungodly for the sake of the godly: the extraction of the tares would injure the wheat. By forbearing the blow, he would give space for repentance: "the longsuffering of our God is salvation." He has therefore ends to answer worthy of himself. But be convinced of this—that he never designed to cherish in you a hope of impunity. His patience is not forgiveness. "Be sure your sins will find you out. He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." He is patient; but he is faithful, and the Scripture cannot be broken. He is

patient: but patience has its limits; and the year of trial granted to the barren fig-tree will expire, and then if unfruitful it shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. He is patient: but if his patience end not in your conversion, it will be glorified in your destruction. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

See in it A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SIN AND SUFFERING. "What I have inflicted upon others, is now inflicted upon me: and in my very punishment I read my crime—as I have done, so God hath requited me!" Our Saviour has said, "With the same measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." And Eliphaz tells us, that he had particularly remarked this even in his days, "I have seen they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." From the nature of their suffering, men may often learn the character of their sin. God sometimes sends our troubles with a label upon them—it seems impossible to mistake their design. We are commanded to "hear the rod." It says many things—but it frequently tells us the very sin for which we smart: it thunders or whispers, "This is the duty you have neglected. This is the idol you have adored Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?"

Between sin and punishment there is sometimes a *comparative* conformity. This is the case when we suffer things which have some resemblance to our crimes. Thus the Jews, for serving strange gods,

were compelled to serve strange masters. Forty days the spies were employed in exploring the land of promise, and forty years the people are condemned to wander in the wilderness for believing them.

Sometimes there is also between them a *direct* conformity. This is the case when we suffer in the same way and in the same things in which we sin. Thus it is said of the Chaldeans, "Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee." Thus it is said of the Church of Rome, "For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy." What was the subject of David's sin? The numbering of his people. In this he suffers: a pestilence carries off seventy thousand of his subjects. What was the design of wicked Haman? "Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made." What was his doom? "And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said. Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." And, to mention no more; in the very place where Jezebel caused the dogs to lick the blood of Naboth, the dogs licked her blood!

But there is a *future* conformity still more dreadful; and of which the Apostle speaks when he says, "Be

not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The man who sowed thistles, and expected to reap wheat, would be deemed a fool. But are we not equally foolish? What are the principles we imbibe, the dispositions we cultivate, the pursuits in which we are engaged, that we are concluding they will issue in glory, honour, and immortality? Is there any relation between these? Do not the steps of the road we travel take hold on hell? Misery is not only the reward of our works, but the very tendency of our sin. Hear this, ye covetous and unfeeling. Your hard-heartedness is not punishable by any human tribunal—but see your crime meeting you at the bar of God: "he shall have judgment without mercy, that showed no mercy." Think of this, ye despisers of the Gospel—he now addresses *you* in vain: "Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."—And hereafter you shall address *Him* in vain: "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

Finally. See in this Scripture THE HAND OF GOD ACKNOWLEDGED, WHILE MEN ONLY ARE EMPLOYED—"God hath requited me." But who saw any thing of Him? Did not the sons of Judah and of Simeon

cut off his thumbs and his great toes? Yes—but “is there an evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?” “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things.” War is as much a judgment from God, as famine or pestilence. And not only are lawful princes and magistrates the ministers of God, but he makes use of robbers and tyrants; as it is written: “Out of him came forth the corner; out of him the nail; out of him the battle-bow; out of him every oppressor together.”

But, admitting this to be true—how came Adoni-bezek, a very wicked man—a heathen—how came *he* to acknowledge it?—The case is this—“The Gentiles, who have not a written law,” says the Apostle, “are a law unto themselves: their thoughts also in the mean time accusing or else excusing one another.” There is a conscience in every man; the principle belongs to human nature; and no wickedness is able completely to banish it. And calamity has always been observed to have a powerful effect to enliven it. So that the man who, in the days of prosperity and ease, banished reflection, never thought of God; or, if he did, considered himself perhaps as the favourite of Heaven, because he was so much indulged on earth—is now abstracted; impressed; softened: he is left alone with his conscience: this tells him of his desert; this awakens all his fears. Hence sickness, accidents, death, are dreadful—they stir up the apprehension of Deity. He suspects more in the storm than thunder and lightning—God is there. The shaking of a leaf seems to say, “What is this that thou hast done?”

A good man perceives the hand of God in all

events, and he *wishes* to see it. "The Lord," says Job, "gave, and the Lord hath taken away: what! shall we receive good at the Lord's hand, and shall we not receive evil?" This calmed him. And this discovery of God is the Christian's relief and comfort in affliction—because he knows that God is his father and friend, and will not, cannot injure him. But it is otherwise with the sinner. His apprehension of God is forced upon him; he would gladly get rid of the conviction: it is all terror and dismay to him—for he knows that God is his adversary, and he may now be coming to lay hold of him—he knows that he has a long account to give, and this may be the time of reckoning. Hence the bitterness of affliction: it is regarded not only as a trial, but as a punishment. The sinner's distress seems to be the effect of chance; but he feels it to be the consequence of design. He discerns in it the injustice of men; and yet is compelled to confess that it is the righteous judgment of God. And thus, by the medium of this penal consciousness, God maintains his moral empire in the world, without deviating from the usual course of events, or breaking in upon the stated laws of nature. He works no miracle, yet his agency is believed. He does not render himself visible, yet his presence is felt and acknowledged; and common calamities are made to operate like positive tokens of Divine displeasure.

Though the subject has been very instructive and practical, I wish to add two exhortations.

First. ABHOR CRUELTY. It is equally disgraceful to religion and humanity. It renders you unpitied of God and man. I hope none of you would be so dreadfully savage as this monster, to torture and

mangle your fellow-creatures, if you had it in your power. But let me speak a word for the poor brutes, who cannot speak for themselves, though unhappily they have the power of feeling. My dear little friends, never torment animals. Never sport with the misery of insects. Never cut off their legs or wings. God's "tender mercies are over all his works." "He hears the young ravens that cry." "Be followers of God, as dear children." But what are we to say in another case?

Adoni-bezek was merciful, compared with those who endeavour to draw their fellow-creatures into sin. This is not only to injure the body, but to cast the soul into hell: and what is any present suffering compared with endless misery!

Secondly. IMPROVE THE CASE OF EXAMPLES. If they were not particularly adapted to do us good, the word of God would not be so full of them. Never read them carelessly. Lodge them in your memory. Often reflect upon them.

And make use of the dreadful as well as the pleasing. It is necessary that sin should be made hateful. It is necessary that we should be awakened to flee from the wrath to come.

And do not suppose that such a character as Adoni-bezek is alone exposed to danger—"Except ye repent, ye shall *all* likewise perish."

"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. Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men: but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."

DISCOURSE LI.

THE CHEERFUL PILGRIM.

“Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” PSALM cxix. 54.

How different are the views and feelings of men in the review of life! How dismal and terrifying is it to look back on years barren of good and filled with wickedness; to look back upon time wasted, opportunities misimproved, faculties perverted, mercies abused, character destroyed; to look back and find nothing from which the mind can derive a future hope, or acknowledge a past satisfaction!

But it is pleasing and edifying to look back—I will not say, upon a well-spent life, but—upon those years in which we have known God, or rather have been known of him; in which we have loved and endeavoured to serve him; in which we have enjoyed something of his presence and his smiles. It is delightful to call to remembrance places and seasons made sacred by communion with him; and to think over the advantages and pleasures we have derived from his ordinances, and from his blessed word.

David does this. "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

Hence we observe three things. I. A GOOD MAN VIEWS HIS RESIDENCE IN THIS WORLD AS ONLY THE HOUSE OF HIS PILGRIMAGE. II. THE SITUATION, HOWEVER DISADVANTAGEOUS, ADMITS OF CHEERFULNESS. III. THE SOURCES OF HIS JOY ARE DERIVED FROM THE SCRIPTURE.

I. When David speaks of THE HOUSE OF HIS PILGRIMAGE, he may literally design to express his exile and wanderings when banished by the persecution of Saul, or the rebellion of Absalom. But he intends it more generally, as significant of the whole course of his life on earth. For, being a partaker of divine grace, he would say this in a palace as well as in a prison; he would say it when surrounded with all the ensigns of majesty, as well as when stripped of all his possessions. If a Christian had the dominion of Alexander, and all the treasures of the Indies, yet in all this abundance, and with all this greatness, he would feel himself poor, feel himself from home, feel himself a stranger and a sojourner—and seek a better country, that is an heavenly.

At first indeed the world is far from appearing to us in this reduced and insignificant point of light. Its maxims and pursuits fall in with our depraved dispositions. And, unacquainted with its vanity and vexation, we rush forth filled with high and eager expectations. We think to find it a paradise—but thorns and briars, sand and drought, tell us it is a wilderness. We dream that we are eating, but awake and feel that we are hungry; and looking around us, we see that there is nothing to feed us.

