

# FINAL DISCOURSES

AT

ARGYLE CHAPEL, BATH,

BY THE LATE

REV. WILLIAM JAY.

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“HE, BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH.”

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LONDON:  
ARTHUR HALL, VIRTUE & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

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1854

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The copy from which this was taken was rebound and given  
the title “Volume 13” of Jay’s Works. Only 12 official volumes  
(edited by himself) were published during his lifetime. Several  
posthumous volumes, like this one, were published but were  
never considered part of the official Works.

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RICHARD BARRETT, PRINTER,  
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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To rescue from oblivion an important portion of the pulpit labours of an eminent minister of Christ, is a profitable and pleasing talk.

I am unwilling to detain any in the porch when so many beautiful and instructive things are to be seen ill the temple to which it leads; I would only say, that MR. JAY'S SERMONS were secured by me during several years, *with his knowledge and sanction*. He told me and others, that if I would not publish them, in any way, during his life, I might do what I desired with them after his death. He never expressed a contrary wish, though I enjoyed frequent interviews with him. He saw and read many of the Sermons, corrected a few, and, occasionally threw out kind suggestions in regard to my reporting them.

The Sermon XXIII. was preached at my request.

And now, following out the wishes of many esteemed friends who heard the Sermons preached, and of some Ministers and others who had not that privilege, I venture to bring them forward and submit them to the religious public, *ardently desiring that thereby good may be done, and that God may be glorified*.

THOMAS JAY WREN.

COOMBE DOWN, NEAR BATH,  
*April 24th, 1854.*



## PREFACE.

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THE Discourses comprised in the present volume, are the *last* which the revered William Jay delivered to his attached people, during the Sabbath mornings of the closing year of his long and honoured ministry; and, as such, they will be read by his numerous friends and admirers who appreciated and loved him, as well as by the religious public generally, with deep and unusual interest. They will be clothed with marked solemnity, and will strike with marked power and significance.

They may be regarded as the closing expositions of Scripture—the closing appeals to the heart and conscience—the closing encouragements and exhortations to Christians—the closing invitations and admonitions to all—of the venerable and eloquent preacher and pastor, after a most extended and useful ministry, and just on the eve of his entering upon the rest of immortality, when he had reached an age far beyond that commonly allotted to man.

And, if we do not mistake, the discourses which this volume embraces, will be perused by the enlight-

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ened and Christian public with the utmost interest and gratification, and their perusal will yield great benefit.

They are, beyond question, sermons of marked beauty, richness, and power. They are admirably characteristic of the venerated preacher, and finely exhibit the qualities of his mind and heart, as they were unfolded in the pulpit.

Several of the Discourses now submitted to the public, are peculiarly admirable.

Those, for example, on "The Glory of the Incarnate Saviour"—on "the Inquiry of our Lord to the diseased man at the Pool of Bethesda"—"The Character of Christ as a Friend"—"The Doctrine of Christian Liberty"—"The Holy Scriptures"—"The desire of St. Paul to be with the Redeemer," and several others we might specify, are strikingly characteristic of Mr. Jay, and will strongly commend themselves to all intelligent and devout minds. It is well known to those who were accustomed to the ministry of this venerable man, that his Sabbath morning Discourses, especially, to his own people, were, generally, his best. They were those, to our knowledge, which he most carefully prepared. They were fuller in their outline; they were more elaborate and original in their structure; and they were, commonly, the richest and most experimental in the instructions or encouragements which they conveyed.

The Discourses contained in this volume are pre-



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sented to the public precisely as Mr. Jay delivered them. There are no erasures—no additions—no attempt at emendation or improvement. The Editor has carefully examined them; to many of them he himself listened, and can bear his unequivocal testimony to the precision with which they are submitted to the former hearers, and numerous admirers of the lamented minister, who will long speak, through the medium of these Sermons. The Christian public may rely on the perfect correctness with which every thing is furnished. The volume, we are persuaded, will be regarded as a valuable memorial of their departed and honoured pastor, by the members of his late charge. It will, also, be perused with deep interest, by those who have been instructed and edified, during many years, by the writings of Mr. Jay, in all parts of the kingdom, as being among the last pulpit addresses which he delivered.

It will, we are convinced, be deemed a truly valuable addition to the collected Works of Mr. Jay, which have been so long before the public, and so highly appreciated; and, if we do not err, it will be esteemed by many, as being among the most instructive and impressive. Besides, several of the Discourses are peculiarly marked by their evangelical richness and unction, and there is a freedom and directness about them all, which must interest and strike. As Hormons, moreover, delivered when the venerable preacher was more than fourscore years of age, they

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are surprising examples of his abilities—of his acquaintance with Scripture—and of the power and retentiveness of his memory.

The volume has been prepared with the utmost care—and it is earnestly hoped that it may be widely and permanently circulated; and that the *last* instructions—the *last* appeals—the *last* admonitions of the venerated William Jay; may prove to numbers of incalculable utility; and now that he has entered the kingdom of God, and his voice has ceased to instruct and exhort, it is a gratifying reflection that his admirable discourses will edify and benefit, in the highest sense, to the latest generations.

Though he continued with us until the most advanced period of life; yet, when he was at length, removed, how was it felt that the Church of Christ had lost one of its ablest ministers, and the British pulpit one of its brightest ornaments—and the language of the great Roman orator, with the alteration of one word, spontaneously occurred to us—“*Quis nostrum tarn animo agresti ac duro fuit, ut ejus morte nuper non commoveretur? quicum esset senex mortuus, tarnen propter excellentem artem, ac venustatem, videbatur omnino mori non debuisse.*”

THE EDITOR.

*London, 1854.*

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# SERMONS

PREACHED ON SABBATH MORNINGS,

DURING THE YEAR, 1852.

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## SERMON I.\*

THE MEMORABLE CHARGE TO THE ISRAELITES.—A  
NEW YEAR'S DISCOURSE ON PROGRESSION IN RE-  
LIGION.

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“Speak unto the Children of Israel, that they go forward.”  
—EXODUS xiv. 15, latter clause.

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WE are going to surround the table of the Lord. “We lire going to “eat the bread, and to drink the cup, in remembrance of Him who died for us, and who rose again.” And, as you well know, that in all religious services I love and endeavour to introduce a suitability of reflection, and improvement, there are few subjects that have not a real, if not an immediate, reference to the *dear* death we are about to commemorate: but I feel the importance of the season, and I must yield to it. We have passed from one year to another, and the transition has been so recent, as to allow of an appropriate address.

The words I have selected, you will find in the

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\* Delivered January 4, 1852.

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closing part of the 15th verse of the 14th chapter of Exodus: "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward."

This command we are going to consider three ways. Let us consider these words *first*, in reference to the journey of the Israelites: *secondly*, in reference to the advancement of the Christian: and *thirdly*, in reference to the progress of time. What may be spoken in brevity, for the sake of remembrance, will, I hope, be made clear in the development. "Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

I. Let us consider *this command in reference to the journey of the Israelites*. With the history of the case you are all familiar. By a succession of dreadful judgments, Pharaoh was at last made willing to let the children of Israel go. But scarcely had they departed, than he resolved, if possible, to bring them back; and so immediately pursued after them, with all his horses and chariots, horsemen and great army, and overtook them. "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" So early began the murmurings and rebellions of this people. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." This indicates strong confidence in Moses, and this confidence was not presumption; it was the result of prayer. It does not appear



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that Moses said anything on this occasion audibly; he seems to have withdrawn from public view, and was prostrate upon the ground, instant in prayer, with groanings which could not be uttered. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward thus teaching us, that as duty is not to call us from prayer, so prayer is not to call us from duty.

Now, to judge of this command, you have only to reflect upon the situation of the people: for if the army of Pharaoh was behind them, the sea was immediately before them; and, if they were to go forward, it seemed to be advancing into the sea itself. But, my brethren, it became *them*, and it becomes *us*, to obey whenever God commands; and to do whatever He enjoins us, and that for four reasons:—

*First*, because He *has a right to command*. He is the Sovereign, we are the subjects. He is the Master, we are the servants. He is the Father, we are the children; and, "If I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts."

*Secondly*. Because *none of his commands are arbitrary*. We may not be able to perceive the reasons upon which they are founded; but *there are* reasons, and these reasons are now satisfactory to *Him*; and they will be more than satisfactory to us, when they come to be disclosed, and when "in God's light we shall see light."

*Thirdly*. Because *all his commands are beneficial*. They all regard our welfare, as well as his own glory. "In keeping his commandments there is great reward."

And *fourthly*, because *they are all practicable*. They all imply a power to obey. If not possessed, yet attainable,—if not in nature, yet in grace,—if not in

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yourselves, yet in another who is always accessible. Thus, while "we are not sufficient of ourselves, even to think anything as of ourselves, our sufficiency is of God and while "without Him we can do nothing, yet, with his strengthening us, we can do all things." You will observe, therefore, that his commands are so many intimations and assurances of success.

A distinguished officer mentions that, some years ago, having reconnoitered a certain position, and having a strong force, in order to take a certain place, his men said, "Sir, it cannot be taken." But said he, "It *can*, for I have the order in my pocket." Now, men may enjoin what is really impossible: but, "*with God all things are possible.*" "Stretch out thine hand," said Christ to one with a withered hand. Did the poor man reply, "Lord, I cannot; it is withered?" No; but he stretched it out, while an energy accompanied the word, and his hand was restored whole as the other. "Prophecy to these dry bones," said God to Ezekiel. Did he reply, "Lord, it is perfectly useless: they can neither hear nor feel?" No; but he prophesied, and they sprang up "an exceeding great army." "Go forward," said God to Moses. Did he say, "What, Lord, and be drowned in the sea?" No; but they *went forward*, and the waters opened before them, and they passed through the sea as on dry ground.

Now all this is very instructive and interesting. It should teach us to do all things in religion without murmuring and disputing. It shews us that we are to be "followers of God as dear children." But there is nothing more becomes us than a child-like, disposition; exercising implicit confidence in God, and unquestioning obedience to his orders. And it is this alone which

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proves you to be the children of your father Abraham. God said to Abraham when he was seventy-five years old, "Get thee out from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,"—a command not very easy to comply with. The heart, at the age of seventy-five, begins to cleave to places and objects to which it has been long accustomed. A native country is dear: a father's house is dearer still. Then he knew not whither he was to go. Did he say, "Lord, before I leave where I am, inform me where I am to be No; he immediately obeyed, "and went forth, not knowing whither he went." So again, when God said to him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." What did he? He rose early in the morning, and prepared to obey this mysterious, this inexplicable command, and obtained from God the testimony, "Now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me."

And, my brethren, this will apply to *declarations* as well as commands. If God speaks and reveals such and such things, we are to believe them upon the authority of the speaker. It is a homage due to his wisdom, and to his faithfulness; for He is "too wise to err," and too faithful to deceive. Whereas, if we say, "How can these things be?" instead of receiving them as a little child receives, without suspicion, the declaration of his father, how do we honour God? How do we honour him, if we place our faith only on our knowledge? If a person were to tell you that there is such a place as Paris, and you were to say, "I shall believe it, sir, as soon as I have seen it," would he not

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deem this an insult? Further, this will apply to the *dispensations* of divine providence, as well as to commands and declarations. When any of these dispensations seem to be at variance with your views and wishes, you are to remember that “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth.” Either you should say with Eli, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good or with David, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it.”

Let us now pass from the Jews to Christians: this is the second division of our subject, in which we are to view this command in reference to *the advancement of Christians in the divine life*. For, my brethren, Christians are now on their way from Egypt to Canaan. They are way-faring men,—they are “seeking a better country, even a heavenly” one; and it becomes them to be always advancing in “the way everlasting.” “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” You too, Christians, are to go forward. It is an awful thing when believers, instead of this, go backward. Yet this *is* sometimes the case. David went back. We read of the *first* ways of David as being his *lest* ways, and they were so. The king of Jerusalem never equalled the shepherd of Bethlehem. The Ephesians went backward, and so were called to do their “first works,” and to exemplify their “first love,” and to “repent,” or to lose the privileges with which they were indulged. The church, in the days of Hosea, had gone back, and, therefore, she was brought to say, by a series of afflictions, “I will go, and return unto my first husband, for then was it better with me than now!” Christian went back in order to find and fetch the roll which had dropped from his bosom, while he slept in the arbour. Alas! how many Christians,

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now living, have gone miles back, and are ready to say,—

“Where is the blessedness I knew,  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and his Word?

What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their mem’ry still;  
But now I feel an aching void,  
The world can never fill.”

It is even a sad thing for Christians, instead of going forward, to be only stationary. An old writer says, “A Christian should never pitch his tent twice in the same place,” but with every fresh rising sun there should be some fresh advancement.” There are some who deny a growth in grace; and no wonder *they* should deny it, because they deny a work of grace in *reality* in the man. All their religion consists in morality. They have no divine principle within. But our Saviour tells us that the water He gives us is to be *in* us “a well of water springing up to everlasting life.” And the Apostle says to the Philippians,—“Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun the good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ!” where he shews us, not only that the work is *real*, but *progressive*.

And what do people mean when they deny, or endeavour to ridicule, a possibility of a growth in grace? What! Is it not possible to obtain clearer views of divine truth? Is it not possible to be more patient under our trials and afflictions, and to have a greater concern for the salvation of those around us? “Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.”

In order to see the possibility, the propriety, the

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importance, the expediency, and the necessity of thus advancing in the divine life, turn to the *commands* of the Scriptures,—“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—“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.”—“Let these things be in you and abound.” Turn to the *images* God has employed in His word.—“The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” In God’s “field” there is “first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.” In the “household of faith,” you have babes, young men, and fathers in Christ. Does not all this imply, and even express, progression? Turn you then to the *examples* which are held forth in the word of truth. Look at the Thessalonians: the Apostle says, “Your faith groweth exceedingly; and the faith of every one of you toward each other aboundeth.” Look at Moses. He knew more of God than any human being in the world then, and yet his prayer was, “O Lord, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.”

You have heard of the Apostle Paul in the chapter we have read. Whoever made such advancements in the divine life as he? But, says he, “I have not already attained, neither am already perfect: but this one thing I do; forgetting the 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.” And adds, “Let as many as be perfect,” or wish to be so, “be thus minded.” Then turn you to the *promises* with which the Scriptures abound. “I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

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—“He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the vine of Lebanon.”—“The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.”

Then turn to the *advantages* of progression in your Christian course; for, as you advance, you will improve, and will rise higher in divine attainments. As you advance, you are “changing from glory to glory.” Every step you take adds to your *dignity*; every step adds to your *usefulness*, and enables you more to adorn the “doctrine of God your Saviour in all things,” and to recommend his service to those around you. Every step you take adds to your *comfort*; it adds to the evidences of your state, and to your character; and so far exemplifies the words of the Saviour, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples—appear as such, and exemplify yourselves as such. No wonder, therefore, that God said unto Moses, “Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.” Let nothing hinder you in your course.” And we say to *you*, Christians, go forward: Let nothing hinder *you* in *your* course—let not sleep hinder you—let not the loneliness of the way hinder you—let not the fear of difficulties hinder you. “You shall tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the adder shall you trample under feet.” Let not the powers of darkness hinder you. If Apollyon straddles across the whole road, and tells the Christian he shall *die or go back*; “resist the devil, and he shall flee from you.”

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“Hell and thy sins resist thy course,  
 But hell and sin are vanquished foes:  
 Thy Saviour nail'd them to the cross,  
 And sung the triumph when he rose.”

“Go forward,” then, fighting “the good fight of faith.”

“Onward, Christians! onward go,  
 Join the war, and face the foe;  
 Faint not, much doth yet remain,  
 Of the trying, fierce campaign.  
 Shrink not, soldiers! will ye yield?  
 Will you quit the painful field?  
 Will you flee when dangers lower?  
 Know ye not your Captain's power?  
 Let your drooping hearts be glad,  
 March in heavenly armour clad;  
 Fight! nor think the battle long;  
 Victory soon shall tune your song.  
 Let not sorrow dim your eye,  
 Soon shall every tear be dry;  
 Let not gloom your course impede;  
 Great your strength if great your need.  
 Onward, then, to battle move,  
 More than conquerors you shall prove;  
 Though opposed by many a foe,  
 Christians! soldiers! onward go!”

III.—Let us consider this command in reference to *the progress of time*. Now, you will immediately see that we do not mean that you should go forward with time itself, for this is inevitable. Time is always advancing; the hour-glass, the day, the week, the year—all go forward. And do they leave you behind? No; you advance *with as much speed as the vessel which bears you along*. Time has been moving on since we have been assembled together, and have you not been moving on? Are you not more than an hour nearer? *Where? What? Conscience*, answer. You are not, therefore, to consider us here as exhorting you to go forward with time, but *how* to go



II

forward, and in what way you *ought* to advance. Hear, therefore, the following admonitions for your march:—

*First*, “go forward” with *humbleness of mind*, not strutting into the new year, as if you had been acting wisely, worthily and meritoriously, throughout the year that is past; but “*clothed with humility* and “*walking humbly with your God.*” If you are conscious of your unworthiness—if you reflect not only on the sins of your unregeneracy, but your sins since you have “known God, or rather have been known of Him,” not only upon your week-day, but your sabbath-day sins—if you reflect upon the sins of even your holy things, can you help exclaiming with Job, “Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee?” or with Jeremiah, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.” *Secondly*.—“Go forward with *gratitude* in the *remembrance of his mercies*. Have they not been “new every morning?” Has not the Lord been “daily loading you with his benefits? How many of your fellow-creatures have “gone down” to the grave and seen corruption?” Who has “holden your souls in life?” Who has “preserved you in your going out, and in your coming in?” Who has “filled the tabernacles of your house with the voice of joy and comfort?”

“His gospel throughout the long year,  
From sabbath to sabbath we have;  
And oft has God met with us here.  
And shown Himself mighty to save.”

What enjoyment have we had in his ordinances? Whose spirit has “helped our infirmities?” Whose “joy has been our strength?” Whose arm has been our support?

Then, *thirdly*, “Go forward” *under a sense of present*

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*aid*, in opposition to complainings and murmurings. Admitting that the new year has found you still in the wilderness, yet, like the Israelites of old, have you not had “grace in the wilderness,” and cannot you distinguish between your desert and your supplies? Need you be told, that you are not alone there—that you have “the fiery cloudy pillar” to guide there—that you have had water from the rock to follow and to refresh you there? Need you be told that you have had manna from the clouds to sustain you there—that you have a Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam—that you have the mercy-seat, and God holding communion with you from off that mercy-seat, and always ready to hear and to answer prayer?

Then, *fourthly*, “Go forward” also with a *firm confidence* as to what may befall you in the future. Reflection is enough to encourage you here: surely we may all say—

“His love in times past, forbids me to think,  
He’ll leave me at last, in trouble to sink;  
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,  
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through.”

How much more do his promises meet all your circumstances, and provide for all the contingencies of futurity. It is true, you know not what a day may bring forth: but you know who has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” You will have continually your wants, but he will supply them all from his riches in glory by Christ Jesus! You will have your various duties to perform, but his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. “Trials must and will befall but if the road be rough, and your feet be tender, “your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy day so shall thy strength be.” You may look for

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continual conflict with enemies; but "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." "Thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff." "Tea, in all these things, we shall be more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Again, *fifthly*, "Go forward" with *earnest and constant prayer*. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." If you neglect prayer, you are open to every kind of danger: whereas, if you abound in this, your soul shall prosper and be in health; for He hath said "Their hearts shall live that seek God." I hope, you are disposed to say with David, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God,—I will make mention of his righteousness, even of his only; " and that you are coming daily to the throne of grace to obtain mercy to help in the time of need.

Once more—"Go forward" with *frequent thoughts of your journey's end*: for it will have *an end*, and you are brought one year nearer to it. Have you not lately heard a voice saying, "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed."—"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Jeremiah said to Hananiah, "This year shalt thou die and so it was. I am not authorized this morning to say to any individual here, "This

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year thou shalt die but I am authorized to say to every individual here this morning, "This year you *may* die." And, *Oh sinner*,—SINNER! is this the case with *you*? and may *you* die this year? May the bridge be drawn, and may the door be shut? and may you be forced to say, "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and I am not saved?" Oh sinner! may you die this year?—are you prepared to meet the King of terrors?—are you prepared to pass through the valley of the shadow of death?—are you prepared to enter a world, in which, as you have no hope, so after which you can have no desire?—are you prepared to appear before "the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil? "

*Oh Christian*, CHRISTIAN! may *you* die this year? What—may you *go home* this year? What—may you leave the winds and the waves you now contend with, and enter the desired haven? What—may you this year get rid of the burden of the flesh, and "the body of this death?" May you be freed from all your corruptions, from all your sins and infirmities, and have no more darkness in your mind—no more rebellion in your will—no more sensuality in your affections? What—may you, *this* year, get rid of a wicked world without, and a wicked heart within?—may you this year see Him, "whom, having not seen, you love; whom, though now you see Him not, yet, believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

*Ah!* Christians, die when you may, you will be introduced to "Him whom your souls love," and will "see Him as He is;" you will be "for ever" with Him,—with Him "who loved you, and gave Himself

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for you, for an offering and sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour—with Him who is now your “Advocate with the Father,” “having obtained eternal redemption” for you: and now you are going to celebrate his dying love; and while you partake of the emblems of his body being broken, and his blood being shed for you, may you “do it in remembrance of Him.” And what subject is there that does not lead us to Christ? Did I not tell you it would be always attractive, always desirable, always necessary, always consoling, always instructive? I calculate that He is never more precious or important than at the end of one year and the beginning of another. Feel you not that, whatever be your external circumstances, “Christ is all your salvation, and all your desire?” Let us, therefore, go to his table singing or sighing—

“Perpetual blessings from above,  
 Encompass me around;  
 But, O, how few returns of love  
 Hath my Redeemer found.

Lord! with this guilty heart of mine,  
 To thy dear cross I flee;  
 And to thy grace my soul resign,  
 To be renewed by Thee.

What have I done for Him who died,  
 To save my wretched soul?  
 How have my follies multiplied,  
 Fast as my minutes roll!”

“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”—AMEN.

## SERMON II.\*

THE FULL ASSURANCE OF SAINT PAUL IN ANSWER TO  
PRAYER.

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“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”—PHILIPPIANS i. 19.

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THE Apostle Paul was a most interesting character, as you see, not only by his powerful communications, which spread before us the whole “mystery of godliness but also, by the incidents of his history and experience, which he has so often given. It is a delicate thing for a man to speak of himself; but, if he be a very peculiar character, or a very superior personage, occasional references to himself, arising, not from vanity, but from the pressure of feeling and from circumstances, are always delightful; and we long to know more of him. Who but feels thankful that the author of “The Task” should have introduced such an incomparable sketch of his own experience?—

“I was a stricken deer, that left the herd  
Long since. With many an arrow deep infix'd  
My panting side was charg'd, when I withdrew  
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.  
There was I found by one who had himself  
Been hurt by th' archers. In his side he bore,  
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.

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\* Preached January 11th, 1852.

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With gentle force soliciting the darts,  
 He drew them forth, and healed and made me live.  
 Since then, with few associates, in remote  
 And silent woods I wander, far from those  
 My former partners of the peopled scene;  
 With few associates, and not wishing more,  
 Here much I ruminate, as much I may,  
 With other views of men and manners now,  
 Than once, and others of a life to come."

These self-touches, if I may so call them, form one of the many charms of his matchless letters.

How often do we meet with something like this in the writings of Moses, and of David, and of Paul also, who frequently entertains, and instructs, and improves us, in the same way. Many instances of this kind we have repeatedly noticed. "We now call your attention to the words of our text,—“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Let us consider three things. *First*: The *subject of attention*,—"this shall turn to my salvation." *Secondly*: The *medium of the blessing*,—"through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." *Thirdly*: The *persuasion of the event*. Does he say, "I desire this?" No, there is something far beyond this; "*I know it*," says he. "*I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*"

I. *The subject of attention*. "This shall turn to my salvation." The Apostle Paul was now in Rome, and under Nero. He had also secret foes, some of whom endeavoured to injure him, even under religious pretensions. "Some indeed preach Christ, even of envy and strife, and some, also, of goodwill. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds." "But," says he, "I

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am not ashamed, I am not dismayed, none of these things move me. *I know that this,*—this what? this opposition, this persecution, this imprisonment, this combination of circumstances—“shall turn to my salvation.”