Various are the disappointments and the calamities

that embitter life; and "many are the afflictions of the righteous." Yet we are mistaken if we suppose that it is wholly or principally owing to these that he views himself now in a house of pilgrimage. The spirit of the world no longer reigns in him. He renounces the world, not only because it is unfriendly, but because it is unsuitable; not because he cannot carry every thing before him, but because he no longer loves it. He forsakes the world when it smiles, as well as when it frowns. He is not violently torn from it, but resigns it in consequence of the discovery and apprehension of something infinitely better. The eyes of his understanding are enlightened, and he sees what is the hope of his calling, and what is the glory of the riches of his inheritance in the saints: and this henceforth becomes his prize. Having discerned by faith another world, he makes a true estimate of this—he sees that the present is not a state to fix in, but only a region to pass through; and therefore finds that he is not at home, but journeying.

He is born from above, and therefore naturally aspires after his native land. Does not every thing tend to the place of its original?

His portion is above. The inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved in heaven for him. There his hope is laid up; there is his treasure—and what wonder if there his heart be also? There he is to gain deliverance from all his errors; perfection of holiness; a glorious body; the possession of all the promises. Can he be satisfied to live at a distance from all this?

His kindred dwell above—there are to be found his Father, his elder Brother, the younger branches

of the household of faith. Thither many of his once dear connexions on earth are gone, and thither all the wise and good are going; and he can now only get a glance of them upon the road, or exchange a few words as they pause for refreshment at the inn. There they shall all unite, and be for ever with each other, and for ever with the Lord. Here he is in motion, then he will be at rest; he is now travelling, he shall then reach home, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God."

Inferior, however, as his present situation is, compared with the future—we are reminded,

II. That IT WILL ADMIT OF CHEERFULNESS: he can *sing*—"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

Genuine religion excites and interests the feelings. It is equally absurd and dangerous to place it in cold ceremonies, or external performances in which the affections have no share. The same may be said of reducing it merely to an intellectual system. The principles of revelation are addressed, not only to the understanding, but to the heart. Ought I to believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins, and that two and two make four, with the same indifference and insensibility? Impossible. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, is not only "a faithful saying," but a saying "worthy of all acceptance:" it contains all that is great and good and suitable and necessary—and can never be properly received, if it meets only with a frigid, speculative assent.

We do not indeed plead for ignorant and unaccountable feelings: but we contend that the light of Christianity is like that of the sun, which, while it illuminates, also enlivens and fructifies. We do not

admire the zeal which burns up the brain; but we plead for the fervour that warms the heart: and wo say, and saith not the Scripture the same? that "it is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing." And wherefore is every thing like warmth in religion branded with the name of enthusiasm? Warmth is expected in the poet, in the musician, in the scholar, in the lover—and even in the tradesman it is allowed, if not commended—why then is it condemned in the concerns of the soul—a subject which, infinitely above all others, demands and deserves all the energy of the mind? Would a prisoner exult at the proclamation of deliverance—and is the redeemed sinner to walk forth from his bondage, unmoved, unaffected, without gratitude or joy? No. "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands!" Shall the condemned criminal feel I know not what emotions, when instead of the execution of the sentence he receives a pardon? and is the absolved transgressor to be senseless and silent? No. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Other travellers are accustomed to relieve the tediousness of their journey with a song. The Israelites, when they repaired from the extremities of the country three times a year to Jerusalem to

worship, had songs appointed for the purpose, and travelled singing as they went. And of the righteous it is said, "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord. The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads." Religion therefore is productive of many pleasing feelings. And we make use of this fact two ways.

First, we say that those who are habitually strangers to pleasure in divine things have reason to suspect their condition. Persons may want the joy of confidence, and yet have the joy of hope: and they may have very little, if any, of the pleasures of hope, while yet they find pleasure in religious exercises and dispositions. They may love the place where God's honour dwelleth, and be glad when it is said to them, "Let us go into the house of the Lord they may "call the Sabbath a delight and say, "It is good for me to draw nigh to God." But it is awful if you find the Sabbath a weariness, the house of God a prison, and the presence of God irksome—it is awful if you find religious duties a task instead of a privilege. It is one of the characters of the true circumcision, that "they rejoice in Christ Jesus."

Secondly, those are mistaken who shun religion under the apprehension that it is unfriendly to their happiness, and prescribes a joyless course, engaged in which they must bid adieu to pleasure. Man needs present gratification, and religion provides for it. The Master he serves does not require him to live only in expectation: he has much in possession; though he has more in hope. There the clusters grow, but hither some of them are sent.

“The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heav’nly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.”

Surely you will allow that happiness depends upon God, and that he is able to make a man happy at present—and is it likely that he will suffer an enemy in rebellion against him to be happier than a servant who is endeavouring to serve him! If such be your conclusion—what a monstrous notion of God do you entertain! Besides, has he not assured you in his word that his “yoke is easy, and his burden light”—that his “ways are ways of pleasantness,” and that “all his paths are peace”? And does not the experience of all those who have made the trial confirm the truth of the representation? Have not his followers found that “to the upright there ariseth light in darkness”? have they not *sung* in seasons and circumstances which would have filled others with misery and dismay? Behold Paul and Silas. At midnight in the inner prison, their feet made fast in the stocks, their backs bleeding with the recent scourge—they not only prayed—but “*sang praises unto God*”! Behold the Church. She views every earthly resource as dried up—but can say, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Behold David. He bids farewell to life; his heart and his flesh fail him—but he exclaims, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou

art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

III. WHENCE DID DAVID, AND WHENCE DOES EVERY CHRISTIAN DERIVE THIS JOY? I answer, FROM THE SCRIPTURES. “Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” The discoveries and the promises of this blessed Book are adapted to rejoice the pilgrim’s heart.

What are these discoveries? They tell him of the *end* of his faith, even the salvation of his soul—they remind him continually of his country; they place it before him in every engaging form, and prove how far it surpasses every thing here—while it will infinitely indemnify him for all his losses, and reward him for all his difficulties.

They show him clearly and unerringly the way. Thus they give him the peace and satisfaction of certainty: he knows that he is not journeying at random—not a step is taken in vain—each brings him nearer home.

They assure him that he is not alone in his trials and exercises. They call upon him to observe way-marks thrown up by former pilgrims, where he began to think no pious foot had ever trod. “‘The same things,’ say they, ‘happened to your brethren who were before you in the world.’ ‘Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.’ ‘Take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.’” How suitable, how animating, how blessed, are such discoveries as these!

But promises are something more than discoveries; and with these the Scripture abounds. They are "exceeding great and precious." And what can the pilgrim want or desire that is not insured by them? A freedom of motion?—This is insured. "Thou shalt walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." An ability to hold on?—This is insured. The "righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Victory over enemies?—This is insured. "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot." All needful supplies?—These are insured. "O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Is not all this sufficient to induce him to go on his way rejoicing?

We have been speaking of the experience of David, and of the experience of all the Lord's people. Are you like-minded with them? There are only two sorts of people in the world. All are citizens of earth or of heaven. And naturally all are of the first class—but some are by Divine grace obeying the command: "Arise ye, and depart hence: for this is not your rest."

Are you men of the world—do you feel yourselves at home—would you be satisfied to live here always—provided you could succeed according to your wishes? Are you looking only to those things that are seen and temporal? The man who takes up with this world as his portion is worse than a brute. He is unworthy of the soul he carries within him. He starves his mind. He makes no provision for the evil day. It matters not what he has—he is in a

miserable condition—he has nothing that can either satisfy or save. A man going to execution is for the present very well off: he has a carriage to ride in; a guard to attend him; officers to accompany him, and a number of followers. But what would you think of the man if he deemed all this the token of his honour, rather than the forerunner of his punishment; and should only consider how he is accommodated, but never ask, Whither am I going? Alas! how many such fools are there! They only think how it is with them at present, but never inquire what will become of them hereafter. But “the end of these things is death.”

There are others who are delivered from the present evil world, and are heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love him. As strangers and pilgrims, let me give you three admonitions, founded on the several parts of the discourse which you have heard.

First. Always regard your present condition as a state of pilgrimage—and never view it as any thing more. This will regulate your desires, and moderate your wishes after earthly things. This will keep you from being too much elated when you meet with prosperous scenes. Not that you will disparage the bounties of Providence—you will even be thankful for them, as conveniences by the way—but you will consider them *only* as accommodations: and not mistake them for the advantages and glories of home—you will not therefore sit down, but still press forward. This will enable you to endure, with fortitude and resignation, the hardships you may encounter. You will say, “As a traveller, I expect such things; they are only the inconveniences of a journey—it will soon

be over—‘and I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.’”

Second. Cherish a humble and a holy joy. Consider this not only as your privilege, but duty. Enforce it upon your minds by the authority of God, who commands you to rejoice always, and by a consideration of the importance of it to others. Nothing will honour and recommend your religion more than this. It will show those around you, that you have found what they are seeking after. Surely you do not, you cannot wish to travel to heaven alone—but, habitually cheerful—singing as you go—you will be constantly inviting and alluring your relations, friends, neighbours, to join you. You will address them, as Moses addressed Hobab, the son of Raguel—“We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel

Third. Love and study the Scriptures. He that avoids reading a portion of them daily forsakes his own mercy; and is so far regardless of his safety, welfare, and comfort. Therefore “bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp: and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”

Precious Bible! like thy blessed Author, our sun and our shield, thou giver of grace and glory, thou conductor through all this gloomy vale to our everlasting home, how many advantages have we already

derived from thee! Thou hast often solved our doubts, and wiped away our tears. Thou hast been sweeter to our taste than honey and the honeycomb. Thou hast been better to us, in our distresses, than thousands of gold and silver. Unless thou hadst been our delight, we should have perished in our affliction.