Now what are we to understand by “this salvation?” There are two opinions entertained concerning it. Some suppose that he alludes to his release from imprisonment; and in proof of this, they call upon us to observe what he says farther on in this chapter:—“Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again.” But the other opinion is far more probable, and we are persuaded, with all the best commentators, that he refers to his *own spiritual and everlasting salvation.*

But again, you are ready to say, “Was he not *saved already?* Does he not say, ‘He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling?’” In order to explain this, we must distinguish between the purpose and the execution; or rather between the procuring and the applying of salvation. The former was accomplished when He expired upon the cross, and said, “It is finished!” And it *was* finished, and nothing can ever be added to it. The latter commences on the day of conversion, but is not complete till the soul joins “the spirits of just men made perfect,” or when the body is raised up at the last day, and the glorious invitation is addressed,—“Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Till then, the wonderful



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process is still going on, and the Apostle tells us this in an earlier part of the chapter, when he says, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun the good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ."

The believer's justification is perfect at once; but its apprehension may be, and often is, very gradual. And as to his renovation, all the images employed to express it in the Scriptures imply this progressiveness. Look at the *morning*: "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Look at the *field*: "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," "so is the kingdom of God." Look at the *family*: There are "children, young men and fathers such is "the household of faith." Thus we read in the promise, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Thus we read, "They shall go from strength to strength." Thus we have the representation, "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." Thus the testimony, "We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." There is, therefore, a truth in the saying, that "a man may be more saved than he is,"—referring not to his state, but to his *appropriation* of it: his having clearer and fuller views; and as to the exercise of its graces, and the enjoyment of its comforts.

Again, you will observe here, of what moment the Apostle considered every thing that related to his salvation. How there are many who never think of this. They ask, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink,

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and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" but never ask "What must I do to be *saved*?" "How can I escape the wrath to come? How can I obtain a title to heaven, and a meetness for it?" They are anxious to know how *this* thing, and *that* will turn to their indulgence, or to their emolument; how this can turn to the getting and spending of money; to the dressing and adorning the body,—to the nursing it when ill, and pampering it when well. *This is everything with them.* But surely, these are *citizens of time only.* Surely these are "men of the world, who have their portion in this life," "who mind earthly things." But this is not the case, blessed be God, *with all.* There are some who are otherwise minded, and they think rightly that they never *can* be truly wise, till they obtain "the wisdom that cometh from above that they never can be in health, "till the *soul* prospers and is in health that they cannot be truly rich, till they are "*rich toward God,*"—that they cannot be truly blessed, till they are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ." The Apostle was such an one. You see how plainly his disposition was displayed; you see how he values everything as it affects his salvation. This was the rule by which he walked—the standard by which he judged—the balance by which he weighed things. He viewed everything as to its bearing upon the soul and eternity. He was satisfied, he was comforted with nothing, but as it tended to bring him into company with the Saviour, and conformity to his image.

And this is the case with all who are enlightened from above. "There are many who say, Who will show us any good?"—who "spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not." But those who are taught of

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God will say, "Lord remember me with the favour which 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." So poor Bunyan says, "Nothing surprised me more, when I was first awakened, than to look around and see how persons were affected by their outward troubles. I had enough of these, God knows; but the *heaviest of them all was lighter than vanity, compared with the burden that lay upon my conscience?* It was *this* that induced me to pray, saying, 'O Lord I am oppressed, undertake for me.' It was this that induced me to pray, not saying, Lord save me from my troubles, but Lord, save me from my *sins*. 'Lord save, or I perish.' My only cry was, *Life, life, eternal life.*"

Let us now consider—

II. *The medium of the blessing.* "This shall turn to my salvation through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." You see, he expresses it *instrumentally*, "through your prayers;" and *effectively*, "and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." We shall briefly notice both these. *First, instrumentally*, "through your prayers." This is very instructive. And does it not show us Paul's *humility*? Is it not like his asking for a share in their devotions? We know he does this expressly in his epistles to the Ephesians and the Thessalonians, and especially in writing to the Romans, when he says, "Now I beseech you, brethren." Could a beggar at the door of your house use more imploring language? "Now I beseech you brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that

I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints: that I may come unto you with joy, by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." Does not the Apostle seem to prefer the prayers of others to his own, and to lay a greater stress upon them? You know this is the case with many. There are many persons whose sense of their imperfections in prayer is such as often leads them to conclude that they scarcely deserve the name of prayer at all: and with the Psalmist they say, "Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter." On the other hand, when they hear some of their brethren in prayer, "Ah," they say, "this is prayer! Oh! that I had 'this spirit of grace and supplication.'—'Lord teach me also to pray.'—'They have power with God, and can prevail.'—'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'"

And surely, here the Apostle does more than argue the *efficiency* of prayer, and not only the *efficiency* of personal but of *relative* prayer. It is observable that the prayer which accomplished Job's deliverance was not a prayer for himself, but for *others*. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when *he prayed for his friends*."

When our Saviour taught his disciples to pray, they were not to say "*my* Father," but "*our* Father." He tells us never to come to the throne of grace alone. *Remember this*. Remember that the dear Redeemer, in the days of his flesh, as He never rejected any that came to Him on their own behalf, so He never rejected any who came pleading with Him on the behalf of *others*. Let this, therefore, encourage you to pray for others: let it encourage parents to pray for their chil-

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dren—masters and mistresses to pray for their servants—relations to pray for their friends. Remember what a resource you have in such prayers, and how it should encourage you. You now are passing through a world of misery, where you are continually meeting with wretchedness you cannot relieve: you can sympathise—you can weep with the sufferers; and this is all. *But it is NOT all.* You have a *blessed resource*—you can retire—you can address the God of all grace and of all power; and can engage *Him* on their behalf, “who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think.” Thus, you may all be useful; for the success of prayer does not depend upon talent or eloquence. “He despiseth not the prayer of the destitute, but will hear their cry, and will save them.” Here, brethren, you have an instrument which can work anywhere, and at any time—whether you are in the closet, in the field, or in the shop. You can “pray always,” and thus be always useful.

But he not only mentions the instrumentality, but also, *secondly*, the *efficiency*. “I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayers, *and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*” Observe, whose Spirit this is. He speaks of “the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” This is not the only place where this Spirit is ascribed to Him. In another part, the Apostle says “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” It is the same spirit which He partook of as man, and which prepared Him for the discharge of his mediatorial work; and, therefore, is it thus said in Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord all his people as really partake of

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this Spirit as He himself; but they only have it in measure, while He has the Spirit without measure. They have an unction, also, from the Holy One; but He was “anointed with the Spirit” above his fellows. He, also, obtained this Spirit for us—He possesses this Spirit; from Him alone we can receive it. The apostle, therefore, says—“He 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.” And, says Watts,—

“’Tis by the merit of His death,  
 Who hung upon the tree,  
 The Spirit is sent down to breathe,  
 On such dry bones as we.”

And, says the great John Howe, “In the order and recompense of the Saviour’s sufferings and death, it was not God’s design to give the Spirit to particular individuals, but to lodge the whole dispensation of it in the extraordinary and ordinary influences in the Mediator, and to annex the dispensation of it to his office, so that the *Son* quickeneth whom He will and it is with Him we have immediately to do. “It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” We are constrained to live a life of dependence upon Him, and to be continually repairing to Him, that “from his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace.”

Now, observe of what *importance* this “supply of the Spirit” is. The Apostle says, “I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayers and the *supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*,”—meaning to

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tell us, that, without this supply of the Spirit, nothing is able to do this effectually, or to turn to this glorious account. I fear we do not dwell enough upon this; for it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

We need this influence *continually*. Ministers need it; Christians need it; you *young* Christians need it, and you *old* Christians need it—and you need it under all circumstances. You need it in your *duties*—without this you will not be able to perform them aright. You need this in your warfare—without this, how can you expect to be “more than conquerors?” You will need it in your *trials*. How, without this, will you be preserved from sinking, or sinning in the day of adversity?—how, without this, will you acquiesce in the dispensations of Providence, and say *not* “This is my grief, and I must *bear it*,” but “*Here I am, let Him do what seemeth Him good*.”

Observe the *manner in which this influence is communicated*. “By the *supply*,” not in a way of affluence, but of supply. How is the body sustained and refreshed from day to day? It must be by continually receiving fresh recruits. You cannot live upon your former, you must have fresh supplies of food. And it is the very same with regard to your spiritual life; therefore, we read, “They that wait upon the Lord shall *renew* their strength,” and that the inner man is “renewed day by day.” O let us, therefore, remember this, and seek for it! Let us rely, not upon natural principles, or former experience, or our frames. These will fail if we depend upon them; but we must seek to be “strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” Talk not of your *weakness*, Christians, for you are not *weak*! If you are weak in *yourselves*, you are strong in *another*.

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If you are not strong as to yourselves, you are strong as to God. If in yourselves you can do nothing, by his strengthening you, you "can do all things."

"We have one thing more, and that is

III. *The persuasion of the event.* "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." It is not, therefore, a miraculous knowledge, as it might be said with regard to many things which were infused into his mind by immediate inspiration. He was "a man in Christ," as well as an "Apostle of Christ." And the prerogative of the Apostle never interfered with the character of the Christian. And as it was not a miraculous knowledge, neither was it an *enthusiastical* knowledge, like that of many who, with all their presumption, can give no reasonable satisfaction of the hope that is in them. But Paul's knowledge was founded upon reason, it was not a looking for the end without the means, but in the *use* of them. "I know that this shall turn to my salvation, *through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*"

It was a knowledge derivable from sources which equally lay open to any of you. It was derivable from the perfections of God: from his power, and goodness, and wisdom, and patience, and faithfulness. It was derivable from the "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." It was derivable from "the exceeding riches of God's grace in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus;" and the Apostle found it so from his own experience. It was thus, you know, by which Asaph checked his despondency, saying, "This is my infirmity and thus the Apostle says—"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." And thus David said—"I know,



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O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” And thus the Apostle says in our text—“I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

One thing more must be noticed, in conclusion, namely; though the religion of the Bible enjoins us to be humble, and forbids every thing like rashness and presumption, yet it admits of *confidence and assurance*. And I need not tell you, brethren, what a recommendation of religion this is. For if I appeal to your own feelings, you well know that nothing is so distressing as uncertainty with regard to any very valuable interest, such as the issue of a malady, or the title to an estate, or the success of an enterprise. In what wretchedness must he, therefore, have been in, without possessing confidence and certainty with regard to those “things which are unseen and eternal,” those things which have immensity and infinity attached to them. But this confidence and certainty are attainable.

With regard to the present state, everything is uncertain. “The world passeth away and the lust thereof.”—“All, all on earth is shadow but as to a Christian, he is not like a man who is floundering in the mud and mire, and pressed down lower by the weight of his own person; *no*, “his feet are upon a rock, and his goings are established; a new song is put into his mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and trust in the Lord.”

The Christian can gain this confidence and certainty with regard to four things.

*First.* With regard to the *doctrines* of the Gospel. He not only has a “faith unfeigned,” but is “strong in faith.” We read of some, who, though ever learning,

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never come to the knowledge of the truth. A venerable friend of mine, who met the celebrated Dr. Pearce, not long before his death, addressing him, said, "Well Doctor, how are you going on?" "Oh," said the aged Arian, "still enquiring after truth!" "Oh, Doctor!" said my friend to him, "you and I are on the verge of eternity, and we ought to have *found* truth before now, instead of being always seeking *after* it; and, blessed be God, I *did* find it fifty years ago, and have been *living upon it and walking in it ever since*."

Now we expect this more as Christians advance in life. Take a Christian who has been in the way of God forty or fifty years. Would he ever say, "It is my *opinion* that Christ is more than a mere creature?" "My *opinion!*" he would say—

"JESUS my God, I KNOW his name,  
His name is all my trust;  
Nor will he put my soul to shame,  
Nor let my hope be lost."

Would he say, "After a deal of reading and reflection, I now rather think that He died as an atonement for sin, and that he brought in everlasting righteousness?"—*I rather think!* "*I know* in whom I believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

With regard to many inferior things in religion, we may leave the mind open to conviction. We cannot exercise too much candour; but nothing can be more pernicious than to apply this to the great leading truths of Christianity; there, as the Apostle says, "It is a good thing that the *heart he established with grace*," and it *can* be established with grace.

Then, *Secondly*, he may gain this confidence and certainty with regard to the *privileges* as well as the

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doctrines of the gospel. There is such a thing as enjoying the "comforts of the Holy Ghost these are not delusions. There is such a thing as "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is such a thing as relief under a distressed conscience, by the application of "the blood of sprinkling." And "if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." "My flesh is meat indeed," says the Saviour, "and my blood is drink indeed."

*Thirdly.*—He can gain this confidence and certainty with regard to *his own personal interest in all this*, and be able to say, "Thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name." We do not affirm, indeed, that all the subjects of Divine grace have this certainty, or we should "break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax." But if it were not attainable, we should not have heard Job saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" or David, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory;" or John, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

*Fourthly.*—He may gain this confidence and certainty with regard to the *end and issue of afflictive dispensations*. So did the Apostle Paul. Did he say, "I *desire?*" No. "I *hope?*" No:—"I **KNOW** that this shall turn to my salvation." And this is the very spirit of the text. You will allow me to pursue this subject a little longer; for how important is it, Christians, that you should be able to derive this confidence with regard to your *afflictions!* I say, your afflictions; for I presume you are not exempted from them. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Where is the person, if he has no outward troubles, who has not the *heart's* bitterness, which is

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known only to himself? If the "thorn in the flesh" be so deeply injected as not to be seen, it may be the more painful on that very account. I was one day conversing with a pious female who had been much indulged by the providence of God, and after I had mentioned several instances, she said, "Well, I ought to be very thankful; but, Sir, you do not *know all*; you see my *sails*, but you do not see my *ballast*." And there is always something as "ballast," connected with the success and indulgence of Christians.

Well, but while the cup of affliction is going round, from family to family, and individual to individual,—while one is saying, "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed me," and while another is saying, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness,"—let me tell you, that these afflictions may be very *useful*. Yes, they may *subserve the very purpose of your salvation*, and they are much more likely to do this than mere successes; for your character as Christians *is far more formed from your trials than from your indulgences*; and, therefore, the Scripture says, "Happy is the man whom the Lord correcteth."—"Blessed is the man who endureth temptation." How many can bear their testimony to the same thing! How many can say already, "It is good for me to have been afflicted!" They have "found in the valley of Achor a door of hope." They met God at first on the bed of affliction, or in the chamber of sickness. "Oh," says one, "if it had not been for these trials and bodily infirmities, I might have gone far astray; I might have lived 'according to the course of this world,' and perished at last, along with it!" Well, are you in trouble? I was thinking this morning, if the vine had

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reason, it would be thankful for the sharpest cuttings of the gardener's knife; or if the fallow ground had reason, it would be thankful for the ploughshare which tears it up, and prepares it, by this process, for the reception of the seed. Are you in trouble? Yes, you say, you are. But if you are able to say, "*I know that this shall turn to my salvation,*" oh how light and momentary, my brethren, will be every trial;—if you know that all are "working out for you a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory!" Oh! what would these outward losses be, if you could only add, "I have in heaven a better and an enduring substance?"

Now, we allow, that there is sometimes a difficulty in gaining this conviction. The providence of God is sometimes very mysterious. Job said, "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." And Jacob said, "All these things are against me while, at the same time, they were subserving his real welfare. And I have often thought how Joseph must have been perplexed and embarrassed, to reconcile his being thrown into the pit, and sold to the Ishmaelites, and imprisoned as a criminal,—how to reconcile all this to those dreams which assured him of his future elevation. Yet, you see, at length it was made perfectly plain. Yes, said he, "You *sold* me, but God *sent* me: you meant it for *evil*, but God meant it for *good*." Thus, Christian, will it be with you, by-and-bye, when "in his light you shall see light;" for "when *Messias*, who is called *Christ*, is come, he will tell us all things."

Yet you *can* gain this confidence, even now. And,

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therefore, let me beseech you to seek after it, and to keep this expression alive upon your minds, with regard to all the distressing dispensations of Providence, remembering that “though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion,”—that though He afflicts, “He does not afflict willingly,”—that though “no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.” Thus may you “walk by faith,” till you shall walk by sight, and be able to see that all has turned to your salvation.

“What shall I say to *others*? You have not been without your afflictions; but what have they *done* for you? Are you the better for them? It is a sad thing to be chastened in vain! Paul says to the Galatians, “Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.” So I may say to some of you. What! do you not remember your diseases? what aches, what pains you endured? Do you not remember your nervous thoughts, your sinking spirits, your shakings over another world, your weak hands and your feeble knees, and your tremblings on your recovery? What! did you “suffer all this in vain, if it be yet in vain?” Do you not remember the loss of that dear child?—your watchings and anxiety in the sick chamber?—your closing those eyes in death?—your kissing the cold cheek in the coffin?—your following the remains to the grave, and your returning to your house desolate, with a *heart more desolate still*? “Have you suffered all this in vain? if it be yet in vain.” When your *food* does not nourish, it is bad; but when *medicine* fails, your case seems to be desperate. Many people, when in trouble, only wish to

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be delivered from it. You should wish and pray to have it *sanctified*. Then, indeed, your troubles will be  *blessings*; otherwise, they will be real  *curses*.

We often hear people say, "We have troubles enough, God knows." But, ah! to suffer here, and  *hereafter too!*—to find these afflictions to be only the beginnings of sorrow—to find that they are the beginnings of "lamentation, mourning, and woe,"  *for ever!*—for it is with affliction, as it is with the means of grace; they  *will* operate; if they do not soften, they will harden: you never come out of them as you enter; they will be "the savour of  *life unto life*, or the savour of  *death unto death!*" O, pray, pray to Him who has all power in heaven and in earth—to Him who is the God of all grace! O, turn to Him who smiteth you, and say, "Lord, sanctify all this, and let it turn to my salvation;" and then He will say, "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."—AMEN.

## SERMON III.\*

### THE GLORY OF THE INCARNATE SAVIOUR.

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“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.”—JOHN i. 14.

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Two classes of difficulties, at the same time, attend some passages of Scripture—difficulties in the application, and difficulties in the exposition. Difficulties of the former class can have no place in our text; for no one can, for a moment, suppose that it refers to any other being than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If, therefore, there are any difficulties, they must be attached to the subject itself; which, by Divine assistance, we must endeavour to explain and improve.

One liberty we take with the passage—it is to transfer the parenthesis in the middle of the verse to the end of it; so that it will read, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father and this is, most certainly, the proper construction. Six things, therefore, must come under our review: and while we endeavour to explain and improve them, may the Holy Spirit,

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\* Preached January 18th, 1852; on behalf of the Sick Man’s Friend Society.



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whose office it is to glorify the Saviour, "take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us so that we, also, "beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Observe *his peculiar denomination*—"The Word." John only, of all the sacred writers, uses this term as a name of the Messiah. But this does not render it less worthy of our regard; for he wrote "as he was moved by the Holy Ghost."

The origin of the title has given rise to many enquiries. Some have supposed that it arose from Philo the Jew; some from Plato the philosopher. But why should this term be considered as borrowed at all? Why not consider it as one of the words which the Holy Ghost useth, and which, probably, the writer himself did not fully comprehend. The question is, *What was it designed to indicate?* Was it the office of Christ, or his design in coming into the world? As he said to Pilate, "For this end was I born, and for this purpose came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth." And, then, as a man by his spirit makes known his mind and will, so the Saviour makes known the mind and will of God. Here it is—"No man hath seen God, at any time; the only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

*Three things appear undeniably to be derived from John's use of the title "The Word."*

*First.*—He intends to mark by it a person. Nothing can be more false or forced than the interpretation of the Socinians, that this term "The Word" here means the wisdom of God. Who ever questions whether God's *wisdom* was with Him from the beginning?

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Could this ever be separated from Him? And how could the wisdom of God “be made flesh, and dwell among us?”—and how could we “*behold*” this, as “*the only begotten of the Father?*”

*Secondly*.—This term is designed to intimate his *previous existence*—as one who had a being prior to his incarnation. When he says, “*The Word teas made flesh,*” surely, he means to convey the idea that it was *something else before*. And when he speaks of it as “*from the beginning,*” what does he mean? Our adversaries say, “from the beginning of the Gospel dispensation.” But *we* say—and we think, so far, we have the mind of Christ—the beginning of the world, the beginning of the creation of God. And as it marks a person, and a person who had a pre-existence before his birth, so—

*Thirdly*, it is designed to mark a *divine* person. The name given to God is expressly given to Him: the *Creation* is ascribed to Him. “All things were made by Him, and, without Him, was not anything made that was made.” Could all this be affirmed of a mere creature—a man, or an angel, or a super-angelic being? Would John have used language so adapted to lead us into mistake and idolatry?—not only to tell us that He was “in the beginning with God,” but that he “was GOD so as to represent Him the “Creator of all things visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, principalities or powers? ” and that He was the source of all life and existence. Surely he here designed to raise him “above every name, not only in this world, but in that which is to come,” and to exclaim with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.”

II.—Observe, his INCARNATION—“*The Word was*

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*made FLESH.*” Flesh sometimes, IN the Scripture, means the corruption of human nature: as, where it is said, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God;”—“The Spirit lusteth against the flesh.” At other times, it intends only that which constitutes human nature, as, when we read, “Except these days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved that is, *no human being*. “All flesh is as grass,” that is, all mankind. “All flesh had corrupted its way.” So that saying, “The Word was made flesh,” is saying precisely, that He *became* man. Therefore, our modern translators have commonly so rendered it. The Word was incarnate.

But did God cease to be God, in order to become man? Union, if we may so express it, is not transmission. As He was God before He became incarnate, so He could not cease to be God after He took upon Him our nature. “As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, also, himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”—“For He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. And was in all things made like unto his brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.” Hence the Scripture ascribes many things to him, which will not apply to his Divine nature, or agree with his human nature *separately*. “Unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given.” This refers not to Him as *God*. “And his name shall be called Wonderful.” *This* does *not* refer to Him as man. Man is a spiritual and material being—spiritual as to

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his soul, material as to his body. But there is no confusion produced by this. The different parts retain their peculiar and respective properties. It is not the *body* that thinks, and reasons, and resolves: and it is not the *soul* that eats and drinks, and sleeps.

It is not the *humanity* of Christ that was from *everlasting*, and it is *not* the *divinity* of Christ that *hung and suffered on* the tree. The one agrees with his *divinity*, the other with his *humanity*. We think this is enough to show there is no contradiction and no impossibility in the thing. But it is a mystery, and will, perhaps, for ever remain so. And what is *not* a mystery? There is a mystery in 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."

Every blade of grass is a mystery, and every part of matter is a mystery, and *this* is a mystery, and so the Apostle calls it: "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." And there is very little godliness, where this is denied or concealed. The Apostle makes it to be of so much importance as to be the *very medium of our salvation*, and therefore, he says, "we have 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 veil, that is to say, his flesh," meaning his incarnation. It is thus, so to speak, to bring down Deity to our apprehension and our reach. Thus He becomes what He could not else have been, our *example*, to go before us in the path of duty and suffering. Thus He is able to *sympathize* with us in our distresses, and is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Thus He could suffer, bleed, and die

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and “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself!” And the Christian can say, with Dr. Watts,

“Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find,  
The holy, just, and sacred Three,  
Are terrors to my mind.”

And, I hope, each of us may be able to say, living and dying,

“While Jews on their own law rely,  
And Greeks of wisdom boast,  
I love the Incarnate mystery,  
And there I fix my trust.”

III. Observe his *residence*: “He was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Now this surely admits of *permanency*. “His goings forth,” we are assured, were “from of old.” Under the former dispensation, he often appeared to man, but he soon disappeared again. These appearances were visions, rather than visits. But even visits are distinguishable from *dwelling*. But, after a lapse of four thousand years, He came and took up *his abode amongst us!* He came and dwelt here, for a period of thirty-three years, walking up and down our earth in flesh and blood,—seen by human eyes,—heard by human ears, and “clothed with a body like our own.” He was willing to be here, so long as He had anything to do or to suffer; and in this, also, should his followers resemble Him.

This residence serves, moreover, to display his *con-  
descension and his abasement*. “Will God, in very deed, dwell with man upon the earth? He might have become incarnate and dwelt among angels and archangels; but He came down and dwelt among men—among us “who are but of yesterday, and know nothing”—who are

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but worms of the earth,—“whose foundation is in the dust,”—“who are crushed before the moth.”

And He does not come down to earth, either, in “the *highest* style of man.” There are some who dwell in mansions and palaces. But “the Son of Man had not where to lay his head!” He was born in another man’s house, and buried in another man’s grave.

What *had* He that He called his own? Some of the human race, when they travel, travel in splendid equipages; He always travelled on foot. We only read once of his riding, and then it was upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass! There are many upon earth who are persons of dignity; they are surrounded and followed by nobles and princes. He was followed by a few widows who ministered to him of their substance, and a few fishermen who had left their nets; the *common* people heard him gladly, and the poor, wherever he was, had the Gospel preached unto *them*.

And does not this “dwelling” among us also intimate his *intercourse* and his *sociableness*? All great minds love solitude. He loved retirement, and sometimes we find He would much oftener have retired had He pleased himself; but He never refused the company of those who were desirous of seeing Him; and this sometimes drew forth the maliciousness of his enemies. Did He refuse to be a guest, when the Pharisee invited Him to his table? Did He refuse to be a guest at the wedding, at Cana, in Galilee, where He wrought a miracle, and turned the water into wine? Did he refuse to go to the house of the Pharisee on the Sabbath day? Was it not alleged that “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them?”

“John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a devil.” That is, he is mopish, melan-

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choly, and a recluse. "The Son of man came eating and drinking"—there was no excess, but a living according to the common modes of life—and they say, "He is a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." This was scandalous reproach. But though He did not love their *sins*, He loved their *souls*, and was concerned for their salvation. And, all through life, we see that He was never actuated by the spirit of the Pharisee, saying, "Stand by; come not near me; I am holier than thou." He never indulged in the abomination of monkishness; He never said, "Touch not; taste not; handle not." He knew that "everything was good, and ready to be received, when sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." His prayer to his heavenly Father was, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." He was *in* the world, but not of it. *You*, also, are to be in the world, but not of it. His religion, if you understand it properly, calls you at once out of the world, and into it. Out of the world, as to its spirit, and principles, and maxims, and what the Apostle calls, "the course of this world but into it, as a field of action, and as a sphere of usefulness; if there are any tried ones to be relieved; if there are the hungry to be succoured, the naked to be clothed, or the sick to be healed; if there are the ignorant and uninformed to be instructed, the vicious to be reclaimed, or the lost to be saved.

IV. Observe his *plenitude*: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, *full of grace and truth*."

"Full of GRACE."—That is of divine influence,

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which, in the Scripture, is so often called "grace," because it flows from the mere favour of God.

Priestley contends, that the word grace, in the New Testament, never once signifies the agency and influence of the grace of God upon the mind, in a way of *sanctification*, but of *kindness* and *bounty*. But the *Apostle Paul* says, "By the grace of God I have my conversation in the world."—"I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." And when our Saviour said to him, in answer to his prayer, "My *grace* is sufficient for thee," Paul understood his meaning, and therefore said, "*Most gladly*, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Now all his disciples are partakers of this Spirit as well as himself. They receive the Holy Spirit; but then they receive it in measure; whereas He received it "without measure." They have all "an unction from the Holy One," but He was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows."

If you lived with the holiest of his people you would not find them full of grace. You would find in them many sad deficiencies—in their principles, in their affections, and in their actions. But He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He had every excellence, and every excellence in its perfection. "Grace was poured into his lips," into his ears, into his eyes, into his life; into all that He said, and into all that He did; into all that He suffered, and into all that He enjoyed.

And He had this grace, which filled Him, not only as a man for Himself, but as Mediator for *us*. We are assured that "He received gifts for men," and



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especially the Holy Spirit, "that the Lord God might dwell among them." We are assured of this, that "it pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell" for us, that from "his fulness *we* might all receive, and grace for grace."—"*Full of grace and truth.*"

But grace often signifies God's *kindness, benevolence, and generosity*. We read of the *meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ*. And was He not full of this? When He saw the multitude, had He not "compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd?" Did He not say, with a voice softer than the ether of Paradise, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Ask the widow of Nain, to whom He said, "Weep not," and restored to her her only comfort from the dead. Ask the woman "who was a sinner," to whom He said, "Neither do I condemn thee—thy sins are forgiven thee." Ask the daughters of Jerusalem who lined the way to Calvary, and as He was passing by them, bearing his own cross, they, with their babes in their arms, could not view Him without turning away and weeping: and He said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Ask the poor suffering thief, who said, "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into Thy kingdom and to whom He instantly said, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Ask all these, whether He was not *full of grace*.

But He was, also, "*full of truth.*" There was no guile found in Him. There was always a correspondence between his words and his works. Everything He said could be relied upon, and can be relied upon *now*. Oh, for faith to believe!

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And there is the truth of *accomplishment*. He was full of this. The former dispensation, you know, was all figure and all type. "The law was a shadow of good things to come but the body was Christ. He it was that embodied, and that verified all that was going before. He was "the true Bread which came down from heaven." He was the true Bock whose streams flowed in the wilderness. He was "the true Tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched and not man." He was the true Mercy-seat. Every bleeding bullock, every slaughtered kid, proclaimed him aloud, as the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." All had its fulfilment in Him.

And there is the truth of *reality*. I need not tell you, that not a few to whom you often turn are as so many cells of emptiness. There is no substance in them. "They are vanity and a lie." As to the world, it is a great lie from beginning to end. No one has ever made the trial but has found it so. Solomon, who had so fine an opportunity of judging, exclaimed, after all his search for happiness, "Vanity of vanities! vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" Thus our hymn says:—

"In vain we lavish out our lives,  
To gather empty wind:  
The choicest blessings earth can yield,  
Will starve a hungry mind."

And, as Dr. Young says, "All, all on earth is shadow!" But here, brethren, all is *substance*. Come to Jesus, and you shall be made "free indeed." Come to Him, and you will find that "his flesh is meat *indeed*, and that his blood is drink *indeed*." And he that eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, hath everlasting life.

Then, there is the truth of *doctrine*. Now there

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are various kinds of truth; as, commercial, historical, philosophical, and others. But the truth with which he was filled, was *Divine* truth,—that truth which regards the soul and eternity,—that truth which tells us all we want to know, and all we must know,—which tells us of our fall and of our recovery,—which tells us of our reconciliation with God, of the only way of justification, of our sanctification, of the only way of our obtaining a title to heaven, and a meetness for it. All this he foretold, and all this is contained in the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

V. We observe his GLORY, “*The GLORY as of the only begotten of the Father.*” Not, therefore, “the glory of this world, or of the princes of this world, which come to nought.” And this we see now, as well as it was seen in the time of Daniel, that they, sometimes, are among the *vilest* of mankind.

Not the “glory” of a temporal empire. This the Jews looked for, which would enable them to “ride upon the high places of the earth,” and keep others under their feet.”

*Not the glory of a worldly conqueror*, striding from victory to victory,—the garden of the Lord before him, and a wilderness behind him,—deriving his glory from the tears of widows and orphans,—a glory stained in blood, and concerning which the late Dr. Porteus, Bishop of London, in his poem, says, “One murder makes a villain, millions a hero.”

Not the glory of the statesman. No; but a *godlike* glory! the “glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” God has many children by creation, and He has many children by adoption, for all believers in the Lord Jesus are “sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.” But *He* is “the only begotten Son of

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God." He is, therefore, raised in his glory beyond the glory of Moses, or of Solomon, or of angels themselves; for "to which of the angels saith He, at any time, Thou art my *Son*; this day have I begotten thee? But, "when He bringeth forth his first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." He was the image of the invisible God." They who saw Him, saw "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." His attributes, actions, and tempers, all proved a Divine relation, superior to every creature—to an infinite and almighty Being. And we behold "the light of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ." And the perfections of the one are the perfections of the other. "And," says the Saviour, "he who hath seen me, hath seen the Father also; " for "I and the Father are one."

VI. And, *lastly*, observe the *Perception* of this:— "We BEHELD *his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.*" How did they see this? They saw it *corporeally*, even with their bodily senses. "He spake as never man spake," and they heard Him in conversation and preaching. They saw Him at his *baptism*, the Holy Spirit descending on Him like a dove, and resting upon Him. They saw his glory in the *transfiguration*, when "his face shone as the light, and his garments were as white as snow." They beheld his glory in the *miracles* He wrought;—in his opening the eyes of the blind, and in unstopping the deaf ears. One day they saw Him walking upon the sea; at another time, they heard Him ruling the raging waves thereof, and saying, "*Peace, be still!*" and immediately there was a great calm.

They saw his glory in the *garden of Gethsemane*, in his submission to the will of God: they saw it in his

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healing the ear of Malchus—in the retreating of the soldiers, who went backward and fell to the ground—in his tenderness to his disciples; when they were overcome with sleep, He said, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. They saw his glory at his *crucifixion*; in darkening the sun—in shaking the earth—in rending the rocks—in opening the graves, and in the re-appearing of the dead.

How much of his glory did they see on the *day of Pentecost*? Before this, “the Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified that is, He was not given in his *abundance*, but now He is *glorified*. The apostle says—“Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” It is *He* who hath done it. All these new tongues are *his*. “*He* hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” And in the *conversion of three thousand at once*, He gave efficacy to the Word, which proved the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

Before this, the views of the disciples were contracted; and not only obscure, but often *mistaken*. But now all was *the light of day*; now they saw his kingdom to be not of this world; now they saw that his death was a propitiation for sin,—that “He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.” How that his love was shed abroad in their hearts, they were filled with holy *courage*; now they were willing “to go forth without the camp, bearing the reproach” of the cross.

Yes; and they not only saw the Saviour corporeally but *spiritually*, too; which was not the case with others. Others saw his miracles, but believed not on Him.

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Yet, what our Saviour said of Peter, was as true of the other disciples as of him. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven and the Apostle said, "It pleased God to reveal his Son IN ME." He was revealed *to* others, but *in* him. It is the same now. While He is revealed to others, He is revealed *in* his people. And according to the Saviour's own words, "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath e'lasting life."

Therefore, we are able to conclude with one question, namely, Are *you* able to make this acknowledgment? Can you say, We have seen the glory of the only begotten of the Father? For this is possible even *now*. Yes; not with your bodily eyes can you see it. Enthusiasts pretend sometimes that they have had visions of Him: and there are some good men who have supposed that they have really seen Him bleeding upon the cross—mistaking a powerful impression for a reality. But, as the Apostle says, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more that is, we know Him *so* no more. But He is to be seen now by the eye of *faith*, and by the illuminations of the *Holy Spirit*. Yes, He is to be seen now in the *Gospel*; He is to be seen in his *house*—in his *ordinances*—in his *people*, who are pictures of Him, as far as they are sanctified. And He is even to be seen in his *works*. Oh, I think I have seen Him in the rising sun, and in the descending showers, and in "the apple tree among the trees of the wood!"—I think I have seen Him in "the rose of Sharon, and in the lily of the valley!"

Well, my dear hearers, if we have seen his glory, then we have been *abased in our own eyes*,—then, the

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world has ceased to overcome us,—then we are able to say—

“Farewell world, thy gold is dross,  
 Now I have seen my Saviour’s cross.  
 Jesus died to set me free  
 From the law, and sin, and thee.  
 As by the light of opening day,  
 The stars are all concealed;  
 So earthly pleasures fade away  
 When Jesus is reveal’d.”

*Then* we can say with Paul, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.” You see that “He is fairer than the children of men”—that He is *altogether* lovely.” He is precious to you, as He is to those that believe; and you exclaim with “Watts—

“Yes, thou art precious to my soul,  
 My transport and my trust;  
 Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,  
 And gold is sordid dust.  
 All my capacious powers can wish,  
 In thee most richly meet;  
 Nor to mine eyes is light so dear  
 Nor friendship half so sweet!”

And, *Oh!* if you have seen his glory, you will be concerned that *others* should behold it also.

If you have seen his glory, his love is now constraining you; and constraining you to *live* not to yourselves, but to *Him who loved you, and gave himself for you*—if you have seen his glory, then you are concerned to *resemble* Him. This is the very essence of your religion: this is what He himself has enjoined. “If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up

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his cross, and follow me. And then you will be *able* to say with Dr. Watts—

“Such was thy truth, and such thy zeal.  
Such deference to thy Father’s will;  
Such love and meekness so divine,  
I would transcribe and make them mine.”

*Who* is it that enjoins this upon you—not only your Teacher, but your *Example*; He who “went about doing good!” And, surely, “if He *so* loved you, *you ought also to love one another.*”

I see your time is gone; and if it were not, I should not have a better opportunity to introduce the case which has been announced, and which regards an institution connected with this church and congregation, namely, “The Sick Man’s Friend Society.” I need only say, I hope each will give according as God hath prospered him; and may the Lord add his blessing.—  
AMEN.



## SERMON IV.\*

THE JOY OF BELIEVERS IN THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE.

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“Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord.”—PSALM

CXXXVIII. 5.

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Now, are these words of prediction only, or also of promise? Yea, of promise also. God can foresee and foretel evil; this only requires his omniscience: but God is the Author, the *sole Author* of all good; and therefore, if He foresees and insures this, it is because He has engaged to produce it. “Of Him, and through Him, are all things.”—“He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will therefore, we may consider these words as containing one of the “exceeding great and precious promises, upon which He hath caused us to hope,” and which are “all yea and amen in Christ Jesus,” to the glory of God by us.

Here the Psalmist says, “They shall sing in the ways of the Lord.” Now let us, *First*, examine “the ways ” here spoken of: *Secondly*, show how the people of God are affected in them—“They shall sing in the ways *Thirdly*, the *use* we should make of the assurance—“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

I. Let us examine “the ways” here spoken of.

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\* Preached January 25th, 1852.

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They are called "the ways of the Lord." You know the chosen tribes ascended up three times in the year to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem. These services were called "solemn assemblies." And the people not only rejoiced before the Lord in these solemnities, but they approached them by *singing*. *We have some of their songs*. They are called "the songs of degrees," because they sang them as they passed from one place to another, and from one company to another in their journey; thus soothing the tediousness of the passage, and increasing the desire of their feet to stand within the walls of their Jerusalem. The author of the 84th Psalm, surely, speaks of his own experience. Hear how he describes the scene: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain, also, filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

But the ways of the Lord mean *the way in which God walks with regard to us*, and the way in which *we walk with regard to God*. Both are here, probably, included, and both are spoken of in the sacred Scripture:—*First, the way in which God walks in regard to us*. That is, his varied dealings. When you read that "All the *ways of the Lord* are mercy and truth," the meaning is, *his dispensations towards us*. His "ways," in *nature*, in the seasons of the year, in the beauties of creation, in the produce of the garden and of the field, in his marching forth in the loveliness of the spring, and in the plenty of the summer, to cause "the grass to grow for the cattle, and meat for the service of man;" producing "first the blade, then the

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ear, and after that the full corn in the ear," till "the fields stand thick with corn, and the little hills rejoice one very side!" He has thus "provided of his goodness for the poor."

Also, His *dispensations of Providence*. Nothing in our world occurs by chance. What men call chance is nothing less than the wise permission, the appointment, the administration, of God.

When anything occurs remarkable, you are accustomed to say, This is very providential. Why, is not everything providential?—are not "the very hairs of your head all numbered?"—"The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Therefore, you are never to forget Him; but, as events occur, say, with Eli, "*It is the Lord*,—let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Now these dispensations of Providence are very various, but David could rejoice in them all. David could say, "I will sing of *mercy and judgment*." Some of these dispensations are plain, some of them are very dark and mysterious: sometimes "His way is in the sea, his path is in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known."

With regard to some, therefore, we are required "to walk by faith, not by sight and our encouragement is the assurance that "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter and then shall we be able to say, what we now believe—"He hath *done all things well*."

His dispensations of GRACE are the dispensations by which He rescues us from the ruins of the fall. Thus the Apostle says, "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

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This is called the "way of salvation." Ministers are the "servants of the Most High God, who show unto men the way of salvation." The way in which this salvation was devised *before* time, the way in which it was procured *in* time, the way in which it is carried on *through* time, and the way in which it is completed when time shall be no longer! This God himself considers his *highest dispensation*: and, therefore, He says, "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, or come into mind." Here He displays all his perfections, and brings glory to himself in the highest, furnishes materials for the study of angels themselves who "desire to look into these things," and will fill all heaven with endless admiration and praise.

But the "way of the Lord" not only means the way in which He walks with regard to us, but, also, *the way in which we walk in regard to Him*. And these are called "*his ways*," because He appoints them, and because He enjoins us to walk in them.

Thus the Apostle says, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Our walking in them, means, our *obedience* to his orders. We read of walking in the fear of the Lord, and of walking in love. We read also of the way of truth, of the way of holiness, and of "the way everlasting."

When David says, "Teach me *thy way*, Oh God! I will walk in thy paths." When he says, as he does in the 119th Psalm, "They do no iniquity; they walk in his ways when he says, "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways when he says, "I will rejoice in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches;" and when he says, "Teach me, Oh

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Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it unto the end in *all these instances*, he means *the way in which we walk with regard to God*, when we are yielding obedience to his injunctions. So the Psalmist says; "Then will I run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

There are persons who speak much of God's commandments under the Law, who yet despise the chief of them all under the Gospel; for, as John says, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." So, when the Jews came to our Saviour, and asked, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God." "Do?" said He. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom He hath sent." When the jailor asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Oh! there are many who would not have replied, especially "*immediately*," and to a *heathen*, and to a *profligate*, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But Paul and Silas said this, and they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And the preacher who does not give the same answer to the same question, is a betrayer and murderer of souls.

Now, till this command of God be complied with, it is in vain to urge upon people their obedience; but when we are in Christ, in a state of union and communion with Him, by faith; receiving succours from Him, as our Head of influence, as well as supplies from Him as our Head of government; then with regard to these other commands we are furnished with *inclination* as well as with ability. And then, when God says, "Deny thyself; take up thy cross and follow me when He says, "Pray without ceasing when He says, " Re-

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pair to my house—come to my table—walk so as to please me, and abound therein more and more:” when any of these injunctions, then, come from Him, Oh! it is *pleasing* to walk in his ways; and the Christian can say, “Oh! that my feet *were* directed to keep thy commandments:—

“Make me to walk in thy commands,  
’Tis a DELIGHTFUL road;  
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,  
Offend against my God,”

Having thus defined the ways here spoken of, let us—

II. Show how the people of God are to be affected in them. “They shall *sing* in the ways of the Lord.”

Observe, they not only walk in the ways of the Lord, but *sing* in them. This implies acquiescence, approbation, satisfaction, pleasure, delight. But how comes all this? Whence springs this “singing in the ways of the Lord?” We may look after some of the near *sources* of it. The *first* of which is *conviction*. Whatever the people of the world may imagine, religion is wisdom, and “wisdom is justified of all her children.” It is a “reasonable service.” The believer is “able to give a reason of the hope that is in him,” and he is able to give a reason of the joy that is in him. This joy proceeds from knowledge; and therefore, says David, “Blessed are the people that *know* the joyful sound: in thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” There is no joy, not even the joy of hope, apart from the Gospel.

Now when a man is convinced that he is a sinner, and condemned by the righteous law of God, which says,—“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them

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how is it possible for him to rejoice, even in hope, till he can see “God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,” and knows that we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and sees that He is both just and the Justifier of the believer who trusts in Him?

Oh! what a burden is laid upon the conscience, when we are thus awakened!—a burden too heavy for us to bear. What a burden had poor Christian, as he travelled on from day to day, till he came within sight of the cross: when he saw this, his burden was loosed from off his shoulders, and rolled into the sepulchre.

To dismiss allegory: the Christian is thus “justified by faith, and has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yea, more! He “JOYS in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom, also, we have now received the atonement.” Thus, as Cowper says,—

“To see the Law by Christ fulfilled,  
And hear his pardoning voice,  
Changes the slave into a child,  
And duty into choice.”

The more I reflect, the more I am persuaded to think that, though your *safety* does not depend, yet your *comfort* does, upon clear and full views of the Gospel,—of your acceptance with God,—the manner of your justification before God,—the means of your sanctification,—your safety, and the certainty of your perseverance even to the end, and of becoming “more than a conqueror through Him that hath loved you.” Therefore, “it is a good thing that the heart be *established* with grace,” that is in the doctrines of grace, and thus may you “go on your way rejoicing.” Then, *secondly*, it arises from *renovation*. There is

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nothing in a natural man that is congenial with any of the ways of God, so as to enable him to *delight* in them. Yea, his heart is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”—“The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be.” Yea, he says unto God,—“Depart from me: I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” On the other hand, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” Now he is after the Spirit, and therefore “minds the things of the Spirit.” Now, he is born of God, therefore he savours “the things which are freely given him of God.” Now he has new and spiritual appetites; now he “hungers and thirsts after righteousness and now, therefore, he feeds—yea, he not only feeds but he *feasts*—upon the provisions of the Gospel; and he finds it a “feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” Now, he “finds his words and he *eats* them, and they are to him the *joy and the rejoicing of his heart*.” Now, he finds them “*sweeter* also than honey or the honey comb.” *Thirdly*, it is derived from *experience*. Thus Peter says,—“As new-born babes *desire the sincere* milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious.” For this taste provokes appetite, and increases it. He who has seen the glory of God will be sure to pray, with Moses,—“I beseech thee show me thy glory.” And he who knows something of the Redeemer, will be sure to pray, with Paul,—“that *I may know him*;” that is, know *more* of him; for, as Watts expresses it,—

“The cross, the manger, and the throne,  
Are big with blessings yet unknown.”



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And our Cowper has said,—

“Whoever says he wants no more,  
Confesses he has none.”

And there is much to cause the Christian to sing in the ways of the Lord, when he considers his *former* experience, when he *reviews* the dealings of God with him; the *surprises* he has met with, turning the shadow of death into the morning; when he finds the Lord to have been not only better to him than his fears, but *surpassing* his HOPES, and doing for him exceeding abundantly above what he, at once, could ask or think.

*Oh*, says he, what a time of love was that in which, passing by, he *said unto me—Live!* *Oh*, what a time was that in which He said to my soul,—“*I am thy salvation* *Oh*, what delightful hours were those in which I have taken sweet counsel, and gone to the house of God in company;—in which I have seen his power and his glory there! *Oh*, to have repeated—

—“those heavenly hours,  
Those seasons so divine!”

How much has he, therefore, to excite and to encourage him, when he views God’s goodness towards him, and when he is heard to say,—

“His love in time past forbids me to think  
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink:  
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review  
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through.”

I would here observe, before I dismiss this article, that this looking back upon experience is the *main principle in which God recovers his people when they have backslidden from Him*. And this is *peculiar to them*.

Now, take an apostate; he *never really “tasted that the Lord is gracious,”*—he never had fellowship with

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the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,—he never walked in the comforts of the Holy Ghost,—he never knew the blessedness of nearness to God: but a Christian feels his remembrance of God's dealings impress him. He looks back, and he compares his former state with the present, and says,—

“Where is the blessedness I knew,  
 When first I saw the Lord?  
 Where is the soul-refreshing view  
 Of Jesus and his word?  
 What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd,  
 How sweet their memory still;  
 But now I find an aching void  
 The world can never fill.”

“Oh, that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me, and when by his light I walked through darkness; while as yet the Almighty was with me!” And so he comes to the resolution of the church, when her way was hedged up with thorns: “I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.” Then, *fourthly*, it flows from *Fellowship*. It is painful for the Christian to reflect upon the multitudes that are going astray: yet he knows, and blesses God that there are some—that there are many, and that their number is increasing—who are travelling the same *road with himself*. Now, these are his dear associates. Concerning these, he says, with David, “I am a companion of all those that fear thee, and of those that keep thy precepts.” These comfort him, these strengthen his weak hands, and confirm his feeble knees. These show him the springs of consolation, as the angel showed Hagar, when she was parched with thirst and ready to die; he opened her eyes and showed

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her a well; so does one Christian to another, in time of need. Thus you find the Apostle Paul: when he saw the believers at Appii Forum, he thanked God—the very sight of them renewed his confidence, and “he thanked God and took courage.”

We find this fellowship in the history of David. He had a friend in Jonathan. Jonathan, we are told, went to David and “strengthened his hands in God.” He found him oppressed, and he said to him—“Oh, David, why art thou cast down, and why is thy spirit disquieted within *thee*? Have you forgotten the promise of the King? Have you forgotten the holy oil which Samuel poured upon your head? Oh David, have you forgotten “the paw of the lion, and the paw of the bear?—Have you forgotten your victory over the uncircumcised Philistine?—Your soul is now cast down; therefore, “remember the Lord from the land of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar.”

Thus it is that Solomon expresses it—“As iron sharpened iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.”—“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.”

*Fifthly.* This singing springs from his prospects and anticipations. If a man were travelling to a place of execution, however splendid the carriage might be in which he was conveyed, however smooth the road, however flowery the banks, however sweetly the birds might sing as he went along, do you think *he* would be able to “sing in the way?” Oh, he would say, *What is this to a man in my circumstances?*—“*There is but a step between me and death!*” But, if a man were travelling to be embosomed in his delightful family again—if he were going to obtain an estate, or

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to receive a kingdom; however rough the way might be—however distressing the travelling, yet he would say,—*Well, it will be better soon*; and what I shall shortly enjoy will be more than a recompence for all the sufferings I now experience!