No wonder Job “esteemed thee more than his necessary food.” No wonder David chose thee as his heritage for ever, and found thee to be the rejoicing of his heart. No wonder the noble army of martyrs parted with their estates and with their blood, rather than with thee. May we value thee as our richest jewel, may we love thee as our dearest good, may we consult thee as our surest counsellor, may we follow thee as our safest rule!

And, O thou eternal Jehovah, “send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God, my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God!”

DISCOURSE LII.

SIN RUINS A KINGDOM.

[FOR A FAST-DAY.]

“Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.” 1 SAM. xii. 24, 25.

SUCH was the language of Samuel to the Jews. The words have a peculiar force in them. It arises from the wisdom of the address. How could he have given them a better representation of their duty? And how could he have more powerfully recommended it?

He requires of them nothing superstitious; nothing merely ritual and ceremonious; nothing only external and temporary—but the exercise of piety flowing from the fear of God, and accompanied with sincerity and fervour in serving him. This is all. “Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart.” This he enforces by two motives; the one drawn from gratitude, and the other from interest. He has been your friend; he can be your enemy. He has done great things for you; and he will do

great things against you. Consider this—"Consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

Already I hope you have dropped Judea, and fixed your attention on your own country. The words could never have been more applicable to the Jews than they are to us. And hence we have been led to choose them on this solemn occasion, when we are called to assemble together to acknowledge our sins and to implore the Divine mercy.

To render the Scripture useful, we must consider persons in former ages as specimens of human nature in general; and the dispensations of Providence towards them as holding forth the unchangeable perfections of Jehovah. Thus individuals, families, churches, nations, become exemplary, and by their welfare or ruin, encourage our hope, or awaken our fear.

Among all the nations of the earth there is no one to which we can so properly refer as the Jews; not only because their history is true, and events are traced up to their proper causes, but because there is a greater correspondence between them and us than between us and any other people. They only of all the nations of antiquity worshipped the same God with us. They only, like us, were under the reign of grace as well as providence, and enjoyed religious and spiritual privileges blended with civil and natural. Let us attend to this.

Samuel tells them that "the Lord had done great things for them." David could not review their history without admiration. "What one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God

went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?" Moses, at a much earlier period, gave them a pre-eminent blessedness. "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. God, in his sovereign grace, "called him to his foot," and commanded him to depart from his own country and his father's house, in search of a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance. He told him he should be the ancestor of a nation, numerous as the stars of heaven, and that one of his posterity should finally bless all the families of the earth. He multiplied and increased him. With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, he was a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth. "When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it; when they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people: he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

Their deliverance from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage is well known. He brought them forth with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Creatures of every rank espoused their cause, and punished their enemies. When in jeopardy from their pursuers, the sea opened, and they passed

through as on dry ground; which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned. Then they sang his praise. And the deliverance was the food of then-faith, and hope, long afterwards. "Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the head of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness."

Forty years wandered they in the desert. They knew not their way—he was their guide. They were exposed to dangers—he was their defence. They had no supplies—he rained down manna; the rocks poured out water; and their clothes waxed not old upon them. Had they unwholesome damps by night? The pillar of cloud became a fire and absorbed them. Were they open by day to the heat of a burning sky? The pillar of fire became a cloud, and diffused an immense shade over them. Thus "the sun did not smite them by day, nor the moon by night."

By-and-by Jordan rolled back its streams, and they took possession of a land, where were wells which they digged not, houses which they builded not, vineyards which they planted not: a land flowing with milk and honey; wherein there was no scarceness; and upon which the Lord's eye was from the beginning even to the end of the year.

But they had unspeakably greater advantages than all these. What says David? "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them." What says Paul? "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the cove-

nants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

And has he not done great things for us?—It is not foolish partiality, but truth that compels us to say, "The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage." O England! "blessed of the Lord be thy land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath. And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon. And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills. And for the precious things of the earth, and fulness thereof; and for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush." Have we not a land of woods and rivers, of fields and of meadows, "of wheat and of barley"? Are not "our oxen strong to labour and do not "our sheep bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our streets"? Are we not placed in a climate whose temperature equally secures us from scorching heat and intolerable cold? What advantages do we possess as an island! In consequence of this, we have been preserved from invasion; and our country has not been made a field of slaughter. What do we know of war? We have only witnessed its remote preparations and effects. We have not heard the "confused noise of warriors," nor seen "garments rolled in blood." Nor have our nurses, terrified at the sound of battle, fled with our infants and lamed our Mephibosheths for life. Commerce has filled our rivers with ships, and poured the produce of the four quarters of the globe upon

our tables. We have a constitution which displays the sober, improved, tried wisdom of ages. We have laws, distinguished by their justice, their mildness, their impartiality. The poor are equally protected with the rich; and character and talents can rise to eminence from the cottage, as well as from the mansion. Humanity and benevolence have distinguished the national character; and around us rise institutions of charity to embrace the sons and daughters of every kind of wretchedness.

Capernaum, though a little mean fishing town, was said to be “exalted unto heaven”—and the reason was—because our Lord and Saviour had honoured it with his presence, and had preached in it the kingdom of God. From the moment the Gospel enters a country, the importance of it commences in the eye of angels; and then—then it is said—“Arise, shine, for thy light is come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” And when it withdraws from a place, “Ichabod” may be written upon the walls—“The glory is departed.” At a very early period this inestimable blessing reached our highly favoured isle. And while it has been withdrawn from countries once blessed with the same privilege, it has been continued to us, notwithstanding all our unworthiness and provocation. Popery had indeed obscured the glory of the Gospel, locked up the Scriptures in an unknown language, and sacrificed thousands of victims to superstitious rage. But the Reformation gave us the Bible; and said, Read, and live! And the glorious Revolution fixing liberty on a firm and legal basis, said, Assemble together; Preach and hear; Worship God according to the dictates of your own consciences, and “he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of

mine eye!" Thus, ever since we have sat under our own vine and fig-tree, and none have made us afraid. We have filled our sanctuaries; we have enjoyed our Sabbaths; and though He has given us the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet has he not removed our teachers into a corner, but, "our eyes behold our teachers, and our ears hear a voice behind us, saying,—This is the way, walk ye in it, when we turn aside to the right hand or to the left."

Ah! think of the want of all this! "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear: for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

And to secure all these civil and religious advantages—how often has he made our cause his own! How seasonably and signally has he interposed to save us from the designs of our enemies! When brought low, he has helped us; "at even-tide it has been light."

Can we be insensible to all this?—If there were any ingenuousness in us, this motive alone would be sufficient.

But fear has its use—and it is necessary to tell you not only that you are bound by gratitude, but interest. "If ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be destroyed, both you and your king." This is dreadful—Think of a king you love, as well as honour, and "whose life is a lesson to the land he sways"—driven from his throne. Think of liberty exchanged for slavery. Think of property rapaciously plundered, or devoured by tyrannical ex-

action. Think of your private dwellings affording those who are dearer to you than yourselves no security from brutal passions. Think of the temples of God burnt up, or converted to other purposes. Think—But let us not pursue this lamentable train of reflection—but consider a few remarks, tending both to illustrate and confirm the danger of a wicked kingdom, and then to inquire after the state of our own.

And First. If there be a moral governor of the universe, sin must provoke him. A righteous God must love righteousness; a holy God, holiness; a God of order, order; and a God of benevolence, benevolence: and accordingly he must abhor all that is opposite to these. And hence it is said, that “God is angry with the wicked every day; the wicked shall not stand in his sight: he hateth all workers of iniquity.” And this is essential to every lovely and reverential view we can take of God. For who could adore a being who professed to govern the world, and suffered the wicked to go on with impunity?

Second. If sin provoke God, he is able to punish it. He is the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. All the elements are his. Every creature obeys his nod, from an archangel to a worm. How idle is it, in a case like this, to talk of armies and navies, and alliances—how absurd is it to compare force with force, and to say, after flattering calculations, “Oh! the enemy cannot come!” He cannot come unless God send him; but he can come easily enough if he should. Is anything too hard for the Lord—when he would either show mercy or execute wrath?

Third. Bodies of men are punishable in this world only. In eternity there are no families,

churches, nations. If therefore a country is to be destroyed, it is tried and condemned and executed here. When we see an individual sinner prospering in the world, and not immediately punished, our faith is not staggered; for we "know that his day is coming." But if a wicked people were allowed to escape—we should be confounded—we should ask, "Where is the God of judgment?" For, in this case, they *are* not punished now. And they *cannot* be punished hereafter.

Fourth. There is a tendency in the very nature of sin to injure and ruin a country. It violates all the duties of relative life. It destroys subordination. It relaxes the ties which bind mankind together, and makes them selfish and mean. It renders men enemies to each other.—Social welfare cannot survive the death of morals and virtue.

Fifth. God's dealings with guilty nations are confirmed by his word, and indeed by all history. He has invariably punished them in due time. Witness the state of Nineveh, Babylon, and others. Thus the nation Samuel addressed put his declaration to the trial—and found it true. A succession of severe judgments befel them—till at last wrath came upon them to the uttermost, and "the Romans came and took away both their place and nation."