So it is with the true Christian. I was one day standing by a very good man under great pain of body, when he said, with much confidence and cheerfulness,—

“There I shall for ever dwell  
 With Jesus in the realms of day;  
 Then I shall bid these pains farewell,  
 And God will wipe my tears away.  
 Jesus, on thee our hope depends  
 To lead us on to thine abode;  
 Assured our home shall make amends  
 For all our toil upon the road.”

The Christian, while *here*, has some Bethel visits; some Pisgah views, some Elim stations, with twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm trees; and sometimes he has a bunch of grapes from Eshcol; but there are better things for him still in reserve; and, therefore, his *prospects* cheer and animate him principally. He knows that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him!” *Oh, to see Him as he is!* *Oh, to be like Him!* *Oh, to be ever with the Lord!* and to have no more to do with a wicked world without, and a wicked heart within. *Oh, to be as innocent as Adam in Paradise, and as holy as the Son of God himself!* “What an expectation is here.

“There shall we see his face,  
 And never, never sin;  
 There, from the rivers of his grace,  
 Drink endless pleasures in.”

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Yes, and before we rise  
 To that immortal state,  
 The thoughts of such amazing bliss  
 Should constant joys create."

*Sixthly*, and finally, We may mention the *accommodation upon the road*. Everything is provided for these travellers that shall make them rejoice and "sing in the ways of the Lord."

A *Guide* is provided; and a guide in whom they may perfectly trust as to his wisdom; for He is infinitely wise. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows all their walking through this wilderness; and, under his conduct, "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." A *Defender*:—and one in whose power we may place unlimited confidence: one who is "able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy;" under whose conduct we may march forward, fearless of any foe; under whose conduct we may "tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon may we trample under feet." *Strength* is provided. "The youths may faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." *Shoes*.—These are provided. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as "thy day, so shall thy strength be." *Water* is provided. "He will guide them by the rivers of water." And they shall find along the road arbours of repose, and houses of refreshment. *Attendants*.—These, you know, are the angels of God. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation?" Is there not enough, therefore, to induce us to sing in the ways of the Lord?

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But, III. Let us observe the use we should make of this assurance. This is various, and important. And—

*First*, the subject should serve to repel the charge that religion is unfriendly to happiness. You know that this is a very common thing, and you need not be told that it is a very injurious one. For—

“’Tis religion that can give,  
Sweetest pleasures while we live;  
’Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die.”

Therefore, if a man find religion to be only terror and slavery, and sadness and melancholy, he will turn away from it.

But nothing is more groundless than this charge. “Religion,” as you frequently say,

—“never was designed  
To make our pleasures less.”

*Less! No*; it was designed to make them infinitely greater. And as it was designed for this purpose, so it is adequate for this purpose also, and inspires us with “everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace,” and enables us to rejoice “with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

Perhaps you have not made the trial; but there are some who have. There are many before God in this house, this morning, who have made the trial; and were you to address them, they would tell you that they were strangers to real pleasure, so long as they were strangers to Christ. They would say, We have found his service to be perfect freedom. His “yoke has been easy, and his burden light.” If it is a yoke, it is the yoke of marriage, and of such who daily bless God for the same. And if it be a burden, it is the

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burden of wings to a bird, which enable it to rise, and soar aloft, and possess the skies.

God is the God of all comfort, and He must be able to make you happy; and can you, for one moment, suppose that He will suffer those who hate Him, and oppose Him, to be more happy than those who *love and serve* Him? Has he not said—and the Scripture cannot be broken—“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.”

*Secondly:* The assurance shows us how defective and mistaken their views are, who can place their religion on opinions, speculations, ceremonies, forms or acts, in which the heart has no concern—in which the heart is a stranger to feeling, and to gladness; for, as Mr. Hart says—

“True religion’s more than notion;  
Something must be known and felt.”

“They shall sing in the ways of the Lord.” Can there be any love to Him, or obedience to Him, or rejoicing in Him, without feeling?

We put out of the question cases of morbid disease and melancholy, as Cowper and others. Such persons view everything through a medium of gloom; and it is not likely that religion, with its tremendous bearings, should be an exception. There are, also, some persons who possess a peculiarity of temperament and unhappy disposition; some have a great deal more of laudanum about them than mercury. Some seem to be constitutionally chilly, not only in body, but in mind.

But, after these concessions, if a man has delight in

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anything else, and none in religion; if he can read a newspaper, or hear a political discourse, with interest, and sleep over his Bible: if his animation never leave him but with regard to religious engagements and exercises, *he has much reason to suspect his state and condition towards God.*

We know and allow that a man may be a Christian without having the pleasure arising from a *knowledge* of his state. I know many of these characters, and question not their piety.

But there are other pleasures beside these; there are the pleasures which arise from devotion and obedience; and if you cannot say in a measure—

“No joy can be compared to this,  
To serve and please the Lord.”

If you only have a form of godliness, and feel not the power thereof; if all with you is duty and task; if you are habitual strangers to pleasure and delight *in the ways of God*; if you do not in a measure feel religious duties to be religious *privileges*, you have reason to fear that you have no *part or lot in the matter*, and *that your heart is not right in the sight of God.* “They shall sing in the ways of the Lord.”

Then, *thirdly*, Christians should from hence learn the *superiority of their enjoyments* to the worldling's. What are the joys the worldling feels? What are they all, but “vanity and vexation of spirit?” “In the midst of their sufficiency they are in straits.” When they have succeeded in their enterprises, everything within still urges them to inquire, “Who will show us any good?” If they *say* they are happy, your experience, Christian, contradicts them; for you have walked in their way long enough to know, that there is no



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peace to the wicked—no solid, substantial peace. If they seem to be happy in company and while in the indulgence of their dissipations;—abstract them from their ungodly companions, compel them to think and reflect,—and *where are the Jonahs now?* But as to you, Christian, you have “*meat to eat* which they know not of: you have “*a joy which strangers intermeddle not with you can rejoice in the possession of his grace, and in your hope of the glory that is to be revealed.*”

Then, *Fourthly*, Professors of religion should study to be *cheerful*. It will do good to *themselves*; for “the joy of the Lord is their strength.” It will have a happy influence over *others*: it will be likely to allure them into the way everlasting: it will be likely to preserve the way of truth from being evil spoken of; and they will be likely to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,” by not “walking mournfully before the Lord,” and crying and groaning, as if they were always going to a funeral; and they will establish the truth of the Scriptures,—“The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.” Yes, and they will call upon others, their companions on the road, to “rejoice evermore,”—to “rejoice with shoutings,”—to “ask and receive, that their joy may be full.”

May you always be looking unto Jesus, “the Consolation of Israel.” In Him may you have peace, while in the world you have tribulation. Exercise much faith in his promises. And if you would have all joy and peace in believing, live near to God, “walk circumspectly.” Remember, though all the consolations of the Bible are derived from free grace, they are enjoyed only in a course of obedience.

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Then, be concerned also, from this subject, to bring others into these ways of joy and singing. Remember the case of the lepers, when they had found supplies and knew that their neighbours were perishing with want. "They said one to another, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us. Now, therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king's household." Do as Samson did. "He took of the honey from the carcase of the lion, and went on singing. And he gave to his father and his mother, and they did eat." Remember what the first Christians did. As soon as they knew the way of life, they said, "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."

To conclude,—May you all seek to enter this course, and join these travelling songsters, who sing in the ways of the Lord.

"Ye, alas! who long have been  
 Willing slaves to death and sin,  
 Now from bliss no longer rove;  
 Stop, and taste redeeming love."

And you, our dear young friends, who have reached the age of pleasure, and are thirsting for happiness; *Oh! come* and join us in this blessed course; come and be united to this company. Then, if your lives are protracted, his grace will be sufficient for you, in every trial and in every duty. Then, if you were to reach "grey hairs," they will be "found in the way of righteousness," and be your glory; and the Lord will look back and say, I remember thee,—the kindness of thy youth." Or, if you should depart in early life—for we

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see how many of our roses and our lilies are early destroyed—then, *early death will be early glory!* and in the noblest sense will the words of the Saviour be fulfilled, “I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me.” AMEN.

## SERMON V.\*

THE INVITATION TO ENJOY THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

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“O taste and see that the Lord is good.”—PSALM

XXXIV. 8.

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THERE are three things in this text we must endeavour to explain and improve. The *first* reminds us that *God is good*; the *second* tells us that the best way of knowing this is by *tasting* it; and the *third* contains an *invitation to acquire this knowledge for ourselves*:—“Oh taste and see that the Lord is good.”—“Who hath ears to hear let him hear.”

I. We are reminded that the *Lord is good*. Goodness is a perfection of his nature, and it belongs to Him as it belongs to no other being in the whole universe. Our Lord himself has decided this, “There is but one good, that is God.” He is originally good,—essentially good,—unchangeably good,—supremely good,—infinitely good. I feel at a loss to express *how* good He is. The goodness of God, according to our divines, is distinguishable into two kinds,—his moral and his communicative. The first of these refers to his

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\* Preached February 8th, 1852.

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rectitude, and is much the same with his holiness, with his beneficence, his loving-kindness, and his tender mercy. It is obvious that it is to the *latter* of these David alludes, when he says, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good."

But how shall we establish, or rather exemplify and display, this goodness? Oh, what a number of examples of it are to be found within these walls this morning! each of which is a proof, each of which is a *multitude* of proofs. And this is the case with every other individual of the human race: yea, this is the case with regard to all his other creatures; for, "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." What immense families has God continually to provide for in air, and earth, and sea! "The eyes of all wait upon Him, and He giveth them their meat in due season." "He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." But we will here follow the example of David, who adds, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, Oh God! that even *the children of men* put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." For, my dear hearers, you will observe what a difference there is between the children of men and those other creatures of God. These creatures have never forfeited the care of their Benefactor and Creator. They all fulfil the purposes for which they were made and are preserved. But it is otherwise with the children of men: they have revolted from Him,—they have proclaimed independence; they have entered into the service of his most accursed foes; they have evinced themselves to be "enemies to God by wicked works and, therefore deserve to have wrath come upon them, as "children of disobedience."

Besides, you will remember, that He made them

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*upright*; He created them “after his own image, in righteousness and true holiness. He attached immortality to their existence. “He made them a little lower than the angels; He hath crowned them with glory and honour,” and has given them dominion over all the works of the lower world. But they sinned against Him, and brought themselves into a state of utter degradation and helplessness.

Yet, notwithstanding this, what a world has He made and furnished for their residence and enjoyment! He has varied the seasons, and made them softly melt into each other, so that “the year is crowned with his goodness.” He hath clothed the earth with verdure, and has caused a sweet interchange of hill and dale, of wood and plain, of land and water. He also feeds you and clothes you all your life long.

And this is not all. He not only supports you, but “gives *you all things richly to enjoy*.” If He were only concerned for your being, and not for your comfort and pleasure, why does he furnish such colours to charm the eye, such sounds to delight the ear, such fragrance to gratify the smell, and such relishes to please the taste? Fruit was not necessary to our subsistence; and if it were necessary, it could have been made to grow without the previous process of the beautiful *blossom*. And why, then, those lovely tints, —why the sweet mixture of red and white, but to please us, before we gather the produce? We see how things that are necessary contribute more or less to our pleasure. Behold the helpless infant! But its helplessness is provided for in another, all without its care; its wants are all supplied by her who bare him. So that I never see an infant dandled upon the knee or sleeping in its mother’s arms, reclining on the carpet

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or playing on the lawn, without being reminded of *Him*, who “even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings ordaineth praise.”

Need we be informed that all our *senses* might have been continually *inlets of misery*,—that our food might have been as disagreeable as our medicine; whereas, now, though eating and drinking are essential to the health, and the preservation of life, you never think of escaping from death, when you are going to partake of them, but only think of relief and pleasure.

But while we would not overlook the displays of God’s general goodness, there is his goodness which we may call mercy and grace, a goodness which deals with us as *sinner*s, a goodness which was the sovereign origin of our salvation and of all those “spiritual blessings in heavenly places ” which we enjoy in Christ Jesus,” the goodness which led Him “to remember us in our low estate ”—to “devise the means whereby his banished ones should not for ever be expelled from Him.” “In this,” as St. John says, without overlooking other things, “in this was manifest the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.”—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” What an unspeakable, what an infinite instance of his love towards us! Herein we have a pledge, and, indeed, the substance of *every other*; for “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

Are you oppressed with a sense of sin? And do you feel it to be a burden too heavy for you to bear? Here He says, “I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness,

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and thy sins and thy iniquities will I *remember no more!*" Are you groaning by reason of the bondage of corruption, as well as the sentence of condemnation; and do you long to be made holy? Here He says, "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 the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a 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." Do you see dangers and difficulties that would impel you to go back from your religious course, or that would fill you with despondency? Here He says, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness."—"My grace is sufficient for thee." Are you perplexed by any of the dealings of his *providence*? Here you learn that "*all* the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that fear Him." Here you find that "*all* things shall work together for good to them that love God,"—the darkness as well as the light, pain as well as pleasure, enemies as well as friends, losses as well as gain. And though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." And yet—

"Yet a season, and you know  
 Happy entrance shall be given,  
 All your sorrows left below,  
 And earth exchanged for heaven!"



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Now, on *whose behalf* is all this accomplished? Why, on the behalf of those who are not worthy of the least of all God's mercies;—on the behalf of those who were once “children of wrath, even as others—on behalf of those who even now try his patience and long-suffering, who are untractable under his teachings, who are incorrigible under his corrections, ungrateful under his favours, unimproved and unprofited under all the means of his grace.

Moses was the meekest of all the men upon earth. Yet, under the murmurings of the Israelites, he “spake unadvisedly with his lips;” and when he saw their idolatry and their dancing round the calf, though he had the two tables of stone, written with the finger of God, he threw them down and brake them to pieces. Oh, if God had human passions, what would become of us! *But*, says He, “I the Lord change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” What other guide, who, if he might have had you under his conduct, but would long ago have *abandoned you*? He, however, is long-suffering towards you, He is still “waiting to be gracious,” and is “exalted to have mercy,” and He hath said, “I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Such, my hearers, is God's goodness. It is but a very imperfect display which we have made; for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love Him.” But we beseech you to keep the eye of your mind upon it. Think much of this goodness. You will continually need it, Christians to remove your fears; to give you confidence in approaching to God, to inspire you with the Spirit of adoption, whereby to cry, “Abba, Father;” and to enable you to go on your way rejoicing.

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But this leads us to observe,—

II. That the best way of knowing this goodness of God, is by *tasting* it. Hence says David, “Oh *taste* and see that the Lord is good.” He does not say, “*Bead* and see,” or “*Hear* and see;” but, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” That is,—*apply* it, make trial of it, and prove it for your own selves. Let us enter further into this part of our subject. David here means experience. Experience signifies knowledge derived from experiment and trial, in contradistinction to opinion, speculation, and conjecture. Ever since the days of Bacon, experimental philosophy has been much commended; and in our day, properly speaking, no other philosophy is appreciated; and yet, much in the same degree, experimental *religion* has been exploded and ridiculed. And may we not just ask *why*? Does not the scripture speak of such things as repentance, and humility, and love, and peace, and joy, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost? Pray, is there no way of reducing all these to experiment and to trial? Let us treat this part of our subject with all possible seriousness. It is of great interest and importance. Let us remember the words of Mr. Hart:—

“Let us ask the important question,  
 (Brethren, be not too secure,)  
 What it is to be a Christian?  
 How may we our hearts ensure?  
 True religion’s more than notion:  
 Something must be known and felt.”

Now, how do matters stand between God and your soul? “We live in a land of vision, and in a land of bibles. There are many among us who know the grace of God in theory only, and not in spirit and in truth. They are strangers to an experimental ac-

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quaintance with all this. And these are characters the most unlikely for us to make useful and saving impressions upon, of all with whom we ever have to deal. When we address those who have not heard the word before, we entertain a hope that they will hear to profit. But as for you who have from your *infancy* known the Gospel, so as to be distinctly and familiarly acquainted with its contents,—as for you, who know everything we can advance, who admit everything we affirm, and who are even able to “contend for the faith once delivered to the saints,” and here rest, without any concern to feel the influence of these things in your hearts and in your lives, YOU are the hearers that DRIVE YOUR PREACHERS TO DESPAIR! And how strange is all this! You assent to all the doctrines we teach; and yet you show no more practical regard for them, than if you believed them to be idle tales and “cunningly devised fables.” You acknowledge there is a hell, and that its miseries are inconceivable; but you never “flee from the wrath to come.” You acknowledge there is a heaven, whose blessedness is beyond what the mind of man can conceive, and into which the righteous only shall enter; but you strive not to “enter in at the strait gate.” You acknowledge the value of the Gospel, and may be concerned externally to endeavour to diffuse it; while you prefer every trifle to its glorious truths, and “the things that belong to your *‘peace.’*” *Oh, the miseries of preaching to such persons—to such characters as these—these, who need no information,—who are sensible to no motive—these, who feel no emotion—these, who are sermon-proof—these, whom we have preached blind, so that they cannot see; deaf, so that they cannot hear, and dead, so that they cannot feel! Oh, what a perpetual contradiction*

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is there between your creed and your conduct! You are not happy, you *cannot* be happy; and, yet, somehow or other, you contrive not to be miserable! You are "*at ease in Zion.*"

But this is not the case with all: there are some—there are many—and we hope their number is increasing—who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." You *know* that the Lord is good by your own experience.

What will *knowledge only* avail you? Will it avail you that you know of a refuge which you never enter?—that you know of a remedy which you never apply to?—that you know of food which you never partake of? No; you must perish, notwithstanding all this. What would *other* knowledge than this experimental do for you? Why, knowledge, where there is not this experience, will render you more accountable, and sink you deeper in guilt and misery.

This knowledge is like the letter which Uriah carried in his bosom to Joab, which placed him in the fore-front of the battle: so this knowledge will be your curse instead of advantage. It will increase your sin, and add to your condemnation. "For to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "If," says the Saviour, "If I had not come and done among you the works which none other man did, ye had not had sin; but now you have *no cloke* for your sin." Now you are without excuse. "He that knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, shall be beaten with many stripes."

But, as I said, there are some of you who *have* this experimental knowledge—some who can say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." I know it, for I have felt the same. And there are *three advantages* that result from this experimental knowledge. The *first* is

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an *increased desire after it*. This is natural; this is unavoidable. Thus Peter says,—“As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye *have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*”

Now, you will observe, that we, at first, seek for the blessings of salvation, only from a sense of our sin and guilt; for we have not possessed them, we have not enjoyed them before. But *after we have possessed*—after we have enjoyed them—then we desire them, not only from a sense of want, but also from a sense of RELISH AND REMEMBRANCE. Yes; then we call to mind what we have been favoured with, and long for more,—then, if we have seen the glory of God as Moses did, we shall desire that we *may see* it,—then, if we have known him, we shall say as Paul, “that I *may know* him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” For, as our admired poet expresses it:—

“Whoever says he wants no more,  
Confesses he has none;”

and shows he never had any experimental acquaintance with the things of God.

Then, *secondly*, it produces a *fuller conviction of the truth* of these things. Now, I think, I can trust any poor unlettered man in the presence of the most subtle philosopher, who would endeavour to persuade him that honey was sour, and that gall was sweet. Why, he would say to the tempter,—“would you argue me out of my very senses? You may reason—you may ridicule; but you can never convince me. *I know* that gall is bitter, *I know* that honey is sweet, for I have *tasted them.*”

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Now, so it is with the real Christian. What is the reason that so many are "led away with the error of the wicked, and fall from their own stedfastness?" Why are they roving after one folly and another? Why, their religion is founded upon *theory*, and not upon *principle*. What one man may put into your heads, another may put out; but what God himself puts into your hearts, liveth and abideth there. "The water," says the Saviour, "that I shall give you, shall be in you a well of water *springing* up into everlasting life."—"We are persuaded," says the Apostle, "of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Such are not "driven about by every wind of doctrine their hearts are "established with grace."—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

*Thirdly*, it produces *fervency* and *earnestness* in speaking of these things, and in recommending them to others. Such an one as this knows the value and efficacy of the medicine he recommends, because he has tried it himself, and it has cured him when everything else failed, and when he knew that he was at the point of death. This grace has relieved the believer's conscience. It has produced peace there "passing all understanding." It has brought the roving heart to rest, so that he is no longer running up and down like a fool, in this world, asking "Who will show me any good?" for he *has found* it. He knows that it is good to draw near to God. He knows there is "a joy unspeakable and full of glory his religion has furnished him with "a joy which strangers intermeddle not with," and "meat of which others know not."

Such a man is prepared, as a Minister, or a Christian,

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to deal with others. Such an one will not speak of these things doubtfully, or with hesitation, or with indifference: *no!* but he will say with Eliphaz,—“Lo, this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good or with the first Christians, “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.”

This brings us to

III. The third consideration, which contains the *invitation* to induce others to acquire this knowledge for themselves. “*Oh taste and see* that the Lord is good “Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him or as dear Dr. Watts has it, in his paraphrase,—

“Oh, sinners, come, and taste His love,  
Come learn His pleasant ways;  
And let your own experience prove.  
The sweetness of His grace.”

Now, this “tasting” has several things connected with it, worthy of your renewed and continued attention, which we therefore implore. And,

*First*, this is very distinguishable from *party zeal*. There are some individuals who are never satisfied without bringing others over to their own peculiar views and feelings. It is not enough for them that persons should follow *Christ*, they must walk with *them*. It is not enough for them, that a man should say, “Sibboleth,” but he must say, “*Shibboleth*,” or they will slay him as an Ephrathite. There is too much of this low, base, kind of spirit, that would increase proselytes to a party, instead of increasing disciples to Christ: but

“Let names, and sects, and parties fall,  
And Jesus Christ be all in all.”

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I remember the words of Mr. Cecil, to a female who addressed him, saying, "Sir, I was once a Dissenter, I am now turned to the Church." "Madam," said he, "take care; you are turning from nothing to nothing." And so it is with many. Would it bespeak loyalty to the Queen, or love to your country, or add to the strength of the army, if you were to take soldiers out of one regiment to augment another? For instance, if you transferred some from the Scotch Greys to the Oxford Blues. But if you bring in fresh recruits, ah! then there is *real* increase and strengthening.

I remember hearing the late Mr. Newton say, "When God put me into the ministry, I determined, if I was anything in it, I would be a physician, and not a tailor. I would endeavour to restore my patient; but having given him health and cure, I would not determine the cut or the colour of his coat; I would leave all this to his own taste and fancy." We may have our preferences, but let us take care,—we may wish persons to be according to our respective views;—we may wish them to be Episcopalians or Independents, Baptists or Wesleyans; but let us remember there is a *name above all these*, and that the disciples of Christ were called *Christians* first at Antioch.

*Secondly:* This invitation is distinguishable from *mere relative affection*. Relative affection, so far from being sinful, is amiable and praiseworthy. Alas! there are few Christians but have some irreligious friends and relations; surely, for them they may be, and ought to be, peculiarly concerned. There is a father who is thinking of an unruly son, and saying,—“My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.” There is a pious sister who is mourning over an ungodly-brother; there is a believing wife who is mourning over her unbelieving husband. And how natural is it,—how



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becoming is it,—to say with Esther,—“*How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?*” But the concern of a Christian is not to be confined here. *No!* It must reach others,—it must extend to strangers, and even to *enemies*. It must cause us to resemble the Apostle Paul, who said before Agrippa, “I would to God, that not only thou, but, also, all that hear me this day, were both almost and *altogether* such as I am, except these bonds.”

*Thirdly:* The exercise of this disposition which leads us to invite others, will *expose us to reproach*. There is something very singular in this. We seldom find persons censured for their attempts to relieve others by charity. They are not considered as interferers, if they venture to heal the sick, or feed the hungry, or clothe the naked. If persons do not approve of the manner, they give them credit for the deed. But what is the body to the soul? What is time to eternity! What evil can you save a fellow creature from, comparable to the evil of sin? What benefit can you confer, equal to that “godliness which hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come?” And, yet, when you endeavour to save others,—when you go to them and say,—“O, state and see that the Lord is good,”—you are considered as busybodies. Oh, they will say,—“You go to heaven your own way, let us go *our* way. We do not interfere with you: be as religious as you please, but keep your religion to yourselves.” But this is enjoining upon persons an utter impossibility. A man *cannot* keep his religion to himself. If he *has* any, it will manifest itself: it will show itself. “We cannot *BUT* speak the things we have seen and heard.” And, said our Saviour,—“If these should hold their peace, the *very stones would cry out.*”

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Remember, therefore, that this disposition is always *the natural effect of divine grace*. Divine grace always *produces, in its subjects, these two results*. First, an earnest solicitude about their own souls, inquiring,—“What shall I do to be saved?” accompanied, *secondly*, by a concern for the *welfare of others*. So that it subdues and dethrones that selfishness, which is so common to the natural man, and establishes that law which requires us “to love our neighbour as ourselves.” So that it crushes envy and ill-will. There is no room for envy. Here is enough for others, as well as for yourselves. It will rejoice that others are made part-takers also. Such an one, therefore, will not wish to break down the bridge as soon as he has passed over in safety,—he will not wish to conceal these rich and heavenly stores which he has discovered, but will rather be for making them known. He will resemble the four leprous men, who, when they had found treasures, and knew their fellow creatures were perishing, said one to another, “We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us; now, therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.” So will it be with you, and you will say,—

“Then will I tell to sinners round  
 What a dear Saviour I have found;  
 I’ll point to thy redeeming blood,  
 And say,—Behold the way to God.”

Look around you, therefore, and endeavour to prevail upon others, as David did. See what others do. There is no cause, however foolish or wicked, but has some advocates. Sin has its solicitors: “If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” The devil has his. There are those who enlist recruits for him,—there are those

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“who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, though they make him ten-fold more the child of hell than before.”

And, while all these are working, *will you be idle?* While these are all awake, and alert, will *you* sleep on, and do nothing, that others may be blessed for ever?

You need not go out of your proper stations for this, or out of your own localities. You need not assume the ministerial office; but you may preach to your children, to your servants, to your friends, and to your neighbours. You need not go abroad as foreign missionaries, but you may be *home* missionaries, such as our Saviour would make the delivered demoniac. He besought the Saviour that he might be with Him. *No*, says He, but “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

All, therefore, are under obligation; but some are under *peculiar* obligation. There are some among you, who went far astray, and “your members were instruments of unrighteousness.”

There is a two-fold obligation you are under to endeavour to bring others to Christ. *First*, An obligation of *gratitude*. You “have had much forgiven, and therefore, you ought to love much.” And, *Secondly*, An obligation of duty. You have done much injury in your day and generation; and this you should endeavour to repair as much as possible. You should also seek to be useful. Perhaps you have made some infidels, and encouraged and excited them to go on in the way of death and hell. Some of these, perhaps, are, alas! *beyond your recovery*; and it should be enough to make you shed *tears of blood*, that there are now in hell, those whom you have prepared for it, and urged towards it!

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They are beyond your reach! *How awful!* But there are others still in “the land of the living.” Do what you can for *them*. Go to them and say, “I was once in the same state with you. Oh, that you were now in the same condition with me! Oh, that the Lord would open my mouth, that I might show you what a change I have experienced, in having been ‘delivered from this present evil world,’—in having been delivered from ‘the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son,’—in having been ‘turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.’ ‘*Oh, come, taste, and see for yourselves, that the Lord is good!*’”

*Who will comply with this invitation?* What hinders any of you from complying? Is it *sin*? Is it any of the pleasures of sin, which are only for a season, which leave a stain upon your character and a sting upon the conscience, the end of which is death?

Or is it the *world*? Have you not tried that long enough to be convinced that it is all “vanity and vexation of spirit?”

Who, then, *again* I ask, will comply with this invitation? Will YOU, O ye *rich*? “O, *taste and see,*” you, “*that the Lord is good!*” Then your riches will be sanctified. Then your “table will not become a snare,” nor will the things ordained for your welfare become a trap; then your prosperity will not destroy or injure you.

Will YOU, O ye *poor*? “O, *taste and see,*” you, “*that the Lord is good.*” Then your poverty will be sanctified. If you have none of the riches of this world, you will be “rich in faith,”—if you have none of the perishable riches, you will possess those riches which add no sorrow therewith.

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Will YOU, O ye *aged*? “O, taste and see,” you, “that the Lord is good.” Oh, it is an affecting and solemn thought, that with some of you, though your day is nearly gone, your work is not yet *begun*. When you look back, all is *guilt*; when you look forward, all is *gloom*. A poor creature I one day visited on his bed of sickness, said to me, “Sir, I have a long journey to go, and *I do not know one step of the way!*” “It is high time for you to awake out of sleep.” But it is *not yet too late*: Oh, “seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon him while He is near.”

Will YOU, O ye *young*, in the bloom of life? “O, taste and see,” you, “that the Lord is good!” Then you will find Him ready to embrace you, saying,—“I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me:” then you will be prepared for an early grave, if called to die; or for all the trials and duties of life if called to live: then your grey hairs will be to you “a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness and He will look back and say, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness.”—AMEN.

## SERMON VI.\*

THE REDEEMER'S QUESTION TO THE DISEASED MAN  
AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

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“Wilt thou be made whole?”—JOHN v. 6.

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“Now there was at Jerusalem, at the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches.” These porches were supposed to be furnished by the liberality of the rich, for the accommodation of the sick poor. I am aware of the difficulties that attend this passage, and the discussions into which they have led the learned. I shall only make one remark here. Surely the salubrioness here spoken of was supernatural. “For an angel went down, at a certain season, into the pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.” You observe here *four* things. *First*, an angel disturbed the water, and occasioned the healing quality. *Secondly*, the water could only heal *periodically*. *Thirdly*, it cured only one at a time; and, *Fourthly*, it healed him of whatsoever complaint he had. Will any thing of this apply to any ordinary medicinal water? It does not appear

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that this pool formerly possessed this prerogative. It is probable it was endowed with it about the time of our Saviour's birth, as a miracle to prepare for other miracles, and to raise expectations of much greater benefits. "In these porches lay a great number of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water." What a multitude of ills is flesh heir to! And there are many too little acquainted with it, and they are not desirous of being informed, therefore they would rather elude such scenes and sights, lest, like "the priest and the Levite," they should be constrained to go to the other side.

It would seem this was the very first place the Redeemer visited when he went up to Jerusalem; and among the victims of woe here presented to his view was a poor creature who had laboured under a malady thirty-eight years! Oh think of this, you who have suffered for a few days or a few weeks only! He had for a long time been waiting at the pool for a propitious moment, but had always the mortification to be prevented by others who were more befriended. Jesus knew his misery and disappointment, and said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The poor sufferer, not knowing the inquirer, was not aware of the force of the inquiry: he thought it came from some kind-hearted friend who was disposed to afford him assistance, and, therefore, does not immediately answer the question, but bitterly complained of the neglect with which he was treated. "The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but, while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." This awakened all the compassion of our Saviour, and, giving way to his pity, and his power, He said,

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"*Rise; take up thy bed and walk.*" Success attended the command, "and immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked."

And now, why was this recorded? Was it merely to inform and amuse our minds? My dear hearers, we shall never read the Saviour's history to advantage, till we learn to pass from the body to the soul, and to rise from "things seen and temporal, to things unseen and eternal." "He came to seek and to save that which was lost,"—He came, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly. He is here now, and addresses this question to each of you, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Let us, therefore, *first*, inquire after the import of the inquiry; *secondly*, shew how you may answer it; *thirdly*, encourage those who are yet uncured to accept of the proffered cure, and be made whole; and, *fourthly*, to admonish those who have said to the Saviour, in answer to the question, "Yes, Lord," and who have experienced his recovering mercy and grace. You will not, therefore, I hope, murmur because in my way to the plate, I shall endeavour to save your souls. This will produce more satisfaction, *at least above*, than even a good collection; for "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

I. *What, then, does the inquiry import?* "Wilt thou be made whole?" It imports *three things*: *disease*—the *removeableness* of the disease, and the *necessity of a willingness* in order to be cured.

*First*, it imports *disease*, or the address would be absurd. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Here we immediately come in contact with the prejudices and pride of many, who turn away from the representations of the condition of human nature by the fall, given in the



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Scriptures. How many this morning have been saying "There is no health in us," and yet have high notions of the goodness and dignity of human nature. If persons refer to the dignity of man, intellectually considered—there, indeed, he is something. In the invention of those discoveries of science, and learning, and genius, and enlarged capacity for improvement, he seems to be but "a little lower than the angels but this is not the question. The question is, What is he morally and spiritually? What is he in his state before God?—what in his dispositions towards God, but a fallen, guilty, depraved, helpless, *perishing* creature? Is not Christianity itself based upon this foundation?—is it not implied in all its provisions? For, in the name of reason and common sense, what need have we of a Redeemer, if we are not enslaved? or of a Saviour, if we are not lost? of a Physician, if we are not diseased? "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick." What testimonies to this purport have we in the Scriptures: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" "From within," says the Saviour,—"out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, all these things come from within." They could not come from within, unless they were there: and, says Isaiah, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores." And is not all this confirmed by history, observation, and experience?—and if the tree has been found, in all ages and climates, and under all kinds and degrees

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of culture, to yield the same bad fruit, must not the tree itself be bad?

We could easily enlarge upon the character of this disease, if we had time. You may see it in the darkness of the understanding—in the perversion of the judgment—in the rebellion of the will—in the carnality of the affections—in the pollution of the conscience, for the very conscience itself is defiled, and in the sinfulness of the life. But we pass on to observe, secondly, that the question implies, *the disease is curable*; otherwise the address "Wilt thou be made whole?" would be trifling and tantalizing. The case is, indeed, desperate in itself; and as to all creatures: thus Newton says,—

"The help of men and angels joined  
Could never reach my case."

What can the *world* do for you? "The world by wisdom knew not God." Whatever skill men have displayed in *other* things, here "they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." And what can the *law* do for you? "It is weak through the flesh,"—it can neither justify, nor sanctify. It can only convince and condemn. Is man's condition, then, helpless? Is there no help,—is there no voice to be heard, "I will come and heal him!"—"I will bring him health and cure." There is. We read the records of his grace in the Scriptures. Does not Paul say to the Ephesians, "And you hath He quickened, who *were dead* in trespasses and sins." Does he not say to the Corinthians, "Such were some of you; but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And raise your eyes heavenward—see what ranks surround the throne of glory; all these were

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redeemed from the earth—all these “were, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others there you find Manasseh—there you find Paul, who “was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious”—there you find some who were the murderers of our Lord; and even here below, we have instances of the same influence and grace, though their conversion was attended with no extraordinary circumstances. And though, as to their persons, they are not free from infirmities, yet there is enough in them to show, that “if any man be in Christ he is a new creature and that “the grace of God which bringeth salvation,” can now, as formerly, teach men to “deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present evil world.”

But, *thirdly*, the question implies the necessity of a willingness in order to the cure. “*Wilt thou be made whole?*” The grace of God, in recovering us, does not operate like a charm, which has no influence unless in the brains of a fool; it does not operate mechanically, like the workmanship of a carpenter upon timber, where the wood is unconscious of the cutting of the axe, the chisel, and the plane. It does not act physically, like the agencies of the human constitution: the powers of digestion, and the circulation of the blood, go on as well when we are asleep as when we are awake. But I never knew a man who was ever converted in his sleep, or was sanctified by a dream. The agency of genuine grace operates *morally*, that is, through the medium of thought, intelligence, volition, choice. “God works in us to will, and to do, of his own good pleasure;” and this renders the doing natural and pleasant, instead of being a burden and a task. Hence

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God says, "I am the Lord thy God who teacheth thee to profit, and who leadeth thee in the way thou shalt go." His leading, you see, is not incompatible with choice, but includes it. Our Saviour said, "No man can come unto me, except the Father *draw* him and the church says, "Draw us"—not drag,—“and we will run after thee.”

Thus Mary "chose that good part which should not be taken away from her." Thus David says, "I have *chosen* the way of truth, thy precepts have I laid before me." No man ever dropped into heaven by mistake—no man ever entered it accidentally—no man was ever forced into it against his will. No; God "opens the eyes of our understanding," and shews us "what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of our inheritance in the saints." Yes; He makes us sensible of our need of salvation above every thing else, so that we then desire it,—we seek it,—we pray for it; and then, when we obtain it, it makes us blest, because it relieves our want, and fulfils our desire, and accomplishes our hope.

Let us now proceed to show—

II. *How you may answer this question*, "Wilt thou be made whole?" You say, "Yes, Lord." It is not necessary that you should do this verbally. Words, indeed, are but air, and may deceive you—they often do; but facts are stubborn things—actions speak louder than words; the eye can pour out tears unto God, where words are wanting,—and there are "groanings which cannot be uttered." But He that "searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the spirit:" and there is "a broken heart, and a contrite spirit," the sacrifice of which He will not despise. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger

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intermeddleth not with, its joy." But the Saviour is acquainted with the meaning of all this; it is therefore possible to return an affirmative answer to our Lord's inquiry; and you may do this *four ways*. First, by *inquiring* after the *means of recovery*. Now the man no longer carelessly asks, "What must I do to be saved?"—"How shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" Now he repairs to the sanctuary in earnest, and searches the Scriptures as he never did before; for now he searches them in order to find the very things which they were designed to make known. Now he hears the word as lie never did before, and the grand inquiry is, "How can I obtain pardon?—how can I obtain a title to heaven, and a meetness for it?"

Secondly. *By applying to the Physician*. Such a man will not resemble those spoken of by Hosea—"When Ephraim saw *his* sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb, yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." *No*; but there is One who can, and, therefore, the man now says with Peter, "Lord to *whom* should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And with David—"Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." He will now kneel before the Great Physician, saying, "Lord, save or I perish."—"Lord, heal me and I shall be healed: save me, and I shall be saved, for thou art my praise." Thirdly. *By submitting to his prescriptions*. When Elisha prescribed for Naaman, the leper, he sent him a message, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and be clean." But Naaman was wroth and went away, saying, "Behold I thought,"—*you* thought! what business had you to think? You came

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as a patient, to submit; and not as the physician, to prescribe. "I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord, his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My Father, if the prophet had bade thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith, "Wash and be clean?" So he had nearly missed the cure.

How different was this from the man born blind, whom our Saviour restored to sight! It is said of the Saviour, "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay; and said unto him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Did *he* object? Did he say; "Why, how can clay open my eyes?—Was the pool of Siloam ever known to give sight to the blind?" No; but he immediately yielded to this injunction. "He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing." So it is with the man when he is divinely impressed. His language is, "If by any means I may obtain this pardon, and this hope of eternal life;—only order, and I will obey;—only prescribe, and however mysterious the remedy may be to my understanding, and however humiliating to the pride of my heart, whatever privations and sacrifices it requires, I will submit—"Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth!" Christ will have the whole management of your case, or He will have nothing to do with it.

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Some years ago, an eminent physician\* resided in this city,—I have some of his works. He was, also, a godly man—all physicians are not saints, but some are, and he was one. His regimen was considered severe, and when he prescribed for some of his patients, and they complained, he was accustomed to say, “Ah! I perceive you are not bad enough for me.” So there are some who do not sufficiently feel their disease, and are not, as yet, willing to be under the control of the Great Physician. When this *is* the case they will say with Watts,

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all.”

Fourthly. By eager and anxious inquiries after symptoms of convalescence. Oh, says the man, “shall I ever be restored? Am I out of danger? What is the sign that I shall recover?” And with what joy, then, does he hail any token for good!—^any seeming indication, however small, of returning health! He feels now a hope—he has an appetite—his pulse is more vigorous—he is freer in his breathing—he has a little strength to talk and to walk. How thankful is he for these indications, while he hopes to “see greater things than these!” It is in this way you may return an answer to the Saviour’s inquiry—“Wilt thou be made whole?” And say, “Yes, Lord, for thou art all my salvation, and all my desire.”

III. Let me *urge those who remain uncured to avail themselves of this gracious proposal*, and be made whole.

I fear this is the case with numbers of you still—

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\* Dr. Cheyne.

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and your case is the most astonishing that can ever be conceived. Now, how is this? In all other cases persons need no urging. If the king were to send a reprieve to a poor condemned criminal in prison, would it be necessary to send a servant, or even his own son, to persuade him to accept it? Yet, says the Apostle, so it is here—"We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." *The body will be heard*, its necessities and complaints *will* be attended to: but did you ever hear of a poor man who refused, when it was said to him, "Will you be made rich?" Can it be conceived that a blind man should refuse to receive his sight?—or that a man diseased, if he were asked, "Wilt thou be made whole?" would object? Yet, so it is here; and hence it is so necessary for us to address you, and urge you, from time to time, to consider your state—knowing the mercy, and "knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." How, then, can I urge upon you successfully to accept of this cure, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Shall I refer you to the nature of the disease itself? Shall I remind you that it is far worse than any bodily disorder?—that it affects and injures the nobler part, even the soul—that it robs the soul of its joy—of its strength—of its usefulness—of its liberty—shall I remind you that it is not only a very vile and abominable disease in itself, but dangerous in the extreme, and mortal, not only in its tendency, but in its results;—while other diseases issue in the dissolution of the body, this issues in the destruction of the soul. Yea, this terminates in the destruction of both body and soul in hell for ever. Then "Wilt thou not be made



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whole?" Or shall I call upon you to contemplate the Physician who thus kindly addresses you? Job describes his friends under this image, and says, "Ye are all physicians of no value but this can never be applied to Him who addresses you this morning, and who says to every one—"Wilt thou be made whole?" His power is almighty—His understanding is infinite. No case is too difficult for Him—no disease ever perplexes Him; and, as he possesses power and ability to save, and to "save to the uttermost all who come unto Him," so, He possesses willingness—and He is as willing as He is able. This Physician is always at home—always to be found—always accessible, and He performs all his cures "without money and without price." And "Wilt not thou be made whole?"

Or shall I remind you, that your opportunity for being cured is short. I do not like to talk, as some have done, of a man's outliving his day of grace. I would rather say with Watts,

"While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."

But, my dear hearers, this lamp *will not turn always*, nor will it bum long. "Are not your days few?" Is not your life "like a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?" And at death, the divine fiat runs, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Then comes the dreadful exclamation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!"

But, though you may not survive the day of grace, you may survive many precious opportunities; you

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may lose many of your convictions, and, perhaps, some of you have lost many of these already. Where now is that tenderness of conscience you once possessed? Where are those alarms you once felt while under the Word? Where is that melting under tokens of divine goodness which induced you to say, "Lord, I am thine; save me." How many opportunities have already gone! How many impressions are worn off! Did you never observe the language of God with regard to Israel; "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsel?" Did you never observe the language of the Saviour, when "He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but *now* they are hid from thine eyes?" Did you never observe his language, "None of the men that were bidden shall taste of my supper?"

Or shall I finally remind you, that if you refuse this proposal, your misery will be the more aggravated thereby? Then you will be spiritual suicides; then you will destroy yourselves; and so you will enter into eternity with the words *ringing in your minds*, "Ye would not come unto me that ye might have life "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" Oh, "How can you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant whereby he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?"

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IV. Let me admonish those who have been enabled to answer the inquiry "Wilt thou be made whole?" who have said "Yes, Lord, and have experienced his recovering mercy and grace." And what shall I say unto you? "Look to the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged." Remember, if you are now "near," you were once "afar off." If you are now the "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," you were once "the children of wrath, even as others." "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?" Oh be thankful; call upon your souls, and all that is within you, to bless and praise the name of the Lord who hath healed you. You will never be able to discharge the obligation you are under to Him, but show that you are sensible of it: show that you are willing to make what returns you *are* able, and therefore ask, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" and show forth his praises, not only with your lips, but in your lives, and walk before Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life."

Go and extol, and recommend Him to others, who hath done such great things for you. You often find acknowledgments of this kind, and say so, not only in honour of the Physician, but also in compassion to those who are suffering from their former complaints. Do you the same:—but take heed to show that *you* are *proofs* of the value and efficiency of the remedy you recommend, otherwise you may do more harm than good—otherwise your recommendation will be worse than vain,—for, if you seem to labour under the disorder which is still staring you in the face while you

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recommend the remedy, persons will naturally say, "We do not believe a word of it: first show its efficacy in yourselves, and then come and recommend it to us, and we will follow your advice."

Consistency in religion requires of you, "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself, also, to walk even as He walked." The Saviour's command requires it; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." *And Oh to be like HIM!* Oh to resemble *Him*, in any measure, who is "fairer than the children of men,"—who went about doing good. Now do not say, "He is above our imitation: this example is too great for us to follow: we cannot do as He did." We know it. You cannot feed a multitude, but you can feed a family or individual. You cannot restore to life the widow's son, but you may comfort the widow's heart. You cannot raise the dead, but you can heal the living. And in conclusion, let me observe, that what you cannot do personally, you can do relatively, and you have an opportunity of doing this on the present occasion.

## SERMON VII.\*

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS A FRIEND, AND THE  
INQUIRY HE OFTEN PROPOSES TO EACH OF HIS DIS-  
CIPLES.

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“Is this thy kindness to thy friend?”—2 SAM. xvi. 17.

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FRIENDSHIP is the state of minds united by mutual benevolence. It has always been deemed one of the essential articles of human life and comfort. Men have pursued it for their honour, as well as for their happiness; for it is considered as disgraceful as it is distressing, to be without a friend. And who are those who, after a while, lose social intercourse and kind regards, but those who deserve it?—as whisperers, tale-bearers, backbiters, despisers of them that are good, and lovers of themselves. For he that will have friends must show himself friendly, “and there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

General associations will not supply the place of a friend. Gossips and visitors and acquaintances are not friends, unless such as Cowper speaks of, “belonging to the lady who has her dear five hundred friends,” whom she always found sycophants in her house, and every one of whom, before they reach their homes, are running her down. For while “the friendship of the world is enmity with God,” it is hypocrisy with men;

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\* Preached February 22, 1852.

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and no condition or rank places a man above the attractions of friendship. Kings have laid aside their royalties to indulge in it. Alexander would have found a conquered world a void without an Hephæstion.

The dearest relations in life cannot supersede friendship. To the beloved name of brother and sister, husband and wife, must be added that of a friend, in order to fill up the comforts of human life. Oh, friendship, thou benefactor and comforter of the human race! how necessary art thou in a vale of tears, and in a world full of "vanity and vexation of spirit!" Thou art the delight of sanguine youth, and the prop of trembling age. Thou art the sweetener of prosperity, and the solace of adversity. The burdened heart, at thy presence, is relieved, and afflictions by thy hand are deprived of their tears.

But, my hearers, while we hail the individual who has found a real friend, we are constrained to observe, that it is not very easy to find one. And, when you have laid down the infallible marks of a real friend, many who have worn the title will be found unworthy of the name, and "weighed in the balances," will be found wanting. Besides, the present is a state of imperfection; and friends partake of this imperfection as well as everything else; therefore, if you would enjoy friendship in its *highest and noblest degree*, you must look above, and must place yourself in communion with *the friend of sinners*.

"Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" I make no apology for applying the inquiry to Christian experience. Nor shall I enter into the circumstances of the history in which it is found. Suffice it to say, it is the language of Absalom, complaining of the con-

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duct of Hushai. You may peruse the whole when you get home; but I hope you will not want to read it all through now.

We have two objects in view this morning. The *first* is, to show that you have a Friend; and the *second* is, that you have often behaved very improperly towards Him. "Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

We have to show that you have a friend. "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." His adversaries colled Him "the Friend of sinners," and their design was to charge Him with being a friend to their sins. This was infinitely false; but He *was* a friend to their *souls*. This was infinitely *true*. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. "He came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And every believer, whatever be his external condition, may say with the Church, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, Oh ye daughters of Jerusalem."

Now let us look at a few of *the qualities of this friend*, and we will mention *five*.

*First*, The characteristic of Benevolence,—pure benevolence,—disinterested benevolence. What is benevolence? Benevolence among men is often little more than a commerce of selfishness, and the offspring of sordid gain. Friendship amongst men arises from the possession of some amiable quality in the object regarded, either real or imaginary. But *His* friendship arises from no excellency in *its* subject, but is all undeserved favour. What were they when he first took knowledge of them? Unworthy of any favour; or,

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as our old writers express it, undeserving, ill-deserving, and hell-deserving creatures. What were they when He gave himself for them? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend and they are his friends. But they were not his friends when He died for them. "For scarcely for a righteous man would one die, but peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." Were *they* good, then, when he died for them? *No*; "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet *sinner*s, Christ died for us."—"When we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

The *second* characteristic of this friendship is *Sincerity*. He is a friend who loves, not in words—in tongue, but in deed and in truth. There are some who say to every applicant readily enough, "Go in peace, be ye warmed and be ye clothed, though they give them not those things which are necessary." Poor, cold friendship this! But "*He* gives us all things richly to enjoy." He has fed you and clothed you all your life long unto this day. Whose mercies "have been new every morning and every evening." You have abused many of his favours; you have misimproved *all* of them: but this does not detract from his bounty. But the blessings themselves are *his*, and proclaim his goodness and preservation; and the abuse of them proclaims only your depravity and shame.

"'Tis to his care we owe our breath.  
And all our near escapes from death;  
Safety and health to Him belong,  
He heals the sick, and guards the strong."