Finally, to enable us to draw the conclusion, he often—he always—gives previous intimation of his displeasure—so that, were not men blind and deaf, they must see and hear his coming. When you see the body wasting away by disease, and every complaint growing more inveterate, you suspect that death will be the consequence—it is already begun. "When the fig-tree, and all the trees, put forth leaves,

ye know that summer is nigh." Our Saviour said unto the people, "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites! can ye discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" And how is it that we do not perceive that God is angry with us—that he is contending with us?—Are none of his forerunners arrived?—Has he not more than spoken?—Has he not smitten us—and more than once? And if lighter judgments do not reform, will not heavier ones destroy? The consequence is infallible—"If ye still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both you and your king."

But you ask—Have we any cause to fear this?—I answer, just in proportion to the degree of our sin. Now there are two ways by which we may judge of our national guilt. The first is, to enumerate the sins which reign predominant among us. To do this would not only be shocking, but endless. For what vice can be named that is not constantly committed through the land!—The other method is to lay down criterions, by which we may estimate the prevalency and the aggravations of sin in a country. And what test has ever been devised that is not alarming when applied to ourselves?

Divines have told us—That if God has favoured a nation with the revelation of his will, their sins are aggravated by means of this light—For "where much is given, much will be required; and he that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Thus a heathen country, committing the very same sins with a country enlightened with the

Gospel, is far less criminal. Thus, a country over-spread with superstition, where the Bible is scarcely known, and its contents can be only viewed through a depraved and disfiguring medium—such a country, committing the very same sins, would be far less guilty than a country favoured with a purer worship, and where evangelical instruction is open to all. And does not this apply to us?

They have told us, That when God has distinguished a people by singular instances of his favour, that people will be proportionally criminal, unless they distinguish themselves by their devotedness to him. Thus God from time to time aggravated the sins of the Jews. “He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” And is not this our case?

They have told us, That when a nation is under the corrections of the Almighty, they are eminently sinful if they disregard the tokens of his wrath, and go on careless and insensible. Hence, says Isaiah, “In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to

girding with sackcloth; and, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts." In like manner, says Jeremiah, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return."—And what impressions have his judgments made upon us? Have they restrained us from any of our pride and luxury? Have they reduced the number of worldly amusements; or chilled the ardour of dissipation? If a stranger were to come among us and observe our manners, would he think we were in any distress, or had received any unfavourable omens?

They tell us—to mention no more—that shamelessness in sinning is a sure proof of general corruption. And where is the man among us who is not more afraid of a threadbare coat, than of a dishonest action? To fail in business, and defraud innocent sufferers of their lawful property, is no longer scandalous; never excites a blush. Impurity is gloried in—and a young man, in most companies, who should profess himself virtuous, would be turned into ridicule! Much—everything depends upon the character of females. See how many of the barriers of virtue they have permitted to be removed! Behold the experiments which fashion has tried upon their reserve, their decency, their purity—See how they have adorned themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety!

If such tests prove the degree of national guilt, our guilt is great; and if sin destroys kingdoms, I say, we have reason to fear.

It is not indeed for us to determine when the iniquity of a nation is full; and it seems that God sometimes prolongs the duration of a country for some providential purposes. They may be instruments in his hand of mercy or of wrath. But such a destiny does not hinder their final ruin. Though they are his instruments, they are not his favourites. He may use them, and still punish them.

There is one thing of which we hear very much, and many seem to consider it as a counterpoise to all our fears, that there are so many good people among us. Blessed be God, this is true, and they certainly afford us encouragement. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom. And God says of the Jews, "I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God." Let us therefore rejoice in this encouragement. But let us rejoice with trembling. Let us remember that it is a hopeful circumstance—but that it does not absolutely insure the salvation of a country. Let us recollect that there was a time when God used the following language to Jeremiah and Ezekiel concerning the Jews: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee. Then said the Lord unto me, Bray not for this people for

their good. Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." What learn we from all this?—That there are cases in the history of nations, when the Divine forbearance is exhausted, and when the cries of the righteous will avail no more than those of the wicked. Were there not in Judea some of the best men that ever lived when the Babylonians invaded and conquered them? Have there not been pious people in every Christian country when destroyed? Does God love his followers now better than formerly, when he suffered them to share in a thousand public calamities?—While he punishes his enemies, may he not correct his friends? Or cannot he indemnify them? Or hide them? Or deliver them? He *must* fulfil his word to his servants upon which he has caused them to hope—but he is also engaged to render vengeance to his adversaries—"he will not spare the guilty."

"What then, would you have us despair?" I would—*if* we are resolved still to do wickedly. *If* we are not brought to national repentance, I would wish every individual to *expect* that we shall be destroyed, both we and our king. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them."

But the reverse is true. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom,

to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Blessed be God for this welcome intelligence. For by this he assures us—and the Scripture cannot be broken—that not only innocence and righteousness will save a country, but also repentance and reformation. Oh that our country may be led to make trial of this encouraging truth! May we search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. May we seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near—"for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

We learn therefore who is the worst enemy of his country—the *sinner*; and who is the best friend—the *Christian*. "By the blessing of the upright, the city is exalted; but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked."

Let us all, therefore, seek after divine grace to renew our own souls, and to sanctify our own lives; and do all in our power to promote godliness around us. Let us endeavour to hinder all the sin we can—in our families and neighbourhood—by prayer, by example, by influence. As much sin as we hinder, so much misery and danger shall we prevent.

Let us prize those institutions which are favourable to the morality and sanctification of mankind. Especially let us value the GOSPEL. It is the grand, and the only effectual means of "teaching men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world."

We are called upon to confess and bewail our national wickedness, and on such an occasion as this

we should feel ourselves to be parts of one great whole. But no man will ever be properly affected with the sins of others till he is impressed with *his own*. Here then our concern is to begin. We are individually to look backward—and inquire, “What have I done?”—and to look forward—and ask, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” We find the builders, in Nehemiah, “labouring every one over against his own house.” And it is a plain but an expressive image, of an old writer, that “the best way to have a clean street is for every one to sweep before his own door.”

Let us therefore personally “cease to do evil, and learn to do well.” Let us fear the Lord and serve him. Let us mourn and weep for the abominations that are done in the land.—And if we are not the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in—let us remember, it shall be well with *us*. If we suffer *with* others, we shall not suffer *like* them. And we shall soon reach Immanuel’s land, where the din of war will be heard no more.

And, oh! remember, if your country should be saved, and you as an individual continue impenitent—*you—you* will be certainly destroyed! And what is any national calamity to “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power! ”

DISCOURSE LIII.

OUR SAVIOUR COMFORTING HIS DISCIPLES.

[AFTER A FUNERAL.]

“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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” JOHN xiv. 2, 3.

Never man spake like this man! Grace was poured into his lips! And in him were accomplished in the highest sense the words of the prophet—“He hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.”

Having assembled with his disciples in an upper room, and administered to them the memorials of his death—he announced his approaching departure. Sorrow filled their hearts. Perhaps they expressed it in words; perhaps it was visible in their countenances. However this may be—he perceived it, and said, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

But what can bear them up under such a loss?—

We grieve when we lose a good man, a friend, a common benefactor. But they were to lose their Lord and Saviour, their teacher, the resolver of their doubts, their comforter in every affliction. How then would he relieve them? What is the remedy he applies?—It is faith!—The discoveries of faith are the best support under the evils of sense. “I had fainted,” says David, “unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”—“Ye believe in God,” says our Saviour, “believe also in me.” But what would he have them believe? You have heard—“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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Let us consider the various particulars of this intelligence; and the certainty of the whole.

I. THE DECLARATION OF OUR SAVIOUR CONTAINS EVERYTHING THAT CAN FEED THE CONTEMPLATION, AND ENLIVEN THE HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

In describing heaven, he calls it his “Father’s house”—as much as to say, I am only going home. Now he is not ashamed to call his people brethren. “Behold,” says he, after his resurrection, “behold, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” Heaven therefore is their home also. The world knoweth them not—it knew him not. They are only strangers and pilgrims on earth. They take many a weary step; and often meet with rough usage and trying weather. But when tempted to complain, they are prevented by the reflection that this is not their home—better en-

ertainment awaits them at their journey's end—heaven will make amends for all. Dr. Howland Taylor, when drawing near the tower of Hadley in Suffolk, where he had been a minister, and was now going to be a martyr—being asked how he did—answered, “Never better; for now I know that I am almost at home!”—And looking over the meadow between him and the place where he was to be immediately burnt, he said, “Only two stiles more to get over, and I am at my Father's house.” And when the venerable Mr. Mede was asked how he did, he replied, “I am going home as fast as I can, as every honest man ought to do when his day's work is over; and I bless God I have a good home to go to.” Yes—a *good* home indeed! Think of a building of God and *for* him; think of an edifice in which he resides; and which is worthy of his infinite Majesty!—We have seen splendid palaces. We have read of others, the magnificence of which seems to exceed belief. The Scripture tells us that Solomon's palace was the wonder of the earth; and that when the queen of Sheba had surveyed it, “there remained no more spirit in her.” But what is all this to heaven—“the palace of the great King”! No man could see it and live. But all this is your home—it is your “Father's house.”