Nor is this all that we can say in favour of his



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friendship. Who provided for us as sinners as well as creatures? Who remembered us in our low estate? Who came forward and said, "Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom?" See Him!—*what friendship!*—laying aside the form of God, and "taking upon Him the form of a servant"—becoming "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief!" See Him!—*what friendship!*—"Who, though He was rich, for your sakes becoming poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich!" *What friendship!* See Him "bruised for your iniquities," that "by his stripes you may be healed," and "dying that you may live." "Behold," said the spectators at the grave of Lazarus, "Behold how he loved him!" when they saw the Saviour's tears. Cannot you look up and see it marked in stronger colours? What did the angels think of Him? What did they say when they saw Him bleeding upon the cross? "Behold how he loved them!" *What friendship!* See Him "delivering us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us!" *What friendship!* to wash us from our sins in his own blood! to sympathize with us in all our sorrows, and to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities now, in his glorified state!

Is it an act of friendship to communicate secrets? "He manifests himself unto his people as he does not unto the world." Is it an act of friendship to reprove? "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, while the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."—"As many," says He, "as I love, I rebuke and chasten." And behold Him coming forward and telling them, that He has provided for all the futurities of life,—all its exigencies, all its occurrences! "I will be thy sun and thy shield; I will give grace and glory, and no good thing will I

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withhold from them that walk uprightly!" My brethren, what wonder is it that the Apostle should pray so earnestly for the Ephesians, that they might be able "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God?"

A THIRD characteristic of this friendship is *Ability*. Where the ear is heavy, that it cannot hear, the hand is often shortened, that it cannot save. Nothing is more painful to real affection than inability. To see a beloved object suffering beyond your reach,—to behold in him wants which you cannot relieve,—to witness in him pains which you cannot alleviate,—to hear the voice from parched lips, "Pity me, pity me, Oh ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me," and to be able only to shed unavailing tears. The Syrophenician woman could not heal her daughter, but she could cry to the Saviour, "Lord help me!" and she cried not in vain. The father of the lunatic brought him to the disciples, but they could not dispossess him of his disease. He *then* cried, "Lord have mercy on my son!" and here he succeeded, and he was immediately delivered. Thus, you see, He answers to the declarations of his most blessed word. Thus we see He comes forward as "mighty to save,"—"Able, also, to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him."

Speak we of *wisdom*? "*His* understanding is *infinite*," He sees the end from the beginning, and always knows what is best for us in "this vain life, which we spend as a shadow."

Speak we of *wealth*? His riches are boundless. "The world is his, and the fulness thereof." All

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power is given unto Him, even as Mediator, in heaven and in earth.

Speak we of *strength*? "Lo! He is strong." Nothing is too hard for Him, There is no want but He can relieve; there is no foe but He can conquer, and enable you, worms as you are, to vanquish too; *yea*, He can make you *more than conquerors*, says the Apostle, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly *above all* that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

The Emperor Theodosius, having, on a signal occasion, opened all his prisons and released the prisoners, is reported to have said, "And now would to God I could open all the tombs and give life to the dead!" This was a *noble* saying, but in him it was an *ineffectual* one. However it is not so in regard to the Lord Jesus. *He* can do even this. He said to the widow's son, "Young man, *arise*." He said to Lazarus, "*Come forth*." And with regard to every believer, "He will raise him up at the last day." And, therefore, they are "looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

*Fidelity* is the *fourth* characteristic of this friendship. It was wrong in David to say, "*All men are liars*." He owns himself that he said it in *his haste*, and he should not have said it at all. There were few who ever had more faithful adherents than he. Was *Jonathan* a liar? Was *Gad* a liar? Was *Nathan* a liar? Was *Hushai* a liar? Were the three brave fellows who, with sword in hand, broke through the host of the Philistines, and brought water from the

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well of Bethlehem at the hazard of their lives, *liars?* "Was the noble army who, on the verge of battle, would not suffer him to proceed along with them lest he should be slain, but generously said, "Thou shalt not go forth; for if we flee away they will not care for us; neither, if half of us die, will they care for us; but now *thou art worth ten thousand of us.*" Yet, we find a Joab, after all his perseverance, turned away from him at last; and we find Ahithophel among the conspirators with Absalom. But, says Balaam, by way of contrast, "The *Lord* is not a man that *he* should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent: hath *he* spoken, and will he not do it? hath *he* promised, and will he not make it good?"—"Surely, men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity."—"And," says Solomon, "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint:" not only disappointing, but painful. So says Mr. Newton,

"Sure, as on creatures we depend,  
Our hopes in disappointment end."

It was, then, the wise resolution of Micah, after speaking of the various disappointments to which he was exposed, "Therefore, I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." And there was one who, many ages before, had said, "I looked on my right hand, and I beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I *cried unto thee, O Lord.* I said, *Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.*" A wise choice this; for Jesus is "the same, yesterday, to-day, and for

III

over." His loving kindness changeth not. "Loving his own who are in the world, He loveth them unto the end." He may, indeed, suspend the intimations of his affection, as a rebuke for their delinquencies, "but his loving kindness He will not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail."

*The last characteristic* of this friendship which we shall mention, is *perpetuity*. Now this is distinguishable from the former article. That regards the stability of friendship, this regards the *continuance* of it. For, however true, however faithful, a friend may be, he is *mortal*. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to the dust: in that very day his thoughts perish." Mortality is written on everything here. Yet have we "set our hearts upon that which is not." The Apostle speaks of the comforts of love: and there are such: but, my brethren, love has its pains as well as its pleasures,

"Our roses grow on thorns;  
Our honey bears a sting."

We pay always dear for our relative delights, in the dread of loss, in the anguish of separation, in the fear of death. And Oh, how the memory, from time to time, revives the anguish, and opens afresh the wound that time was beginning to heal; and excites present grief at the recollection of departed pleasure. Hence the complaint of many a bereaved individual, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." I once had a friend and companion who would have shared with me in these difficulties, who would have counselled me under these perplexities, and who would have encouraged me under this despondency, but he is gone, and I must

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finish my journey *alone*. But what is the language of Jesus? "I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee."—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."—"He *was* dead, but is alive again, and *lives for evermore*." And "*because he lives, we shall live also*." Creatures are lamps only, but he is the *sun*. Thus said Mrs. Bowe on the death of her beloved husband:—

"Thou didst but take my lamp away,  
To bless me with unclouded day."

So says Young:—

"All, all on earth is mortal, all beyond is substance.  
How solid all where change shall be no more!

Believers begin to realize this, even while they are here, by laying *hold on eternal life*. They now begin to experience something lasting, something *everlasting*. They are indeed inspired with everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

Thus, Christians, you have a Friend, and his friendship is characterized by *benevolence*, by *sincerity*, by *ability*, by *fidelity*, and by *duration*.

But I now hasten to show—

II. That you *have often behaved very inconsistently, and improperly towards Him*, so as to constrain Him to say, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?"

We premise here two things. *First*, that it is not to be supposed that you can fully discharge the obligations you are under to this Friend, in this weak state of flesh and blood. No, nor in any other in which you can be found, will you be able *fully* to dis-

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charge those obligations. But then, though you cannot do this, you ought to be *sensible* of them, and show that you are willing to make *suitable* returns, though you cannot make adequate returns; and to be always asking, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" Therefore,

*Secondly*, we observe, that God *expects* us to make suitable returns, and is disappointed if we do not. Perhaps you are ready to say—"Can God be disappointed? Why, He *can* be disappointed, and He *cannot* be disappointed. We must make a distinction. As to the question of *fact*, He is *not* disappointed. He *cannot* be disappointed; because nothing can occur to surprise Him, or even to inform Him. But, as to the question of *right*, he may be disappointed. He has a *right* to do so. He *does* do so. He has a right to be disappointed. "What more," said He, "could I have done to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"—"These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none." Oh, what instances of ingratitude and unkindness compel Him to say—"Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" He does expect gratitude and a sense of obligation in his beneficiaries. But general declamation in preaching is doing little. It is much the same as crying—"Fire! Fire!" You ask, "*where?*" I am going to tell you—

*First*, It is reasonable and righteous for your friend to expect that you should obey him. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them," saith the Saviour, "he it is that loveth me." And none of his commandments are "grievous." None of them are arbitrary,—none of them are unrighteous in themselves. All of them are founded in a regard for your welfare.

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Have you, then, been always saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Have you always resembled the servants of David, who said to the king, "Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever the king shall ordain?" Have you been praying,—

"Make me to walk in thy commands,  
'Tis a delightful road;  
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,  
Offend against my God."

*Secondly.* It is reasonable and righteous in your friend to expect that you should own him and honour him before men. Have you done this? Have you been always seeking his glory? Have you endeavoured to promote his cause in the world with all your influence? Have you done what you could in your own circle, and with regard to your own and your children's welfare, and your friends and your neighbours? Do you not sometimes sit in company silent—perfectly dumb, when his truth has been assailed and attacked? Have you not sometimes, when about to meet an enemy, taken off your cockade and put it into your pocket? A fine soldier, truly! Have you not denied him before men? Have you not blushed to have it known, even where you attend, or the very doctrine which you profess?

"A Christian is the highest style of man.  
And is there who the blessed cross wipes off,  
As a foul blot from his dishonoured brow?  
If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight.  
The wretch they quit, desponding of their charge,  
More struck with *grief*, or *wonder*, who can tell?

There is Peter, and he has denied his Lord. "And



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Jesus turned and looked upon Peter.” That look said many things; but it said among other things, “Is this thy kindness to thy friend? “What! while I am suffering and dying for you, Peter, art thou denying me? But can any of you rise up and cast stones at Peter? Have *you* not denied Him? And have not your denials been more shameful than his? Where *was* He when *he* denied him? Why a criminal at the bar of Pilate and shortly to be nailed to the cross. Where is He, when *you* deny Him? In the midst of the throne of universal empire! He is not ashamed to call you brethren! Yet you are ashamed to acknowledge Him as your Lord and Saviour.

*Thirdly.* It is reasonable and righteous in your friend to expect that you should readily believe him and confide in him. You cannot try or dishonour a person more than by questioning his veracity, especially when the person you discredit has been celebrated for truth and faithfulness, and has been never known to fail in a single instance; and when you have had thousands of proofs of this in your own experience.

But suppose this friend should add to his word his *oath*, which ends all strife; and suppose you were to disbelieve him then! and failed to trust him even then! Why then you would charge him not only with falsehood, but with perjury! Oh, I tremble to think of the nature of unbelief! How infinitely vile it is! And where is the Christian but, upon reflection, may say, Oh, my best Friend, my Almighty Benefactor,—thou who art continually doing me good, I hear *thee* complain and say, “Is this thy kindness to thy friend?” And, my best Friend, you shall hear *me* complain too. I will mourn over an evil heart of un-

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belief, prone to depart from the living God; and I will cry out with tears, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief."—"Lord increase my faith."

*Fourthly.* It is reasonable and righteous in your friend to expect that you should be fair and open and unreserved with him,—that you should lay aside formality in your intercourse with him; that you should feel a pleasure in corresponding with him,—in calling upon him,—that you should consider going to his house not a task, but value it as a privilege. That, after he has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble," "pray unto me," "ask and receive that your joy may be full;" that you should not be afraid to ask a favour from him—afraid of wearying him with your continually coming unto him—afraid of asking too much? How well may he say, "Do I deserve this suspicion and reserve? Why do you not make use of me for all the purposes for which I have made myself known?"

*Fifthly.* It is reasonable and righteous that your friend should expect that, if any of *his* friends and relations be near you, you should behave kindly towards them. David inquired on a particular occasion, "Is there any here of the house of Saul, that I may deal kindly towards them for Jonathan's sake?" The Saviour has brethren and sisters. Many of these are poor and afflicted, and, therefore, of course they are despised by the world. "The world knoweth them not." You may be ready to ask, "Why, since they are related to Him, does He suffer this?" Now, one reason is for your own sakes. He allows them to live thus among you to receive the tokens of your affection to Him. He arranges things thus that you may have opportunity to manifest your regard for Him, and not say, "Oh! if He were here upon earth,

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how would I attend to Him: if He were hungry, I would feed Him; if thirsty, I would give Him drink; if He were naked, I would clothe Him; if sick and in prison, I would visit him." Well, but He *is* here. The poor, and *his* poor, you have always with you. And I lo will say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And He will say this before an assembled world: You did not visit me personally in prison; but you visited Bradford there—you visited John Bunyan there, with his poor blind daughter by his side, suffering for conscience' sake—you never fed and clothed me, but you fed and clothed John and Mary such an one, and, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

*Lastly.* It is reasonable and righteous in your friend to expect, that *if he left any emblem or memorial of his, you should highly prize it.* Suppose you had the picture of a dear departed friend; and suppose this represented him in the act of dying, in consequence of his endeavour to save you from fire, or from flood. And suppose he delivered this to you *with his own dying hand*, saying,—“When this you see, remember mo and that you should throw it into the lumber room, and there leave it, and never wipe off the dust, or bring it forth to look upon it, and kiss it and weep. What should we think of your kindness to this friend?

My brethren, such a memorial you have with regard to Him in the Lord's supper. It is the only representation of Him He has left in his church. He exhibited it when dying. He delivered it on the same night in which He was betrayed: Jesus then took bread, and blessed it and brake it, and gave it to the

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disciples and said—"Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me."—  
(Luke xxii. 19.)

"Do this in time, till time shall end,  
In memory of your dying Friend;  
Meet at my table, and record  
The love of your departed Lord."

And have you complied with this? Some observe it twice in the year; some once a quarter; some once a month; and surely this is seldom enough to agree with the words of the Apostle—"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."

But there are some who neglect even this monthly commemoration. And when, my brethren and sisters in Christ,—when the dear picture has been presented before you, have you thrilled with holy joy from head to foot? Have you said—

"Let all my sacred passions move,  
While I rehearse his deeds."

Have you been ready to break forth—

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,  
'Tis music to my ear:  
Fain would I sound it out so loud,  
That earth and heaven might hear."

Many turn their backs upon it—many observe it only occasionally; and then insensibly and indifferently.

But time admonishes me to close; and I shut up the discourse by addressing those who have *not* this Saviour for their Friend, and, then, by addressing a few words to those who *have* this Saviour for their Friend.

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*First.* There are such who have *not* this Saviour for their Friend: and is not this the case with some of you?—yea, with *many* of you. What! has He “no form, nor comeliness, nor any beauty, that you should desire Him?” who yet is “fairer than the children of men;”—yea, who is “*altogether lovely.*” We speak this to your shame. And we speak this not only to your shame, but also to your condemnation; for they are awful words the Apostle uses,—“If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.” It is strange you should be regardless of Him, especially since you must acknowledge you cannot be safe or happy without Him, whether in life or in death. Strange, too, that you should disregard Him, seeing He invites you to come and partake of fellowship with Him. I hope you may neglect Him no longer. Oh, that you may comply with the words of Job, “Acquaint *now* thyself with Him and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee.” Turn, my dear hearers, Oh turn your expectations from creatures who are so many cells of emptiness only, to that Saviour who is *full* of grace and full of truth: then, every thing will befriend you, when He is your friend—then you shall be “in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you,”—then all will be well, and “all things shall work together for your good—then, “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.”

Lord Brooks was a nobleman of our own country, but so charmed was he with that wise and accomplished person, Sir Philip Sidney, that, when he died,

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he would have no other inscription upon his tomb than this—"Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sidney." *Oh*, may my tomb but tell a tale that truly states *here lies a friend of Jesus!* This will be infinitely more important than if it were adorned by the trophies of victory, the ensigns of power, or the emblems of affection.

Then, *secondly*, let me address a few words to those who *have* this Saviour for their friend. Ascertain, my brethren, as clearly as you can, that He is your friend; for He may be so, and you not know it. But it is very desirable that you should know it, so that you may say with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God!" and with the Church, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Then, whatever be your circumstances, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Remember, if other helpers fail, the Lord is the same. "He fainteth not, neither is weary." He is "a very present help in trouble." Then, "if even father and mother forsake you, He, the Lord, will take you up if you are "troubled on every side, you will not be perplexed;" if cast down, you will not be in despair; having nothing, yet in Christ you will possess all things."

Then, dear brethren, often think of going home to this dear Friend, and being for ever with the Lord. The Apostle said, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is *far better*." And will it not be far better for *you I*—will it not be far better for you to be in the land *flowing with, milk and honey*, than to be in the wilderness with the serpents, and the thorns and briars? Will it not be far better to be delivered from the burden of the flesh, and to be "presented faultless before the presence of his glory,

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with exceeding joy?" Oh, be not afraid to go to Him! His presence will be with you in "the valley of the shadow of death and at the end of it you will find Him waiting to receive you to himself,—that you may "behold his glory,"—that you may "see Him as He is," and be "for ever with the Lord."

Again, demean yourselves properly towards Him. O, let Him not be "wounded in the house of his friends and rather *die* than "cause the worthy name by which you are called to be blasphemed," or his truth to be evil spoken of.

*Finally*, thank Him for his complaining, his chiding, and his rebukes. We are too prone to wish comfort. Comfort is a desirable thing, but we want something besides comfort. Be concerned, therefore, to search and try your ways, and turn unto the Lord. If He says, "I have something against thee,"—and where is the individual to whom He does not say this—say with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Do not be afraid of being too humble.

"The more thy glory strikes my eye,  
The humbler I shall lie:  
Thus, while I sink, my joy shall rise  
Unmeasurably high."

Do not be afraid of godly sorrow—"This worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." Do not be afraid of tears—"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

"'Tis joy enough, my all in all,  
At thy dear feet to lie;  
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,  
And none can higher fly."

AMEN.

## SERMON VIII.\*

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY STATED AND  
IMPROVED.

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“Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.”—GAL. ii. 4.

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LIBERTY is our subject this morning. Liberty has always been highly prized, and can never be prized too highly. There is something animating and ennobling in the very sound of liberty. The word is sweet, but the thing itself is much sweeter. Slavery is always disgraceful and hateful. By depriving a man of his freedom you reduce him to a brute, or a mere machine. He is unworthy to wear the name of a man who can be reconciled to the absence of it; and, as Cowper finely says,

“Who lives and is not weary of a life  
Exposed to manacles deserves them well.  
'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower  
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;  
And we are weeds without it.”

Well, we have liberty, we have *civil* liberty, we have *spiritual* liberty. We have liberty as Britons, and we have liberty as Christians.

Yes, we have liberty as *Britons*. You would suppose, from the language of some, that we live in the regions

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\* Preached Feb. 29, 1852.



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of wretchedness and slavery, and that we have the notion of liberty rather than the reality. But Britain is *free*. We acknowledge that everything is imperfect under the sun. And whatever is human will always betray its origin by its defects. But while we have four P's, even in the degree in which we have them, Britain can never be enslaved. We have a free Parliament, a free Pulpit, a free Press, and a free Platform.

For, what now is liberty? It is as remote from licentiousness as it is from despotism. It is not a permission for us to do as we *would*, but for us to do as we *ought*. Perfect beings may indeed be indulged with the former; depraved beings can only be entrusted with the latter. Burke finely said, that "persons are enabled to enjoy civil liberty in proportion as they impose moral fetters on themselves." And Newton has said,

"Men toil for freedom in a senseless mood;  
But he who loves it most must first *be wise and good.*"

All persons prize liberty—The most tyrannical beings I have met with during a long life, have been, in their own connexions and dependencies, the most zealous for liberty; that is *for their own*.

But you must not suppose that I am going to speak this morning only or principally of civil liberty, no, but of *spiritual*: not of the liberty we have as Britons, but of the liberty we have as Christians; or, as the Apostle finely phrases it in our text, of "*the liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.*" Ah!—He is all and in all. We must always refer to Him. What *have-we* that we have not *in Him*? Are we chosen? We are "chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world."—"In Him we have redemption through his

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blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”—“In Him we have obtained an inheritance.” God has given unto us eternal life, “but this life is in his Son.” He has given us “exceeding great and precious promises,” but they are all “yea and amen in Christ Jesus.”—“It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” And we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.” No wonder, therefore, that we should read of “our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus”—“If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”—“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” A liberty, unsung by poets, and by senators unpraised. Let us plunge at once into the subject; and let us endeavour to exemplify our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus. It will be found to include five things, *First*, our freedom from the exactions and impositions of man in religion. *Secondly*, our freedom from the bondage of corruption. *Thirdly*, our freedom from the condemnation of the law. *Fourthly*, our freedom of access to God. *Fifthly*, our freedom to enjoy the good things of nature and Providence.

I. Our liberty, which is in Christ Jesus, includes our freedom from the exactions and impositions of men in religion. Now observe, we say, *in religion*; because we do not here refer to civil things. We are willing to abide always by our Saviour’s distinction, “Bender to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which are God’s.” Or, as Watts has beautifully versified it—

“Let Cæsar’s dues be ever paid  
 To Cæsar and his throne;  
 But souls and consciences were made  
 To be the Lord’s alone.”

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So says the Apostle: "Bender, therefore, to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." But civil authority cannot interfere between God and our soul; and nothing can be binding upon the conscience in religion that has not the sanction of divine authority.

Observe here, now, the example and the conduct of the Apostle Paul. Observe how he enforces civil obedience:—"Let every soul be subject to the higher ] lowers;" they are rulers that "bear not the sword in vain;" they are "a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." You see here the purpose of civil government: it is to punish offenders and to encourage well-doing; but not to bind the conscience with regard to the doctrines of religion.

How was it with the Apostle Paul at this very time? Why he went forth to overturn the religion of the empire, which was idolatry; at the head of which was the Emperor, as chief. In the name of the Lord Jesus he went forth boldly to expose error and sin. "You say," (says he), "there are lords many and gods many; we affirm that there is but one God. You bum incense to demons; we serve the only living and true God. You deny that there is a resurrection of the dead; we say there is 'a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust.'" No, my brethren, where religion is concerned, Jesus is the King in Zion. He is our Lawgiver. And if any require you to believe or do what He does not require you to believe or do, you lire enjoined, you are bound, to obey God rather than man. The Saviour comes forward and says, "Call no limn master upon earth; for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." No; the inquiry

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must always be, "What saith the Scripture?" No; "the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants."

When will men distinguish things that differ? When will they distinguish between civil governments and Christianity? One is the offspring of man, the other is the offspring of God. The one regards us as men and as citizens, the other as Christians. The one deals with us with regard to time, the other with regard to eternity.

II. We observe, "Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus," includes a freedom from the bondage of corruption. I was thinking, in my retirement this morning, what a number of tyrants does every sinner serve! What a tyrant is Satan! "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," and who "takes them captive at his will: he first seduces, and then torments them. What a tyrant is the world!—they who have faith indeed "overcome the world but all others are overcome by it. We read of those who "walk according to the course of this world," as if they had liberty; but they are rather drawn or dragged along in that course. They are always disappointed and complaining and murmuring, and always speaking against the world, and yet they suffer themselves to be deceived and tantalized by it. Their time is not their own, and their will is not their own; they must do and say as others do: they cannot do as they would.

What a tyrant is sin! "He that committeth sin," says the Apostle, "is the servant of sin."—"His servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." And though, as Peter says, a sinner may boast of his

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liberty, and utter great swelling words; “yet,” says lie, “while they promise themselves liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.” Is, then, the sinner free? Ye drunkards, are you free? Did you never read, “Awake Oh drunkard, and weep?” Did you never feel the effect of intemperance on your own selves? Did you never see persons reduced by intemperance to want, and their wives and families to beggary and rags? Oh, yes, you have seen many such; and what trembling limbs, and palsied frames, and perhaps, premature death, has been the consequence. Oh yes; and yet you will not resist!

Is he free, who is under the dominion of pride and revenge, and envy and malice? What wretch upon earth drudges like one of these—with whom reason remonstrates, and conscience condemns? Who sees and approves better things, but follows worse! Sometimes, indeed, they vow that they will not again walk in the same evil course, and then “their iniquities, like the wind, carry them away.” When such an one meets with a temptation that is fatal to his virtue and his happiness, he can neither flee nor resist. Is such an one free? Oh, says the Apostle—looking back to the days of his unregeneracy—“Oh,” says he, “we were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after this the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared.” And how did it appear? “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.” Yes, grace

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never leaves its subjects as it finds them. It finds them slaves of Satan and of sin; but it says, "Sin shall *not* have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."—"Ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."—"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."—"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed; for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God."

Why, then, you are servants still: *yes*, but not slaves. You have a master still:—we have a Master, and we obey him. Our Master is in heaven. Our master requires nothing of us but what is reasonable and righteous. We have indeed a Master, and it is our pleasure to servo him. His work is honourable and glorious. He "draws us by the cords of love and by the bands of a man."—"His yoke is easy, and his burden is light and his service is perfect freedom. We are upholden by his free Spirit, and we can say with David, "We will walk at liberty, for we seek thy precepts."