Our Lord tells us that in this house there are “many mansions.” No inconsiderable number will be required. For if it be asked, Are there few that shall be saved?—taking them all, eventually and collectively, we answer, No. The Captain of our salvation is leading “many sons” unto glory. And John saw before the throne “a great multitude which no man could number,” from all the diversities of the

human race. But there is room enough in the house of God to accommodate all his immense family. There is therefore nothing to justify monopoly. There is enough and to spare.

But the expression implies not only multiplicity, but variety. Though the house is one, the apartments are many. There is something in the heavenly state suited to the circumstances, and character, and taste of every inhabitant. The land of Canaan was given to the Jews; but each tribe had its own division, and the lots of no two of them were in all respects alike. In the world of nature we see “one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.” Among the angels we read of thrones and dominions; principalities and powers: they have their orders and degrees. This also, we have reason to believe, will be the case with glorified saints. We see endless diversity in all God’s works and ways. And will heaven be an exception? All will be perfectly blessed—but why should all be similarly employed; or equally endowed? Plunge a number of vessels into the sea—they are all alike filled—but, various in their dimensions, they hold unequal proportions.

Further; he tells them, “‘I go to prepare a place for you.’ You are coming too—but I must go first—to remove every impediment; to perform every condition; to secure every advantage.”

For this happiness is not such as Adam would have obtained after a proper trial of his obedience in Paradise. It is the happiness of a lost creature, in whose restoration difficulties were found which the Saviour alone could remove. And before *He* can remove them

—see how much it was necessary for him to accomplish! It was necessary for him to come down from heaven to earth, and return from earth to heaven. To your complete happiness, his death was necessary—his resurrection was necessary—his ascension and intercession were necessary—his universal empire, and his dispensation of the Holy Ghost, were necessary.

He went away, not only to possess a personal reward, but to assume a relative dignity—not only to live a life of glory, but also a life of office; and hence says the Apostle, “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life!” Hence he said to his disciples, “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” With his own blood he entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. He appeared in the presence of God for us, pleading his sacrifice, and claiming the purchase of the Cross: “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” He has taken possession of heaven in our name, and he holds it for us. And we read that he entered within the veil as our forerunner, whose office it is to prepare for the reception, and to announce the approach of those to whom he belongs.

Again. “If,” says the Saviour, “I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself. This is fulfilled in two cases. He comes again at death. And this is infinitely desirable. It is an awful thing to die. And many a Chris-

tian has found himself in such a frame of mind as to say—

“Oh! if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste;
Fly fearless through death’s iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she pass’d!”

He does this. He is peculiarly near to his people in their expiring moments. Many of them have confessed his presence in words; while others who have not had the same degree of rapturous confidence, have equally proved it by effects. Yes, he comes to irradiate the dark valley; he comes to establish their faith, and to enliven their hope, and to make all grace to abound towards them in this time of need. He comes to take them in from this world of storms to their everlasting refuge—to receive them to himself—as you would go to the door to receive a beloved friend from a distance, or hasten to embrace a dear child returning, after a long absence, from school.

He also comes again at the last day to receive them to himself. And this coming differs very much from the former. The one is spiritual, but the other will be personal. The one is private, and invisible; the other will be public and obvious, for every eye shall see him. The one is to receive his people individually; the other will be to receive them collectively. The one is to receive their souls, but the other is also to receive their bodies. This is a grand article of our faith and hope. “To them that look for him, will he appear a second time, without sin, unto salvation. Our conversation is in heaven; from whence we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to

the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Finally, he adds; "that where I am, there ye may be also." Whatever situation were prepared to receive the Christian, he would feel himself more than disappointed if when he came he could not see *him*, enjoy *him*, be for ever with *him*. For he has learned to place all his happiness in him; and it is only in proportion as he can experience his presence, that he can say, of any situation, "It is good to be here."

There is in heaven company of the first sort; society the most delicious. There we shall join the innumerable company of angels. There we shall mix with all the truly wise and good. There we shall be introduced to martyrs, apostles, patriarchs. We shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. We shall see those who have gone before us, with whom we were once connected by the tender ties of nature or of friendship. But Jesus is "the chief of ten thousand." Whom have we in heaven but him?—And he cannot be satisfied unless we shall be with him to share in all his honour and happiness. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Where I am, there shall also my servant be."—Such are the contents of this gracious declaration.

But the more important and interesting any intelligence be, the more anxious are we for its certainty. Our Saviour therefore,

II. Meets this state of mind in the disciples, and says—"if it were not so, I would have

told you." How friendly and familiar, and yet how convincing and forcible, is this address! Take it thus:—

First. If it had not been so—he *could* have told them. For he knew all from the beginning. He was perfectly acquainted with the situation of his Father's house; with the works and enjoyments of heaven; with the character of the persons who were to possess it; with the way in which it was to be obtained.

Secondly. If it had not been so—he *should* have told them. As their professed teacher, it was his office to rectify their mistakes, and to save them from delusion.

Here you will also observe, that he had always laid a peculiar stress upon a future state in his doctrine. He had endeavoured to induce them to give up the present for the future—to abandon treasures on earth, in expectation of treasure in heaven. Now if there were no such state of blessedness and recompence—ought he to have suffered them to give up every thing that was dear to them here, for the sake of a fool's paradise? He knew that they had forsaken all to follow him; and he knew that, in consequence of their adherence to him, they would endure persecution and death—and, if there was nothing to indemnify them, should he not have told them?

Thirdly. If it had not been so—he *would* have told them. This follows from the former. For what was proper for him to do, he always did.

Besides—on all other occasions, when they had apprehended things to be otherwise than they really were, he had set them right. We see this with regard to his sufferings, and the nature of his kingdom.

He had kept back nothing that was profitable for them. "Henceforth," says he, "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." And surely he would not have held them in darkness and error in a case of so much consequence as this!

What room was there for suspicion? Could they question his love? Had he not abundantly proved his readiness to serve them? Was he not even then going to lay down his life for them?—What could be more awful than the circumstances he was now in? He was now ready to be offered: and do men feel inclined to deceive when—dying?

Conclude we therefore by remarking, First, How unlike our Saviour is the "god of this world." The god of this world "blindeth the minds of them that believe not." He is afraid of the entrance of light. He reigns by delusion. He knows that the end of these things is death. He knows that even now the pleasures of sin are not equal to the sorrows of religion. His servants indulge expectations, every one of which will issue in disappointment. He knows this—but he refuses to tell them so: till, from the blindness of sin, he plunges them into the darkness of hell.

Second. We shall never go on well in religion till our Lord and Saviour has gained our confidence. And this he surely deserves. He is often better than his promise, but never worse. Let us in all cases run to his word, and consider what he has spoken—if he has not said such a thing, it matters not who has—but if he has spoken it—believe it to be more

sure than heaven or earth—for heaven or earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass away. If you were not welcome to come and take of the water of life freely, he would tell you—if future happiness were a fancy, or a dream, he would undeceive you; and not suffer you to run and strive in vain. Settle it therefore in your minds that he will not—that he cannot delude you.

It is expected therefore that the believer's confidence in him should be in proportion to his acquaintance with him. Hence it is said, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." And hence, says the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed"—my faith is not a blind, rash confidence—I am sure of my ground, therefore I tread firm—I have proved the character I depend upon, and therefore I unreservedly commit myself to him—he is an old friend, a tried friend. How many evidences have I had of his kindness, veracity, and power! How reproachful would it be if I could not trust him now! "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

Third. What a Master, what a Saviour do we serve! How sincere! How kind! "His heart is made of tenderness; his bowels melt with love." How concerned is he, not only for the safety, but also for the comfort of his followers! With what a soft hand does he wipe away their tears! How graciously does he reward them—how infinitely does he provide for them! "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!"

Fourth. Are you to fill any of these mansions?—

Is there a place above prepared for you?—How people long to rise in the state! How they envy the great! How happy would they deem themselves if they could get into such—and such places! To what humiliations will they submit, what sacrifices will they be ready to make, to attain such fleeting, unsatisfying honours! But what are they, what can they be to “heavenly places”!—in which you are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ”?

For whom then are they prepared? I answer, for those who are prepared for them. God makes his people “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” The vessels of mercy are “afore prepared unto glory.” Others would be only miserable there; even if God had not determined to exclude them. But “the wicked shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all workers of iniquity: without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” Here nothing that defileth can ever enter. For such as love sin there is another place prepared. “For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” The place indeed was prepared, as our Saviour says, “for the devil and his angels but sinners, by their rejection of his grace, will make it their own!—It is therefore said that Judas, when he died, went to his *“own place.”*

Lastly. Let us rejoice in hope. Let us lay open our minds to these everlasting consolations which our Saviour here reveals and insures. Let them fill us with a joy unspeakable and full of glory in all

our present trials, and especially under the loss of dear and valuable friends.

Let us remember that, when no longer visible to us, they are not lost. They have reached their Father's house. They are disposed of infinitely to their advantage. And this should subdue the selfishness of our grief. If we love them, we ought to rejoice in their promotion.

We have no reason to believe that they are acquainted with our circumstances, or can employ themselves for our welfare—yet “for us they languish, and for us they die.” We may improve their removal; it should draw us away from earth, and attach us the more to heaven. And thus their going away will be for our welfare. When we lose the lives of our friends, we should be careful not to lose their deaths too.

They will not come to receive us to themselves—but they will welcome us when we enter their everlasting habitations. The separation is temporary. A time of re-union will come. We shall see their faces, and hear their voices, again in the flesh. O cheerful consolation!—how suitable—and how sure! “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise

first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

DISCOURSE LIV.

THE DISCIPLES IN A STORM.

“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”

MATT. viii. 23–27.

A STORM at sea is one of the sublimest appearances in all nature. Hence it has often employed the painter's pencil and the poet's pen. David, whose genius was very vivid and distinct in its conceptions, has given us an admirable representation of this impressive scene. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths:

their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet: so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."

Let us repair this evening to the lake of Galilee, and behold a vessel in a storm, containing the twelve apostles and the Lord of all. The narrative is every way instructive and useful. And was written for our learning. The circumstances are six. They are these—THE STORM AROSE WHILE THE DISCIPLES WERE FOLLOWING OUR LORD. WHILE THEY WERE ALARMED, HE WAS ASLEEP. IN THEIR DISTRESS THEY IMPLORE HIS ASSISTANCE. HE REPROVES THEIR FEARS. HE COMMANDS THEIR DELIVERANCE. HE DRAWS FORTH THEIR ADMIRATION AND PRAISE.

They sailed in a calm, and soon encountered a storm. It is the emblem of life; at least, the life of many. They launched forth into the world with fair appearances and high-raised expectations; but they had not proceeded far before the clouds gathered blackness, the sky was overspread, the winds howled, the waves roared, and they said, with Hezekiah, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness." It is the emblem of many a particular enterprise; for so unanswerable often is the end of a thing to the beginning of it, that prudence, as well as Scripture, seems to say, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

But we are not only taught that we may sail in a calm, and meet with a storm;—we may encounter

one even when sailing with Christ. This was the case here. They were acting in obedience to his authority and in compliance with his example: "When he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him; and, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves." How is this? He could have prevented the fury of the elements, and have given them a peaceful and pleasant passage over. But then he would not have taught us so much. Particularly we should have wanted a confirmation of this truth—that prosperous gales do not always attend us in the prosecution of duty. And yet this is a very important lesson. It is of great utility to the young, who are just beginning a religious course. It will prevent their expecting exemption from trials and difficulties; it will lead them to believe that these things may occur, will occur: and thus when the evil day comes they will not think it strange, or grow weary and faint in their minds; but rather be emboldened and confirmed. "O my soul, did He not tell me this? Did he not assure me that in the world I should have tribulation—that, as a traveller, I must look for some unfavourable weather and disagreeable road—that there would be a slough, a hill of difficulty, a valley of humiliation—and here they are! I am right. Here David sighed. Here Paul groaned. These are way-marks which they have thrown up. I inn journeying the same way; 'the way everlasting'"

For want of having this truth present to the mind, many Christians, who are more advanced in the divine life, have been confounded and dismayed. All misery wears the character of sin, of which it is the consequence; it naturally therefore reminds us

of it. God is the source of all light and joy; and when we see nothing of the one, and feel nothing of the other, it is not easy to believe that he is present with us. We are ready to say, with Gideon, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this evil befallen us? ' Surely, he would have hindered all this. Surely, if he had it in his power, a father would keep a child from everything hurtful; and a benefactor, a friend. How then can God be my benefactor and father, when, though he could by a single volition cure all my complaints, he suffers me from week to week to struggle with poverty, pine in sickness, and groan under disappointment! If I am his, why am I thus?" But here we err. We do not consider that his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways—that though his love be real, it is also wise—that though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. Hence it is said. Blessed is the man that escapes, but, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life." Afflictions are the same to the soul as the plough to the fallow ground, the pruning-knife to the vine, and the furnace to the gold. Let none, on the other hand, conclude that they are right because they are prosperous. Success is flattering not only to our wishes, but to our pride; and when we are very warm in any cause, we are prone to consider every favourable circumstance as expressive of. Divine approbation. But did God approve of Jonah's flight because, when he came down to the sea-shore, he found a ship just ready to sail? What says poetry?

“God’s choice is safer than our own.

Of ages past inquire

What the most formidable fate?—

To have our own desire.”

What saith the Scripture? “He gave them their heart’s desire, but sent leanness into their soul.”

Secondly. WHILE HIS DISCIPLES WERE PERPLEXED AND ALARMED, “HE WAS ASLEEP.” O sleep, thou soft, downy enemy! how much of our time, our short, our uncertain, our all-important time dost thou rob us of!—*His* whole life was an illustration of his remark—“I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, wherein no man can work.” He never spoke an idle word; never spent an idle hour, lie was in watchings often: we read of his teaching early in the temple; of his rising a great while before day, and praying; of his going up into a mountain, and continuing all night in prayer to God. Now for once we read of his sleeping. We may take three views of it.

It was a sleep of *refreshment*. Wearied nature required repose in him as well as in us. For though he was Divine, he was also truly and properly a man, and was possessed of all our sinless infirmities. At onetime we find him upon the road begging a draught of cold water; at another, he hungered, and found no food on the fig-tree, lie was now heavy to sleep, and like a labouring man—such he was—his sleep was sweet; and, regardless of delicate accommodations, he could lie down and enjoy it even in a fishing ship, and in a storm!

This renders the sleep *wonderful*. There could have been no fear, no uneasiness within: all was secure and serene. Some of you, it is probable,

could not sleep in a storm. Judas was now on board. I dare say Judas could not sleep. What a hell would his avarice produce in his guilty conscience! But see Jacob. He is journeying alone; the shades of the night descend; yet he "takes the stones of the place for a pillow, and lays himself down to—sleep"! David abroad in the field, in the rebellion of Absalom, and when he had few troops with him, said, "I will both lay me down and—sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Peter, in the night preceding his designed execution, was "sleeping between two soldiers" so soundly, that the angel was obliged to strike a blow, as well as a light, in order to awake him. "So he giveth his beloved sleep"! Happy they whose minds are tranquillized by the blood of sprinkling. Happy they who, though sensible of daily infirmities, can say, Our "rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Happy they who can this evening retire, and feel a comparative indifference to life or death; who can say, If I live, it will be to serve thee; and if I die, it will be to enjoy thee.

Again. The sleep was *designed*; and our Saviour had a particular end to answer by it. He would try the disposition and dependence of his disciples, and show us that he may be with his people in a storm, and yet seem to be indifferent; seem to see nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing. Thus it was with Abraham: his deliverer did not interpose to say. Forbear, till the hand had grasped the knife, and was stretched out to use it. Thus it was with the Jews in Egypt. He had engaged, at the end of four hundred and

thirty years, to deliver them; but he seemed to have forgotten the promise: the very last day of this long period was arrived—but he awoke in time; and before the returning dawn all the host of the Lord had escaped!—He defers these interpositions to render them the more divine and wonderful. His glory never shines so brightly as on the dark ground of human despair. When creatures have withdrawn, and the eye sees nothing all around but desolation, then, if he approaches us, he must be seen, and be welcomed with peculiar joy and praise: while, by such a dispensation, he says to his people in all future ages—“Never despond; I can turn the shadow of death into the morning; at eventide it shall be light.”

“Just in the last distressing hour
The Lord displays delivering power;
The mount of danger is the place
Where we shall see surprising grace.”

In the mean time he exercises our faith and patience, and calls forth our desires after him. He knew that his disciples would soon apply to him; and so they did.—It is the Third circumstance in the relation. “THEY CAME TO HIM AND AWOKE HIM, HAVING, LORD, HAVE US: WE PERISH.” It has been said, that those who would learn to pray, should go to sea; and one would suppose that danger so imminent and sensible would produce this effect. But, alas! many have returned from sea without learning to pray. Perhaps indeed they prayed while the storm continued—but their devotion sunk faster than the winds and waves. How many are there who consider prayer as a task to be performed in perilous circumstances, but not their

daily duty, their constant privilege! We read of some birds that never make a noise but at the approach of foul weather: and there are persons who never cry to God but “when his chastening hand is upon them.”—What would you think of a neighbour who never called upon you but when he wanted to borrow or beg? Would you not say. What a selfish wretch! he has no regard for me; he thinks of nothing but his own convenience? And what can God think of your religion, if you never seek him but in trouble?

And yet we are authorized to say, that trials have frequently been the means of bringing a man to God: he and God first met in affliction; but a friendship for life was the consequence. I cannot therefore but look hopefully towards a man who is brought into trouble; just as when I see a smith putting a bar of iron into the fire, I conclude that he is going to do something with it, to form out of it some useful implement, which could not be done while it was cold and hard. In his affliction Manasseh sought the Lord. Upon the same principle, thousands have had reason to say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”—We may also observe, that as trials are useful to begin, so they are employed to assist a life of prayer. For Christians themselves sometimes grow too careless and insensible. God hears from them less frequently, less fervently, than before. Other things amuse them and engage them. But how differently do they feel in the hour of mortification and disappointment! “Where is God my Maker, that giveth songs in the night? Therefore will I look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.”

“Now I forbid my carnal hope,
My fond desires recall;
I give my mortal interest up,
And make my God my all.”