III. We said, "Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, includes a freedom from the condemnation of the law."—"The soul that sinneth it shall die." And, says the Apostle, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And who has ever done this? Who has ever continued from the first hour of reason in avoiding everything the law forbids, and in doing everything the law commands? Why, then, you are a transgressor; and the curse enters by every breach of transgression.

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But *whose* curse is it? The curse of God,—the Almighty God! and “who knoweth the power of his anger “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!” And is the execution of this curse certain? It is as certain as the sun rising to-morrow morning, unless—*unless what?*—unless a surety be found,—unless a surety come forward and say, “Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.”—“I will bear their sins in my own body on the tree,—I will suffer ‘the just for the unjust,’ to bring them to God.” And here He is, and all that is said of Him in the Scriptures is exemplified. He has done all this: He has given his life a ransom for us; and now, “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” *No*; He “has *redeemed* them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them.” How, therefore, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—“Peace which passeth all understanding,”—yea, “we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have also received the atonement.” And they could not have originally been so dear to God, as they now become, when they appear in his presence, sprinkled in his blood; and when they are heard making mention of his righteousness only, and are accepted in the beloved.

IV. We said, “Our liberty, which is in Christ Jesus,” includes a freedom of access to God. He is the greatest and the best of Beings. In his presence is “fulness of joy;” at his right hand are “pleasures for evermore.” “With Him is the fountain of life.” It is, therefore, “good to draw near to God;” and, as the royal Psalmist says, “All that are far from Him shall perish.”

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Now, observe, when the angels sinned in heaven, they were immediately driven out of it. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, they were banished from Paradise. When the Jews sinned they were expelled from the land "flowing with milk and honey," that is Canaan, the land of promise; and they became "a proverb and a bye-word." So many instances of actual fact show us, every one of them, what is the effect of sin—that it is to get in between us and God—that it is to separate us, to keep us from God. And this was our condition by sin. But the degradation, the misery, the wretchedness of sin, all these arise from our separation from God; and our happiness and our elevation must arise from our re-admission to Him, and our fellowship and communion with Him. Accordingly, Jesus is the Mediator. "Through Him," says the Apostle, both Jews and Gentiles "have access by one Spirit unto the Father." And again he says, "We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." Yes, he goes forward and says, "We have 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 veil, that is to say, his flesh."

Now, observe the difference here with regard to an earthly monarchy. The approach to him may be difficult, and it must be very much limited. He cannot always receive every petition himself, nor can he hold intercourse with all his subjects. This would be considered inconsistent, not only with his ability, but with his dignity. As he does not possess real greatness, he must ape it. He must substitute in the room of it court ceremonials; he must multiply his guards and his attendants. Thus we have read of the Em-



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peror Napoleon often requiring persons to pass through fourteen rooms, before they entered his presence and chamber.

But, now, how is it with regard to believers,—their liberty with God, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords? Why, they can have access to Him at all times; they can tell Him all that perplexes them, all that distresses, all that alarms them! They can communicate to Him what they are not at liberty to communicate to their dearest earthly friend! They can find Him in every place. They may go and talk with Him in the fields; they may hold communion with Him by the way; they may have intercourse with Him even in their ordinary business! They have liberty, full liberty, to enter his house; they have liberty, full liberty, to come to his table; they have liberty, full liberty, to hang upon his arm, to lean upon his bosom, to call Him their Lord and their God, “the strength of their heart and their portion for ever!”

V. We said, “Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus,” is a freedom to partake of and enjoy the good things of nature and Providence. Who forbids this? Who cries, “Touch not, taste not, handle not which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have, indeed, a show of wisdom in will worship and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”

But we never have observed that unscriptural self-denial and self-imposed severity have, at any time, aided in the mortification of sin, or in the promotion of sanctification. The Scripture speaketh expressly on the point, and says, “For every creature

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of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." Here is our charter.

There are some persons who seem almost afraid to make use of their temporal mercies and comforts. It is well for us to feel that we are unworthy of the least of them all; but it is equally desirable that we should feel that we are welcome; and that such is the infinite goodness of God, that, as the Apostle says, "He giveth us all things richly to enjoy."

It is very true we have, by sin, forfeited all claim to God's goodness, but the Saviour has restored this right

"He sunk beneath our heavy woes,  
To raise us to his throne;  
There's not a gift his hand bestows,  
But cost his heart a groan!"

They are, therefore, now again become ours; yea, more ours than over they were before. Yes, and now says God in his kindness to us, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment."

Are Christians to be unobservant of the succession of the seasons of the year? Are they to be blind to the beauties of the garden? Are they to be dead to the fragrance of the rose, or "the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed?" Or are they not to seek to sympathize with "the valleys when they stand thick with corn, or the little hills when they rejoice on every side?" Will Christians feel a less delightful influence and interest in a few weeks time, when their God and Saviour will come forth and say, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo! the winter is

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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; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

"He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,  
And all are slaves beside."

The Christian can look around upon all the works of Creation, and say, "My Father made them all."

There is no one can enjoy the good things of nature and Providence like the Christian, because he connects a sacredness with them, being ransomed by the Saviour's death, so that he cannot use them indifferently or improperly. And then he relishes the love of the Giver in the gift, and, as Watts says,

"How sweet our daily comforts prove,  
When they are seasoned by his love."

We have thus endeavoured to exemplify "our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus." How shall we improve it? The improvement will include *four* admonitions.

*First*, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage." This is the admonition which the Apostle himself gives to these Galatians. Now we are not afraid, Christians, of your losing the state itself; but you may lose some of its spirit. You may lose some of its enjoyment, and some of its noble profession. You may tremble, where you should be bold, and you may temporise, where you should be firm and *decisive as a martyr!* You may sneak, and you may conceal, and you may cringe, where you ought to be

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open as the day. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Or if, in your resistance of the invasions which your spiritual enemies would make upon your high liberty,—if this should bring upon you reproach,—if they should call your faith fanaticism,—if they should call your humility a want of spirit,—if, for your dear Redeemer's sake, you should suffer reproach, you are to take up this cross, and hind it as a garland around your neck, exclaiming, "If this is to be vile, I will be yet more vile. So, blessed Jesus! in the days of thy flesh thou wast despised and rejected of men, and thy name was cast out as evil but "it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."

*Secondly*, Do not abuse your liberty. There is nothing too good to be abused. Therefore, the Apostle, speaking of this liberty, in the latter part of this epistle says, "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Beware of the Antinomian scheme—Oh, *he* is freed from the law; therefore he has nothing to do with it. But Paul had to do with it. Paul said, "I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man." Though he turned away from it as a covenant of works, he viewed it as a rule of life. Remember, your liberty is not a liberty to sin. "Is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." Why, the very thought of continuing in sin that grace may abound, quite *shocked* the Apostle, who said, "God forbid! How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?"—"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

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There is another abuse of this liberty, that is, of placing all who profess Christianity upon the same level in society, as if, because we are all one in Christ Jesus (for so we are), that the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the ruler and the ruled, were all the same, in a civil condition. God himself maintains the gradations and distinctions of life, and the duties and obligations resulting from them; and I never knew any violation of these distinctions but it was attended with injury, not only with regard to those above, but even to those below their level.

*Thirdly.* Improve this liberty. In one sense you cannot; its provisions surpass all expression and conception. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But we mean we should make use of it and improve it. As to yourselves you should be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And not only so: not only should we be without rebuke to the day of Christ, but we should seek to be exemplary—to be useful, and to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. We should seek to walk worthy of the vocation by which we are called—to walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost: to walk in the light of his countenance all the day, and in his righteousness to be exalted. For, as Zechariah says, "All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever."

*Fourthly.* Recommend this liberty to others; only see that you exemplify yourselves what you recom-

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mend, otherwise you may be more injurious than beneficial, as some are by their talking on religious subjects—otherwise you may draw forth the proverb, “Physician heal thyself;” or the retort, “Thou that 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 must *do*, therefore, as well as say. Show what your religion has done *for* you, and show what it has done *in* you; and then you may expect and hope that it will do something *by* you. Then your address to others may be effectual; and if you “hold forth the word of life” by your tempers and conduct, it will not be difficult to hold it forth by your lives and by your lips. If you “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,” Oh, then you may go and talk away to others: then you may go and say, “We are the first people upon earth; we live under the finest constitution in the world. Our privileges, and our immunities, and our dignities, are numberless and immense. There is nothing excellent from which we are excluded; nothing wise and glorious to which we are not entitled. We are “the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.” We are the children of God,—“heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus.” Oh, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.”—“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.” Thus you may address persons like the first believers, and say, “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

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the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” And what is *my* invitation then with ‘which I would finish this discourse to you all this morning?

“Ye alas! who long have been,  
Willing slaves to hell and sin;  
Hence from grace no longer rove,  
Stop and taste redeeming love!”

## SERMON IX.\*

THE GIFT OF THE SCRIPTURES, AND HOW IT SHOULD  
BE IMPROVED.

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“The Holy Scriptures.”—2 TIM. iii. 15.

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MY brethren, as we are the creatures of God, and as He hath made us reasonable creatures, it is natural to suppose that we should have a revelation of his mind and will concerning us. Without this, how can we walk so as to please Him, or how, without this, can we obtain the knowledge of his approbation, upon which all our happiness depends? But this was not to be derived from ourselves. The trial was made; it was made by those who enjoyed great advantages with regard to time, and the knowledge of the arts and sciences; and what was the issue? “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,”—“they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”—“The world by wisdom knew not God.” And this arose not only, or principally, as has been frequently represented, from the weakness and inadequacy of reason to make the discovery, but because the subject was not only beyond our reach, but fell not within our province. The acquisition depended not upon us, but upon God. We are servants;

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\* Preached March 7th, 1852.



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it is not for servants to dictate, but to obey. We are patients; it is not for patients to prescribe, but to submit. We are criminals offending; and it is the prerogative of the sovereign offended, to choose the way in which his mercy shall be exercised, or whether he shall exercise mercy at all. Our only inquiry, therefore, should be, What may we hope for? and our prayer—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And, in answer to this, says God, "I have *showed* thee, Oh man, what is good and it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

This revelation, my brethren, is the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures of which Paul here speaks, and says of Timothy, "Erom a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Our subject this morning, therefore, is the Scriptures; and we will endeavour to show two things: Eirst, What you owe to these Scriptures in a way of *privilege*; and, Secondly, what you owe to them in a way of *duty*. And this, we hope, will prepare for a welcome announcement of the approaching meeting of the Bible Society, and will, also, furnish a powerful argument in favour of its claims. But, for the dear sake of a few whose minds may feel dreadful forebodings, I would just say, there will be *no collection* at the close of this service.

I. Then, let us show what you owe to these Scriptures in a way of *privilege*; and it is no easy thing to do this. Not a little, indeed, may be inferred from

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the various names and titles which the Scriptures bear. For instance, Is *truth* valuable? they are called "the Word of truth." Is *righteousness* valuable? they are called "the Word of righteousness." Is *grace* valuable? they are called "the Word of his grace." Is *life* valuable? they are called "the Word of life." Is *salvation* valuable? they are called "the Word of this salvation." But let us consider the advantages we derive from the Scriptures, when viewed under *seven aspects*.

*First.* Let us view these Scriptures as inspired. They claim no less a distinction and pre-eminence for themselves. "Holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Wise men, indeed, differ a little as to the mode of this inspiration, but this does not affect the reality, nor the nature of its communications.

All we have met with, is acknowledged to be of Divine origin. It challenges, and it supports its challenge well. We have here prophecies, we have precepts: we have promises, we have admonitions: we have here the achievements of the best of men, and we have the convictions of the wisest of men. We have internal evidence in the purity, in the dignity, and in the consistency of its contents. We have *external* evidence in the numberless miracles openly performed, in the presence of enemies who would have gladly deceived them if they could. We have prophecies, many of which have been fulfilled; and others, which are fulfilling under our own eye. We have the establishment and spread of the cause, by means which could never be considered adequate

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to the production of the result, without a Divine interposition and agency.

“Hence and for ever from my heart  
I bid my doubts and fears depart;  
And to those hands my soul resign,  
Which bear credentials so divine.  
Let the false rapture of the mind  
Be lost, and vanish with the wind:  
Here I can fix my hopes secure;  
This is thy word, and must endure.”

And, my brethren, how delightful is it, in a world of uncertainties and suspicions, of conjectures and errors, to find something concerning which we may say, Well, this is truth,—this is something upon which we may rely firm and secure; and here we have something upon which we may depend, with more assurance than upon the continuance of the earth and of the heavens; for, as our Saviour says, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

*Secondly.* Let us view these Scriptures as *preserved*. What an immense multitude of books have perished in the lumber of the world! Yet this book has survived, though it has been, exposed to dangers, and many of which are peculiar to itself, especially those which arise from the malice of devils, and the wickedness of men; and many an unholy person would gladly destroy the Bible, especially if he could destroy the things recorded therein, as well as the leaves.

Not many years ago, at Marshfield, in our own neighbourhood, there was a surgeon of the place whose wife had been awakened under my ministry, and it was natural for her to read some of my works; these he successively destroyed: it was more natural

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for her still to read the precious Bible; and, alas, he diabolically seized this, and thrust it into the grate and consumed it to ashes!

Jeremiah had a roll written from the mouth of God, which was read before the king, Jehoiakim,—“And it came to pass that when Jehoiadah had read three or four leaves, that the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, and burnt it.” So Antiochus, the persecutor of the Jews, did the same; he searched up all the copies of the Jewish Scriptures, and had them consumed in the fire. Dioclesian did the same with regard to the Christian Scriptures, and raised a pillar, upon which he had it inscribed,—“In such a year, the Christian heresy was destroyed.” *Was it?*

Oh, Christians! let not your hearts tremble for the ark of God: it is in safe keeping; and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”—“All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is 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.”

*Thirdly.* Let us view these Scriptures as translated. The first translation of the Scriptures was the Septuagint, executed by a number of learned men at Alexandria, who translated the Scriptures of the Old Testament into Greek. This was peculiarly overruled by the providence of God. Alexander, by his victories and dominion, was the means of spreading the knowledge of the Greek language, and thus the Scriptures could be easily read; and thus an expectation was commonly entertained of, a future Messiah and Benefactor. The New Testament was, also, soon translated into several languages; but it was a long time before

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the Bible was translated into our own language. And with regard to this, we ascribe nothing to Government: Government had no part of the work, and shall have no share of the praise. It was accomplished by several well-minded individuals, whose hearts God had touched; and who laboured with much diligence, with great perseverance, and through many dangers. Indeed, the principal number of them were burnt to death for their God-like conduct. After various attempts and persecutions, the translation which you now have was completed; and we want no other, and, I trust, we shall never desire any other.

But how much do you owe to the translation of the Scriptures? What would the Scriptures be to you in their original languages, but only a dark room p filled, indeed, with beautiful statues and pictures, but none of them can be seen. They would be as a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed. But now all is laid open.

There are some who endeavour to run down what they call "carnal learning but they should remember that without this carnal learning, under God, the Holy Scriptures would have been an universal blank; whereas, now, every man can "read in his own language the wonderful works of God." And never say, "It is only a translation we have." That translation is the Bible to you; and it is the *entire* Bible and the complete Bible to you. Never imagine that scholars have greatly the advantage of yourselves, and that they are in possession of treasures which are denied to you; for it is not so—the most qualified and eminent judges being witnesses.

Melchior Adam tells us, that Bugenhagen (one of those whom Luther employed in translating the Bible,)

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was so affected with the incomparable mercy to the churches of Christ in Germany, that every year he invited his friends to a solemn feast that day whereon the work was finished, which was called the feast of the translation of the Bible.

When Elizabeth came to the throne, by an act of grace she opened the prisons, and a number of the citizens addressed her, thanking her for her generosity; but ventured piously and ingeniously to say, "May it please your Majesty, there are four very excellent and worthy men who have been denied to walk abroad in the English tongue—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John;" and from that time they have been allowed to walk at liberty, and to speak to you in your own tongue, in public and private, of the wonderful works of God.

*Fourthly.* Let us view these Scriptures as printed. Printing was a wonderful invention; it was, indeed, a dangerous invention to some, that is, to those who "hate the light," and who "come not to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd." Cardinal Wolsey spake wisely as a cardinal, when he said, "We must destroy the press, or the press will destroy us." But what an invaluable privilege has this been to others! For transcriptions of the Holy Bible must have been very difficult to obtain. There were not many able to copy for themselves, and but few who could purchase written copies. There were certain among the Greeks and Romans who educated some of their slaves, and employed them to transcribe. But all could not afford to educate and employ persons in this way, and the copies of the Scriptures must have been extremely few.

A certain writer says, when London Bridge was

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first built, a copy of the Scriptures would cost nearly as much as one of the arches; and the whole of a labourer's work through life would not have been sufficient to have furnished him with a copy! How is it now? Now, you see, by means of this invention, they may be multiplied to any degree; and every family, yea, every individual, may be in possession of a Bible, either by donation or by easy purchase. And "we speak the words of truth and soberness," when we say, while one copy of the Scriptures could be written off by the pen, a million, yea, a million, may be printed from the press! Shall we overlook this?

Again, *Fifthly*. Let us view the Scriptures as expounded. Now we owe much to many of those who have thus written. We have a rich abundance and variety of commentators. Some of these expositors treat much on the history of trees, plants, flowers, birds, animals, productions, &c.; but there are others that, with a nobler purpose, explain the higher subjects of the Bible, namely, those which relate to our everlasting peace—which concern the Lord Jesus, in whom alone we have "wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

Calvin wrote well as a commentator. It seems amazing that he should have succeeded so well, when we consider that he had no one to follow, and that he had to find his way; yet he cut his way through a large wood of difficulties. He is seldom found to differ from those who followed him in the same course.

What a glorious work is Scott's Commentary; perhaps, in regard to the meaning of Scripture, and for the use of ministers, it is superior to any other. But, Oh! *dear Henry!*—thou prince of all expositors!—

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nothing can ever equal thy commentary for personal profit and pious use. And we are almost induced to excuse the extravagance of old Mr. Ryland, when he says, "No Christian can ever begin to read this commentary, without wishing that he was shut out from the world, and had nothing to do till he had reached the end of it."

*Sixthly.* Let us view the Scriptures as preached. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Now, we are far from undervaluing the reading of the Holy Scriptures; yet, after all, generally speaking, "Faith cometh by hearing, and *hearing* by the Word of God." And, "It hath pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." The highest view we can take of preaching is, that it is a Divine institution; and we are expressly assured of this by the Apostle, who tells us that "when the Saviour ascended up, He 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."

Here we learn, that preaching is a Divine appointment, and that it is a permanent appointment; that the trumpet of the Gospel is to be blown till we hear the last trumpet sound. And if it be the appointment of God—the only wise God—it must be a *wise* appointment. It displays much of the wisdom of God. Nothing in the communication of knowledge has ever yet been found like a living address from man to man. Nothing can produce so much impres-



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sion and effect. Julian, the apostate, therefore, when he wished to revive paganism, determined to establish it by means of public speakers. Hence all our modern institutions employ their orators and lecturers. Even the Peace and the Temperance Society require, not only to be read, but heard. It is certain our blessed Saviour left nothing behind him in manuscript; but he was a prophet and he was a preacher, and "never man spake like this man."—"The common people heard him gladly." The poor were evangelized, and multitudes followed him wherever he went. If he preached upon the mountain, there were they; if on the seashore, there were they; if it were noised that he was in the house, there were they pressing round about him. "He came down, like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth."

How were the nations Christianised at first? By preaching. What principally did the work of reformation? Preaching. What chiefly evangelized Scotland? Was it not the preaching of Knox and others. What caused the revival of evangelical religion in our own country in the time of Whitfield and Wesley? Was it not the preaching of the everlasting Gospel. How is it now? Those of us who are pastors, when we converse with persons for admission to the Lord's table, find the largest proportion, by far, have been awakened to a concern about their state, not by reading the Word, but by the preaching of it.

*Lastly.* Let us view the Scriptures as experienced.

There are many who have the Scriptures *without* them, but not *in* them. There are many who have the Scriptures in their own country, in their churches, in their houses, in their hands, and some of them even in their mouths, but not in their *hearts*. But there

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are others to whom they are as a "well of water, springing up into everlasting life." The Word has come to them, "not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance and they have found these words "to be spirit and to be life."

Cromwell required all his men to carry a Bible. This was called Canne's Bible. I have one of them in my house. On a certain day one of his soldiers was engaged in a skirmish, and a ball struck the very position of his heart, and would doubtless have killed him, but there it *met with his Bible*, which he carried under his regimentals. It pierced through the cover, and it penetrated as far as the Book of Ecclesiastes. This he discovered after the battle, as he turned over one perforated leaf after another, till he found the ball resting—*where?*—AH, WHERE? Upon these very words:—"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: *but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*" This, with the remarkable deliverance, was the means of his conversion: and when at Dr. Gifford's church he gave in his experience as a candidate for baptism, *he kissed the Book and said, "This has been the means of saving my body and soul too. The means of the salvation of my body from the ball, and my soul from hell."*

What have *you* to say to the Scriptures in this view? I do not wonder that Papists feel so little regard to the Scriptures. They owe much more to the tradition of the fathers than they do to the prophets and apostles. I do not wonder that many of you who are merely nominal Christians, feel no more regard to the Scriptures than you do, never having found them to be

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“the power of God unto salvation;” and, therefore, you only read them from mere curiosity, or for amusement.

Yet how is this? Surely there are many here this morning who can bear a blessed testimony to the value and importance of the Bible. Oh, says one, this blessed book has indeed been instrumental in calling me “out of darkness into marvellous light.” In what a state of ignorance was I before; now I can say, “Whereas I was once blind, now I see.” Oh, says another, it was this book, that when I felt a burden too heavy for me to bear, said to my conscience, “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” Oh, says another, “I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath and I can say, “Unless thy law had been my delight, I had perished in my affliction.” What was the book that went and said to the wife weeping by the side of her dying husband—“Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me?” What was it that said to the bereaved sister, “Thy brother shall rise again?” What is it that says to the Christian, in the prospect of all the unknown futurities of life, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness?” “—I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” —“My grace is sufficient for thee.”

Thus we have shown you what we owe to the Holy Scriptures; the benefits we derive from them as *inspired*, as *preserved*, as *translated*, as *printed*, as *expounded*, as *preached*, and as experienced under Divine teaching.

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I must now hasten to show—

II. “What you owe to these Scriptures in a way of *Duty*. And, surely, nothing less do you owe in a way of duty, than to *peruse* them, to *believe* them, to *understand* them, to *practise* them, and to *distribute* them.

*First*. Surely you owe nothing less than to peruse them, and to value them, as David did. He said, “I rejoice at thy word as those who find great spoil.”—“I esteem the words of thy mouth,” says Job, “more than my necessary food.” And, says David, “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.” And what said the celebrated liobert Boyle?—“I would prefer a single twig of the tree of life to all the riches of the world.”

But let it be remembered that the Scriptures will not profit, unless they are “mixed with faith in them that hear them.” This is the commendation to the Thessalonians: the Apostle says, “When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you who believe.” Do you thus receive the Scriptures? What if you realized God in them! If, when you sat down, you placed your Bible before you, and were to say, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak,” and considered him as speaking to you from heaven, could you nod over the volume, as you now often do? Could you trifle with its hallowed pages, as you now sometimes do; making them only a subject of curiosity or entertainment? Bunyan says, “All through life the thought would, now and then, come across my mind, Is not the Bible a lie?” “And this,” said he, “pro-

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duced a shock which I am unable to describe." And no wonder; for "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Ah! my brethren, I am sometimes ready to ask, Are we not practically unbelievers? Do we really believe the Scriptures? or, may we not say, with good Mr. Newton, "What unbelievers are the best believers among us?"

*Secondly.* What less can this duty be than to understand them. The Eunuch was reading the Scriptures, when Philip joined the chariot, and inquired, saying, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" He did not then. Oh, it is a sad thing that many professors of religion are so shamefully ignorant of the Scriptures, in consequence of which they are so liable to err,—so liable to be led away with the error of the wicked, and "carried away by every wind of doctrine," so as frequently not to know the way wherein they should walk, or the things which they should do; so that if the word of Christ dwell in them, it is not "richly and in all wisdom." There may be an abundance laid up in their memory, but they know not how to apply it. They are not, as the Apostle says, "*skilful* in the word of life, for they are babes." "Eor, when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again what be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." There are few who do justice to the Scriptures in this respect. They are—

"A broad land of wealth unknown,  
Where hidden glory lies."