By this you may judge whether your storms are blessings or curses. Do they make you passionate or prayerful? Are you quarrelling with the winds and waves, or spreading the case before the Lord? Are you looking to creatures, or to him who has them all under his command, and “in all our affliction is afflicted”? “I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.”

Fourthly. Our Lord REPROVES HIS DISCIPLES. But observe, I beseech you, for what it is that he censures them. It is not for breaking in upon his repose. Some of you may remember the confinement of one hundred and forty-six Englishmen in what was called the black hole, at Calcutta. It would harrow up the feelings of your souls were I to relate the sufferings of these brave men, driven into a dungeon, which was a cube of eighteen feet, walled up eastward and southward, the only quarters whence refreshing air could come, and open westward by two small windows barred with iron—all this under a melting sky—and many of the men wounded! But what I refer to is this. The cries of these sufferers at last were such as to prevail on one of the enemy’s soldiers to go and implore relief of the Suba or Chief. But he soon returned, saying, that the Suba was asleep, and that it was upon pain of death any one dared to awake him before the time—and before he awoke many of them had expired!—But it is not

so with thee, O blessed Jesus, thou Saviour of the world! Thou despisest not thy prisoners. We cannot by our continual coming weary thee. Thou hast always an ear to which misery is welcome. The groans of a broken heart are as delightful to thee as the songs of angels. No: he does not reprove them for their prayer, but their fear. They were in a needless panic. They talked of perishing, not considering who was with them; and that *they* could not sink without *his* sinking too. His safety proved their security. Therefore he saith unto them, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" And hereby he shows us—that our alarms originate in the want of faith—that faith may indeed be real where it is little—but that being little, it renders us liable to apprehensions and dismay—and that if a small degree of faith will be sufficient for fine-weather sailing, a greater is necessary in a storm—a faith assured of our union with him; clear in its views of his power and love; and firm in its dependence upon his promise.

But, oh! in what manner did our Lord utter this reproof? It is impossible to do justice to those lips into which grace was poured, and which spake as never man spake. But had we heard him, I am persuaded his tone of voice would have been more expressive of kindness than severity. It would have been the address of one who pitied while he blamed; who was touched with the feeling of their infirmities; who knew their frame, and remembered they were but dust; who knew the influence outward things have upon the body, and the influence the body has upon the mind. He would not therefore keep them in suspense; but,

Fifthly: it is said, "THEN—HE AROSE AND REBUKED THE WINDS AND THE SEA, AND THERE WAS A GREAT CALM." What a scene was here! I see him opening his eyes—but not with surprise. Nothing astonished him through life. I see him going upon deck—not in haste. Haste is the effect of confusion—he had always too much to do to be ever in haste. I see him facing the storm.—But what said he? He "rebuked" the winds and the sea. To rebuke is a word that we apply to intelligent creatures only. We talk of rebuking a servant or a child—but not a tree or a stone. Thus the storm is personified and addressed as if it could hear him; and it did hear him and obey. And "there was a great calm"! Those who are acquainted with the sea know that, after a storm is hushed, the deep continues for a considerable time to rise and fall and fret. But the sea now immediately subsided from its raging, and spread into a smooth surface. For his work is perfect. He doth all things well. And the execution honours him as much as the design.

But, Finally. WHAT EFFECT HAD ALL THIS UPON HIS DISCIPLES? They are not only convinced, but impressed: they not only "believe with the heart," but "confess with the tongue and, filled with ADMIRATION and PRAISE at such a peculiar and unexampled display of perfection, "they marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" Some persons if known would be abhorred; others would decline, upon acquaintance; and where intimacy does not reduce our esteem, it commonly diminishes our admiration. In other cases, ignorance is the cause of wonder: but here it is knowledge; for the character

is perfect, and the object infinite. The more we know of the Saviour's attributes and works and ways, the more we shall admire and adore. And we are told that when he has ended all our storms, and made all things to work together for our good—then "he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." We admire him indeed now. He has already fixed and filled our minds. We already see in him such various and numberless excellences, that the world has faded into nothing by the comparison. We see in him every-thing to feed our contemplation, every-thing to encourage our hope, every-thing to excite imitation, every-thing to command attachment and praise. But how small a portion is known of him!

—"Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor heaven, his full resemblance bears:
His beauties we can never trace,
Till we behold him face to face."

Let me conclude. First, by a word to the disobedient. He who addressed the wind and the sea, has often addressed you. He has addressed you by sickness, by affliction, by delivering mercy, by conscience, by friends, by ministers, by his law and by his gospel, by threatenings and by promises. But, more insensible, more rebellious than the wind or the sea, *you* have not heard or obeyed him. And yet you pretend to possess reason! But wherein do you show it? "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." And this will be your case. You are not only his creatures, but his subjects; he has not only given you privileges, but rendered you account-

able for them, and he is coming to try you by them. And can you be ignorant of the result? "As for these mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth and slay them before me."

Secondly. Let me call upon those of you who love the Saviour, to familiarize him to your minds as present with you in all your difficulties. You need not say, Oh! if he were on earth, I would go to him, and tell him my grief, and ease my burdened mind. You may do so now; for though he is no longer visible, he is still accessible; and if you call, he will answer, and say, "Here I am." He is a very present help in trouble.

Look to him to tranquillize a stormy world. The nations are angry—but He who stilleth the raging of the sea can also calm the tumults of the people.

Look to him to pacify a troubled conscience. In the midst of the most painful distress and anguish within, he can say unto your soul, "I am thy salvation." Fear not.

Look to him in all your trials. Surely, in a storm, there ought to be a difference between you and others. *They* have made no provision for the evil day: but *you* have a friend, a kind friend, an almighty friend, with you. You have tried him. You know "whom you have believed;" and he knoweth them that trust in him, and will "never leave them nor forsake them."

Have you evils in prospect? Does a dispensation of Heaven approach you, that, instead of opening like a fine morning in May, seems setting in like a winter's night, with "dark waters and thick clouds of the sky"?

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.”

DISCOURSE LV.

FAMINE.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land.” AMOS viii. 11.

SIN is said to be “an evil and a bitter thing.” It is evil in its nature, and bitter in its consequences. It is evil with regard to God, and bitter with regard to us. It “brought death into the world, and all our woe.” Numberless are the miseries to which it has reduced individuals, families, nations, and the whole human race.

Among these, one of the most dreadful is Famine. It would not be easy even for the imagination to do justice to a calamity so tremendous. What must it be to view “the heavens over us as brass, and I lie earth beneath us as iron”! What must it be, from the appearances of nature, to exclaim, “Is not the meat cut off before our eyes; yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed is rotten under the clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed because they have no pasture; yea, the

flocks of sheep are made desolate." What must it be to make observations like these: "The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field"?—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget." Yes! even mothers have dressed and devoured their own offspring. The horrible fact is mentioned three times in the history of a people once peculiarly dear to God. In the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, Josephus tells us that the daughter of Eleazer had fled from beyond Jordan to the metropolis, in the general distress: she had been wealthy, but was now reduced to the last extremity: after a heartrending address, she killed her infant at the breast for food—and when some ruffians" entered the house, and demanded whatever provision she had, she presented a dish, and throwing by the napkin—showed them the remains of her child—the other part she had eaten! Referring to the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, says the prophet Jeremiah: "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people." In the siege of Samaria, by Benhadad the Syrian, we read: "As the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the Lord do not

help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn floor, or out of the wine-press? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. And it, came to pass when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh."

Who is not ready to say—Let us turn from THESE scenes of horror, and, falling upon our knees, pray, "O Lord, correct us, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring us to nothing"?

And yet there is a famine infinitely more dreadful than all this: and, to keep you no longer from our subject, it is the very judgment here denounced: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."—We need not inquire to what periods the prophecy immediately refers. It was to be accomplished at different times, and in various degrees.

We divide our reflections into throe parts: the First of which regards THE NATURE OF THIS JUDGMENT. The Second, ITS DREADFULNESS. And the Third, ITS INFLICTION. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

I. Let us consider THE NATURE OF THIS JUDGMENT. It takes in the loss of the Gospel, as a judgment, administered by preaching. It is a famine, not of reading, but "of hearing the words of the Lord."

We may consider this famine as *eternal*. The means of grace, and the ordinances of religion, are exclusively confined to this life. If you die strangers to the power of godliness, so you must continue. Your mistake will indeed be discovered, but cannot be rectified. *There* no throne of grace. *There* no messengers of mercy. *There* no invitations to turn and live. *There* no sabbath smiles upon you; no temple opens to receive you; no altar spreads before you the hallowed emblems of the Saviour's death. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Hence it is that we urge you to "seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near:" and remind you of our Lord's admonition, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

We may consider this famine as *spiritual*. And

thus it refers to the state of the mind; and takes place when souls are reduced to such indifference and insensibility as to be morally or judicially incapable of improvement by the institutions of religion, even should they be continued among them. When a man can no longer use food, or turn it into nourishment, it is the same with regard to himself as if all provision was denied him death must, be the consequence. The case of many who have long been favoured with the Gospel is, according to this view of the subject, alarming. Much has been said, very incautiously, of the termination of a day of grace. In a sense, every day is a day of grace; and "God is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." While therefore there is life, there is hope. But surely this hope diminishes, as impenitency becomes inveterate. Surely favourable opportunities may elapse, and return no more. Surely convictions may be stifled, and impressions worn off, never to be renewed. Surely, by unsanctified attendance, year after year, the most important truths may become so familiar as to lose all their effect. Surely, by incessant trifling with divine things, God may be provoked to recall his influence from his ordinances—and thus will be fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, who saith, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

We may consider this famine as *doctrinal*. It may then be occasioned by the removal of faithful ministers, and the succession of others of different principles. This is sure to cause a declension in the number and in the zeal of the members of churches. For the grace and the truth of God always go together. And in this case the Gospel is really taken away, and something is made a substitute that will be found ineffectual for all the purposes of conversion and consolation. As light recedes, darkness in the same proportion follows. Every system has some parts in it that are essential. When the leading doctrines of the Gospel are denied or concealed, the Gospel is withdrawn; and when this is withdrawn, "Ichabod" may be inscribed upon the walls of the building—"The glory is departed."

This famine may be considered as *literal*. This is the case when a people are deprived of the very institutions of religion, and are forbidden the assembling of themselves together according to their convictions. This may be done by the inroads and oppression of an enemy; by the encroachments of tyranny; by the loss of liberty of conscience. Our forefathers could explain this.

II. Let us pass from the nature of this judgment, to examine the DREADFULNESS of it. To some men indeed this famine would be a very little grievance. Probably it would prove a pleasure rather than a pain. If the Gospel was removed, they would be less incommoded and alarmed. They would rather have no prophets, unless they would "prophesy smooth things." Of a Micaiah they exclaim, "I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." "Yea, they say,"—how dreadful are

actions put into words!—"yea, they say unto God, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." But do we take the value of learning from the opinion of a fool? Do we estimate the jewel from the swine, that, ignorant of its worth, tramples it under foot? Do we cease to admire Handel because some have no ears for his harmony and melody, or may choose to be perverse and fastidious?—But what do we? We disregard ignorance and prejudice, and seek after a proper standard by which we may obtain the decisions of truth. Let us apply the same rule to the subject before us. To know the dreadfulfulness of this judgment, let us,

First; dwell upon the advantages derivable from the preaching of the Gospel. The generality of those that are called by Divine grace are saved by this instrumentality. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And the usefulness of it continues through the whole of the Christian life. "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: till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Some are unable to read, and many have little time to search the Scriptures. Particular errors and vices are continually arising and prevailing, that require the application of particular doctrines, and the inculcation of particular duties: and a minister will study these in the choice and in the discussion of his subjects. How often in his

palaces have some of you found God for a refuge! How often have your perplexities been solved, your fears banished, your hearts filled with all joy and peace in believing!—Could you be reconciled to the thought of losing all the pleasure and profit you have found by experience to be connected with the means of grace?

Secondly; let us think of the importance of the soul and eternity. The body is the meanest part of our nature; and time is the shortest portion of our duration, by a degree no less than infinite. The chief question therefore should never be, “What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?”—but, “What must I do to be saved?” The chief care ought to be, to gain spiritual wealth, spiritual honour, spiritual food—for these regard man in his most essential claims and necessities. Every thing should be considered as good or evil, according to its connexion with the soul and eternity: and from this principle, which a child can understand, we infer, that, beyond all comparison, the famine most to be dreaded is that which regards not the body, but the soul; not time, but eternity.

Thirdly; observe the design of such a dispensation. Some judgments, though painful, are still profitable. They remove the human arm; but it is to lead us to a dependence on the Divine. They take away the desires of our eyes; but it is that we may ask, “Where is God my Maker, that giveth songs in the night?” How blessed was the humiliation that reduced Manasseh from the throne into a prison, where he sought and found the Lord God of his fathers! How kind was the famine that drove the prodigal to his father’s house! “O God, chastise me, but do not

abandon me. Try me as thou pleasest, but do not withdraw from me the proofs and the mediums of thy grace. Say anything but this—‘He is joined to idols, let him alone.’” Other judgments are in mercy, but this is in wrath. Other judgments are parental, but this is penal. Other judgments may urge us into heaven; but this is the way to hell, “going down to the chambers of death.”

Fourthly. In estimating this curse, let us appeal to the sentiments of the righteous. Their conviction, in a case like this, far outweighs the opinion of the politicians and philosophers of the age. The question is a religious one; and “the spiritual judgeth all things, though he himself is judged of no man.” In what terms does David deplore the loss of Divine assemblies? “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” Take those who are confined from the ordinances of God by disease or accident—though God does not leave them comfortless, neither are they unsubmitive, yet with the recovering Hezekiah they are asking, “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?”

We can rise but one step higher, and there we meet with God himself. His people *may* err: but his understanding is infinite; he *cannot* be deceived. What does *he* think of this judgment? You may infer it from his benediction: “Blessed are the people that know the

joyful sound." You may infer it from his promise: "I will give them pastors after my own heart, that shall feed them with knowledge and understanding. Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying. This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." You may infer it from his threatening: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."

III. We have to reflect on THE EXECUTION OF THIS SENTENCE. For some may be ready to say, How can such a thing be? It is very improbable; and, considering the Divine promise, it seems to be impossible. For has he not said—"This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever. Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." But a distinction instantly removes this difficulty. God has engaged to establish his church universally; but this does not regard any particular body of professors. He has engaged that the Gospel shall never be removed from the world; but this does not hinder the withdrawment of it from particular places. If after all you are slow of heart to believe; if you are still thinking that such language as this never can, or

never will be accomplished with regard to us; let me ask you,

First. Is not He who utters this threatening almighty, and so able to fulfil it? If he has infinite resources from which he can bless his friends, he has the same power, the same dominion, to furnish him with arms against his enemies. He can never be at a loss for instruments to do his pleasure; nor can these instruments, however weak in themselves, prove feeble in the hand of Omnipotence.

Secondly. Is not He who utters this threatening just, and so disposed to fulfil it? Men may draw God as they please; they may imagine him all patience and pity; but they will find themselves mistaken. "A God all mercy is a God unjust." He is an equitable Governor, as well as a tender Father. He is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works! If sin is the abominable thing that he hates—if it be aggravated by light and knowledge—if the servant that knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes—if the abuse of the greatest privilege be the greatest guilt—*can* God see all this without concern, without provocation? If at an infinite expense he has sent the Gospel among us, and we make light of it; refuse to read or to hear it; or make the hearing of it a matter of mere curiosity or entertainment; applying it to no one purpose for which it was given, or turning it into licentiousness—is it *conceivable* that we can do this with impunity? *Can* God connive at such wickedness? *Must* he not prove that he is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"? Mercy sent forth the messengers to invite to the marriage-feast: but what said Justice of those that refused? "None

of the men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

Thirdly. Is not He that utters this threatening faithful, and so bound to fulfil it? Even a Balaam could say, “The Lord is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”—He has evinced his truth in his denunciations as well as in his promises. If Joseph found his word true, so did Pharaoh; and Saul was constrained to believe it as well as David.

Fourthly. Has not He who utters this threatening fulfilled it already in various instances? Here we appeal from principles to facts. The Gospel *has* been removed from a country; a people *have* been unchurched. The Jews are an eminent example. While they enjoyed their ceremonial services, they had the Gospel in type; and when the Saviour was among them, they had the Gospel in reality: but the kingdom of God was taken from them, and given to a people “bringing forth fruit in its season.” When we consider the names by which they were called; the miracles, the ordinances, the privileges that distinguished them; and see this garden of the Lord laid waste, this people a reproach and a by-word—with what force comes the admonition of the apostle: “If he spared not the natural branches, take heed also lest he spare not thee”! What became of the Church of Rome, so famous as to be “spoken of throughout the whole world”? It was made “a cage for every unclean bird.” Where are the seven churches of Asia? The places that once knew them, know them no more for ever. The blasphem-

mies of the Koran sound where once the name of Jesus was as ointment poured forth; and the banners of an infamous impostor wave where once was erected the standard of the Cross, to draw all men unto it. All these had a time wherein to know the things that belonged to their peace—and then they were hid from their eyes. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

The subject demands *gratitude*. We have reason to bless God that we have not had a famine of bread; that he has crowned the year with his goodness; and fed us with the finest of the wheat. But still less has he visited us with a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Why did the Gospel reach us at such an early period? Why, when it was denied to so many, was it imparted to us? Why, since it has been withdrawn from numbers once favoured with it, is the blessing yet continued to us—and in such purity and plenty”—“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth’s sake.”

Again. Let us be concerned to improve it while we possess it. It is our Saviour’s application of the same doctrine. “Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light.” With Gospel means, be concerned to obtain Gospel grace; and earnestly pray that the ministry of the word may become the ministration of the Spirit. “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a

hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straight-way forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

Finally. As it is so dreadful to be destitute of the Gospel, think how many of your fellow-creatures are found in this deplorable condition. They would be glad with the crumbs that fall from your table. They never hear of a Saviour. They feel depraved propensities, but know nothing of that grace which can create in us a clean heart, and renew in us a right spirit. They feel guilty fears, but know nothing of that blood which cleanses us from all sin. Pray that the Scriptures and that missionaries may speedily reach them. Pray that the Sun of righteousness may arise, with healing under his wings, and comfort them with the knowledge of salvation. “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.”

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