Or, as David says, "They are exceeding broad."

“The cross, the manger, and the throne,  
Are big with blessings yet unknown.”

I wish you were better acquainted with them. “Search the Scriptures seek after more acquaintance with “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” And, instead of imagining that you are very proficient in Divine knowledge, pray with the Apostle, that you “may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.”

*Thirdly.* Surely this duty cannot be less than the *practising* of what the Scriptures teach. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them and even “faith, without works, is dead, being alone.”

We read of “obeying the truth,” and of “walking in the truth.” You never can regard the Scriptures properly, till you find them to be “a light unto your feet, and a lamp unto your paths.” There is nothing in these Scriptures but has a practical aim and tendency. Its doctrines are “according to godliness:” its exceeding great and precious promises are given us, “that, by these, ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” And “he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as Christ is pure.” Hume, the infidel, sneeringly said, “the Bible was given to keep the poor in order.” I think it was given to keep us *all* in order. I am sure it says as much to the rich as to the poor; as much to the master as it does to the servant; to the husband, as it does to the wife; and as much to you professors as to the profane: it tells some of you that you have “the form of godliness without the power,” “a name to live while you are dead.”

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*Fourthly.* Surely this duty cannot include less than your distributing them. The Scriptures were designed for all. The Scriptures have not reached their end, when they have reached only to you. As soon as you become possessors, you are also to become dispensers of them. The Scriptures are not given you as a blessing only to enjoy, but as a talent, also, to employ. You have them not for yourselves only, but also for others; therefore, as the Apostle says, "Their debtors you are." And you are *religious rogues and villains*, if you withhold from them their rights, or embezzle what was only intrusted to you for their sakes! What, then, must we think of those who withhold the Scriptures from the common people? as does the Church of Home. It is in vain for them to deny it.

The learned Mr. Townsend published his Travels in Spain: his wife, Lady Clark, was a member with us. When in Spain, though he had access to their libraries, and even examined them, he saw many religious books; and what was remarkable, he saw the history of the Inquisition, (by Dr. Chandler), yet he never saw a Bible while he was in that country!

Two converts from Popery have joined this church, since I have been its pastor. Both affirmed that when they became Papists, immediately the priests required them to give up their Bibles. One of them never saw a Bible for sixteen years after, till he returned to Protestantism, when he received this blessed book again, as life from the dead!

But, my brethren, instead of reflecting upon others for not doing their duty, let us catechize you a little. Do you abound much in this "work of faith, and labour of love?" Are you concerned and desirous

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about the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures? You know well enough that they are the true sayings of God: you know that it is in your power to supply those who are destitute, with these sacred pages. All of you can do something individually, and still more relatively. You may join others, and so be workers together—hence the advantage of combination and united effort; for what cannot be done by one individual may be accomplished by hundreds. In the year 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in London. It was a day of prayer and faith: I was then in town; and though I could not attend the first meeting, I saw some of those who were going, and wished them God-speed. The number of attendants was small, and the collection inconsiderable. Three or four pages contained the Report. What has God wrought since then? Now the annual Report is a whole volume: now the income has reached nearly to the sum of one hundred thousand pounds a year!\*

Now thousands of similar institutions have been established, at home and abroad; and *millions* have become subscribers and members! Never was there such an institution under heaven! that rose so rapidly and prevailed; that has so magnified and grown; that has expended such sums in benevolence, and that has done so much good!

I remember that, many years ago, some supposed the Society unnecessary, if not for foreign service, yet for *home*. But, when examination was made, how many thousands of families, as well as individuals, were

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\* During 1853 up to April 1854, the extraordinary sum of £222,000 had been contributed, including the Jubilee and Chinese funds!—EDITOR.



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found destitute of a copy of this blessed book! There were, also, many villages and hamlets, where not *one copy* of the Scriptures was to be found in their own language!

The principle of this institution,—as all great discoveries are, or ought to be,—is “Union without compromise.”

It might naturally have been supposed that none would refuse to labour for the spread of such a book, especially as it was without note or comment; and, therefore, favoured one no more than another. And, by the way, this union of religious parties brought them near enough to see that they were not a nest of hornets, but men; and, having ascertained that they were men like themselves,—and Christians, too!—union and harmony have been the consequence: and, owing to this, other kindred institutions have been formed and supported; and may the Lord command his blessing upon the present service, and his name shall have the glory.—AMEN.

## SERMON X.\*

### THE SPIRITUAL MAN UNKNOWN TO THE WORLD.

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“But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”—1 COR. ii. 15.

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WILL you excuse an introduction, and favour me immediately with your serious and candid attention, while I observe at once, that we have three sources of reflection.

I. We have a spiritual character; this character we must look at.

II. We have an attribute attached to it; “he judgeth all things this attribute must be qualified.

III. We have a distinction; “yet he himself is judged of no man this distinction must be exemplified. These are the three parts of our discourse; each of which claims your serious attention this morning.

“Come, thou soul-transforming Spirit,  
 Bless the sower, and the seed;  
 Let each heart thy grace inherit.  
 Raise the weak, the hungry feed;  
 From the Gospel  
 Now supply thy people’s need.”

I. We have a spiritual character—“he that is spiritual this character we must look at.

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\* Preached March 14, 1852.

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To suppose that there were no such characters would be to charge the Apostle with folly in speaking of them. But where are they to be found? How is it to be understood?

The spiritual man is opposed to "the natural man," referred to in the preceding verse, where the Apostle says, "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 "natural man," means a man in his unregenerate state, under the power and influence of those principles and affections which are natural. It further intends to denote, by the spiritual man, one who is renewed by the Spirit of God; the Author and the Source of all real goodness and holiness. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." And, therefore, the promise, "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 a 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."

Such an one, therefore, is the fruit and offspring of his Spirit. Hence we read of being "born of the Spirit," of "living in the Spirit," of "walking in the Spirit," of being "led by the Spirit," of "praying in the Holy Ghost," of being "strengthened by the Spirit," of being "filled with the Spirit," and of bringing forth "the fruits of the Spirit; which are, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." No wonder, therefore, they are called spiritual.

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From the possession of this Spirit of God they derive a character; and become, themselves, what they naturally were not, namely, *spiritual*. They have spiritual *appetites*, they hunger and thirst after righteousness. Hence they hope and fear, and mourn and rejoice, accordingly. They have spiritual *senses*, as the Apostle says, which are exercised to discern good and evil. They have spiritual *eyes*; they can see Him on his throne. They have spiritual *ears*; they can hear his voice. They have spiritual *lips*; they show forth his praise. They have a spiritual *taste*; and, therefore, they can savour the things which be of God. "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."

But general declamations neither edify nor impress. Let us be a little more particular, and lay down a few *tests* by which the spiritual may be known, and whereby you may ascertain whether you are of their number.

And the *first* of these tests which we shall bring forward shall be taken from the *thoughts*. The thoughts are the firstborn of the mind, and always resemble it.

Now a spiritual man's thoughts cling and cluster around the cross, as the bees do around the hive; and for the very same reason, for there is the honey. A Christian can say, with the Psalmist, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them." Not that *all* his thoughts are good. He can say, with David, "I hate vain thoughts." I hate them, but I have them. I have them, but I hate them.

Yes, evil thoughts may enter the mind of a spiritual man; but they enter it as thieves enter your dwelling, —either by fraud or force; alarming, and making you

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miserable as long as they remain; and, when they are gone, you are hoping they will be apprehended and imprisoned. But how is it with regard to the natural man, and how do they enter *his* mind? "Why, as friends and acquaintances. They come by invitation. And, if they are invited, they are welcome when they come. They are asked to take a chair: they are desired to stay as long as possible. They are furnished not only with a seat, but with entertainment and delicacies. So true it will be found, as Solomon says, "As a man thinketh, so is he." We will take another test from the *desires*. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" They seek their happiness in the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season; or, in the things of time and sense only. But "the spiritual" pray, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me."—"Look thou upon me, and be merciful to me, as thou usest to do to those that fear thy name."—"Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest to 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." Or, with the Apostle Paul, "that I may win Christ, and be found in Him:"—"that I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." Now these desires in the Christian may not arise so high as he could wish; but this is the current in which they flow; this is the end to which they move. They can, therefore, say with the church, in Isaiah, "Our *desire* is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee;" or, with Nehemiah and his companions,

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“Thy servants, who DESIRE to fear thy name and “the desire of the righteous shall be granted.”

“We will fetch another test from *gratitude*. If ever a natural man feels anything like gratitude it is for some temporal favour—for a recovery from sickness, for a safe journey, for a successful business, or for a good harvest.

Now a spiritual man overlooks none of God’s mercies. He blesses him for his daily bread, but much more for the bread which came down from heaven. He blesses God for his civil freedom, but above all for the freedom with which the Son hath made him free—the glorious liberty of the children of God. He can say, with Watts—

“To thee we owe our wealth, and friends,  
And health, and safe abode;  
Thanks to thy name for meaner things,  
But they are not my God.”

Or, with Cowper—

“Give what thou canst,  
Without Thee, we are poor;  
And with Thee rich,  
Take what thou wilt away.”

Hence arises his livelier excitement, and his richer strains of praise, with the Apostle—“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.”

Let us take another test from the use of creature *possessions*. A natural man only uses the good creatures of God naturally; that is, as bodily gratification;

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or, if mentally, as objects of wonder, and curiosity and science. But a spiritual man walks with God in his garden, and in his field, and sees God in everything around. He sees Him making “the grass grow for the cattle, and meat for the service of man he sees Him making “the valleys stand thick with corn, and the little hills rejoice on every side he sees Him filling the earth with his goodness, opening his hand and satisfying the wants of every living thing. And, then, he has fellowship with the Father, and holds communion with his Redeemer: he has many emblems of Christ. He sees his Saviour in the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley, and in the apple-tree among the trees of the wood: and in the rising sun he beholds an emblem of the Sun of Righteousness. He regards all these as the purchase of his Saviour’s blood. He finds a sacredness in them which others know not of, and enjoys them with a sense of special favour: and—

“How sweet our daily mercies prove  
When they are seasoned with his love.”

Thus the Christian can say now—

“The men of grace have found  
Glory begun below.”

Another test of spirituality is to be derived from *association*. We mean, of course, *voluntary* association, for this only shows the disposition. It is said of Peter and John, that, “being let go, they went to their own company.” While here, we must have to do with the world; otherwise, as the Apostle says, we must needs go out of it. We must, in some way, be connected with the world—in managing our secular

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affairs, and in our concern to be useful to others and endeavouring to do them good.

Now the spiritual are among them; they are among them as a physician is among his patients,—not because of the pleasure of their company, but because his duty lies there; or as a man steps under a shed in a shower for shelter, anxiously all the time looking out to see if the clouds are breaking and the rain diminishing, that he may pursue his journey and the object he has in view.

But take a spiritual man when he is entirely free, and when he can act from choice, and you will find him saying with David—“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that love thy name “My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” Therefore, John wisely says—“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

Let us advert for another test to *conversation*. Spiritual discourse to a natural man is always uninviting, and even irksome: he strives, therefore, as soon as possible, to introduce those things which are more congenial to his worldly mind. But it is otherwise with the spiritual: he encourages it; it falls in with his disposition; he is at home in it; he feels it to be his element. He fulfils the prediction, “They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness—“They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.”

Thus it is said in the life of Archbishop Usher, that he never would leave a company, without saying,



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“*Let us not separate without a word for Christ.*” Thus our Saviour says, “A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Shall we refer once more for a test of the spiritual man to his *devotional exercises*. He does not draw nigh to God with his lips, while his *heart* is far from Him. Far from it: but he worships God in the spirit, “rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh.” Not, by the way, that he is always lively, always animated, and always heavenly in his religious exercises. Would to God he were: but this is his aim. For this purpose he uses them as means of intercourse with his God and Saviour; and he is disappointed, and grieved, when unable to realize this. Therefore, he often complains and prays with David, saying, “My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word.” Whereas others never think of God or eternity, when going to the Sanctuary,—never seek his presence and blessing before they come here; and never inquire, when they withdraw, whether the end be answered, and they have derived any spiritual advantage; but are satisfied with “bodily exercise, which profiteth little or with “the form of godliness without the power ” thereof.

So much for the first article; but—

II. Here is an attribute attached to this character: “The spiritual judgeth all things.” This attribute must be qualified: the term implies to discern, to distinguish, to understand.

But what we have to do here is, to observe the *degree* and *extent* of this perception. “He judgeth

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all things." At first, the term seems to invest Him with an unlimited knowledge: "He knoweth *all* things." But, surely, this must be taken with some restrictions, or what he asserts will not be true with regard to any individuals,—no, not even with regard to the Apostles themselves; for, as Paul says, "We see in part, and prophecy but in part." It must, therefore, be qualified by being taken with four limitations.

*First.* As these "all things" must extend to religious things, so they must extend to religious things *only*. We are, indeed, commanded to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." And, says Mr. Newton, "I would have a good man excel in whatever he be engaged in: if he sweeps the street, I would have him do it better than any other man." This would always be honourable to religion. And religion, also, tends to make men wiser in other things; by arousing their faculties,—by exciting their energies,—by inducing them to redeem their time. And now we know, after various experiments among the heathen, that there is nothing that civilizes equal to Christianity.

But the Apostle does not mean to say here, that every Christian is a scholar, or a philosopher, or a grammarian, or a mechanist. He does not refer here to the knowledge of nature, or of commerce, or policy, or of the arts and sciences; but what he calls, in the preceding verse, "the things of the spirit," "the things which are of God."

*Secondly.* As this "all things" extends *only* to religious things, so it extends *only* to all things that are *revealed*. "Secret things belong to God, but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our

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children." There are ten thousand subjects upon which the busy minds of men may dwell, concerning which the Scripture says nothing. But where the Scripture is silent, it is better for *us* to be silent too: and not to be wise above that which is written. Or, if men will choose to speculate and to conjecture, let them speculate and conjecture; but not wish *us* to subscribe to their reveries, without scriptural authority. "Yea, hath God said?" This should be the question with us. "What saith the Scripture? "To the law and to the testimony; if they walk not according to this rule, it is because there is no light in them."

Then, as this "all things" extends only to religious things, and to religious things only that are revealed, so—

*Thirdly*, it extends to religious things only of *importance*. Everything in religion is not equally momentous, though it is equally true. The value of the fiery cloud to the Israelites, consisted in its leading them to a city of habitation, and not as a phenomenon in nature; and the value of the star to the wise men was its going before them, till "it came and stood over where the young child was."

It is much the same with regard to the Bible. Its grand business is to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Wherewith shall I appear before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" Its grand exhibition is, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" "Look

unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else."

What you are required to know is not the decrees of God, but his commands: what you are required to study are his promises, rather than his prophecies.

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As soon as the disciples began to study prophecy, and came to the Saviour, saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" He said unto them, "*It is not for you to know* the times and the seasons, which the Lather hath put in his own power."

A man may be spiritual and yet not able to judge what kind of creature the Leviathan was; or know where is the locality of Opher, or the length of a Jewish cubit.

A man may be able to open the seals and blow the trumpets, that is, in his own imagination, and be no nearer to the kingdom of God than before.

There are many things in the Scriptures, the knowledge of which does not necessarily accompany salvation, but these cannot be the things the Apostle includes, when he says, "The spiritual judgeth all things." It is much to be regretted that many should be so much taken up with the subordinate parts of Scripture, as comparatively to disregard the things that belong to their everlasting peace. I have often been grieved to find persons professing godliness give so much of their time to decide the modes of administering the ordinances; to the forms of church government; to the future destination of the heathen; to the recognition of each other in a future state, and of the resurrection of the body. Oh, how much better would it be to remember the words of Dr. Watts:—

"This is the field where hidden lies  
The pearl of price unknown!  
That merchant is divinely wise,  
Who makes this pearl his own!"

And to be able to say, with holy satisfaction, "We

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know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." And my brethren, what says the Apostle in his address to the Romans? "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation;" but it is only "through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Again, as this "all things" extends only to religious things, and to religious things only that are revealed, and to those only of importance: so, *Fourthly*, it only extends to the knowledge of these *COMPARATIVELY*; not *absolutely* and *completely*. For who by searching can find out God—who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" As to many of them we know, if anything, very little of their nature, or mode of existence, or even their mode of operation. We know them in their results and in their development; and how little even of these do we know! The Apostle Peter says, "Which things the angels desire to look into!" They see there is much more to be known than *is* known; and they come to the Church to learn the manifold wisdom of God.

"The cross, the manger, and the throne,  
Are big with wonders yet unknown!"

Paul, therefore, after knowing so much of Christ, after communing with him as a Christian, and preaching Him as a minister for so many years, says, "That I *may* know Him." For, my brethren, after all we know of Christ and divine things, how slight is our acquaintance with the one or the other. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or

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whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There is a hope laid up for the Christian in heaven, but what knows he of it as yet? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." They partake of a joy, but that joy is unspeakable and full of glory. They possess a peace, but that peace passeth all understanding. The Saviour, therefore, addressing Nathaniel, says, "Thou shalt see greater things than these." In his experience, should be accomplished the promise, "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, when the Lord healeth the breach of his people, and bindeth up their wounds."

The Apostle prays for the Ephesians, that they might be "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God." He allows that this love is incomprehensible, yet prays that they may be able to comprehend it. He allows that it surpasseth knowledge, and yet desires that they may know it, that is, that they may have more enlarged and influential views of it. And the spiritual do know much of this; and they must know much of it, to do anything like justice to the language of the Apostle in the text, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things."

There is not only a real, but a wonderful difference as to knowledge, between them and others, and between their present and their future state: as much difference as between darkness and light, night and day: they "were darkness, but are now light in the

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Lord.”—“In God’s light they see light;” that is, they see divine things divinely; or, as Archbishop Usher expresses it, “As the sun can only be seen by its own shining, so God can only be known by his own revelation.”

The Apostle Paul speaks of God’s revealing his Son *in* him, as well as to him; and when the eyes of your understanding are open by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, there are no new revelations made to the man, that is, no revelations that are new in themselves. They are, indeed, new to him. They were, however, all in the Scriptures before he saw any of these things: but now the Spirit has “led him into all truth not only into the belief of it, but into the enjoyment of it, into the experience of it, and into the power of it.

And he not only sees the reality of these things, but their infinite excellency. He is supremely enamoured with them! He feels their infinite value. He lives under their influence, and is “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And, my brethren, I am never so satisfied that what I preach is the truth of God, as when I find it accord with the views of the truth of those who give the best evidence of being born from above, and bound for glory; for they judge, not from learning, or from genius, but from actual experience: and “He that believeth hath the witness in himself.”

III. We have a distinction, “Yet he Himself is judged of no man.” This distinction must be exemplified. This distinction may not be so peculiar as, at first, it appears. You have, perhaps, acquired a certain art, and a person, ignorant of the art, calls in question your proficiency in it, and you say, “I am

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not to be judged of by such as you." The higher and more peculiar the sphere in which any one moves, the more difficult must it be to judge him. How could Handel be judged of properly by a clown or a novice in the principles of music? How could a statesman, in executing the complex concerns of a whole nation, be judged of by a man not able to manage his own family, or even himself?

Again; it is always peculiarly difficult to judge a man morally and religiously. For we are not only ignorant of the heart, but may judge of conduct, while we are ignorant of a thousand things which may tend either to extenuate or condemn. For a man may be conscientious in certain things in which he is censured and condemned. He could not, it may be, have acted otherwise, and with more conscientious motives; therefore our Saviour says, "Judge not," and afterwards applauds judgment. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

But the spiritual is absolutely inexplicable to the natural man. "He is a new creature," and not, therefore, to be judged of by the old rules and principles. His "life is hid with Christ in God." The Saviour says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he who receiveth it."

"He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." That is, he knows them, but they know not him! He has been in their condition; but they have not been in his! He is no stranger to their experience, but they are perfect strangers to his! He knows their language, but they do not understand his! Therefore, "the spiritual



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judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." *No*—The greater part of his religion must be in secret, and unobserved by the world! *No*—"The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy."

The spiritual are, therefore, said to be "men wondered at." Others may think it strange that we "run not with them to the same excess of riot;" that we can so readily dispense with those diversions and amusements which seem almost necessary to their very existence; but they know not what it is that has weaned us from it all—that it is the discovery of something infinitely superior; otherwise, they would not wonder that a man should leave the filthy puddle for the spring of living waters, or quit the dunghill to ascend a throne.

Then, they wonder that you should find such delight in the exercises of the Lord's day; that you should hail it as the day "the best of all the seven," and call "the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable." While they say, "What a weariness it is!—when will it be over?" you are glad when it is said, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord." You are "made joyful in the house of prayer;" but they know nothing of this spiritual taste which the Christian feels; otherwise, they would not wonder that, "as new-born babes, you desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby they know nothing of your love to God, otherwise they would not wonder that you find such delight in approaching unto Him, while you say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee?"

Their experience under affliction often perplexes

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the people of the world. They see them "in patience possess their souls." They hear them inwardly saying, "Though I mourn, I do not murmur."—"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."—"Let thy lovingkindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." They see their afflictions, but they do not see their consolations; they see their various burdens, and often wonder that they do not sink under them: but they know nothing of "the everlasting arms underneath them;" how that "the Eternal God is their refuge," and that "He has made with them an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," when he makes not other things to grow. They know not how they call upon Him in the day of trouble, and that "He strengthens them with strength in their souls so that while "in the world they have tribulation, in Him they have peace and "as their sufferings abound, their consolations much more abound."

Their conduct is often equally puzzling to them. They wonder to see them following a course, which is not likely to gain them worldly advantage, but which exposes them to endure reproach and self-denial. They know not the lever that moves them, and are unacquainted with the machine, the love of Christ, that sets all in motion: if they knew this, they would not wonder that it should constrain them to love Him in return; for, "To them that believe, He is precious therefore, they can "go forth to Him without the camp bearing reproach" for his name.

Neither can they judge of the system of doctrine which they hold. It may seem to them as though they may "continue in sin that grace may abound."

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But, *no*, they hate the very "appearance of evil." They exclaim, "How can we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" The truths and promises seem in their view to lead to licentiousness, yet the believers of them lead the strictest of all lives, and their liberality is known unto all.

When that excellent man, Mr. Venn, settled in Yorkshire, a neighbouring clergyman is reported to have said, "Mr. Venn is the most extraordinary person I ever knew; he is an Antinomian in sentiment, yet he is one of the best men I ever knew, and one of the best preachers I ever heard: he preaches doctrines exceedingly liable to abuse, and allows people to live as they list; yet a most wonderful change has taken place in his parish since he came there."

Thus, Christians, it is that you perplex others, and oh may you perplex them still more! It is your honour and your distinction: "the spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

Let us, therefore, conclude by observing, that our subject accounts for Christians not being very ready to communicate to men of the world of their religion and experience. They would not understand it. When David, therefore, wished to speak of his experience, he said, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." They could relish it, but others could not. He would be like one who spake a foreign language to them. We often feel that we are speaking to many of you who do not understand, while it is plain as the day to us. You hear of our happiness, you hear us "sing in the ways of the Lord;" you hear us speak of "the feast of fat things" we partake of; but if you would know

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what it is, you must come and relish the dainties *yourselves*.

Oh, that you would “taste and see for yourselves that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.”

The subject, also, accounts for the mistaken opinions and divers misrepresentations of Christians by man of the world. “The world knoweth them not,” and yet they are very free in speaking of them; for you will always find some ready to speak of things of which they know nothing. Hence Christians are forewarned of being “evil spoken of.” The people of the world will magnify their infirmities into faults. They will take the miscarriages of a few, and impute them to the whole community: and, when they cannot find anything whereof they can accuse them, they will go a motive-hunting; and, shrugging their shoulders, will say, “Ah! they are no better than others behind the scenes. If you knew them, you would find their holiness, hypocrsy, and their zeal, selfishness.”

But, my brethren, you must not complain or murmur, but remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who hath said, “Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you *falsely*, for my sake.”

Then let us learn from this subject to be indifferent as to the judgment of the world. Let every minister, let every Christian say, with Baxter—

“Careless, myself, a dying man,  
Of dying men’s esteem;  
Happy, O God, if thou approve,  
Though all the world condemn.

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“With me,” says the Apostle, to the Corinthians, “it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” We may respect natural men for their conduct and kindness, and be willing to sit at their feet, to learn other things of them; but we shall not think of being judged by them, as regards those things which are peculiarly our own. We know we have the advantage of them, and of their judgment; we have the benefit of experience. We can say, with the first Christians, “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.”

But, lastly, is there *nothing*, then, by which the people of the world may judge you?—You who are spiritual? Yes, many things. They can judge of your *talents*. They may, perhaps, be able to say to you, “You think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.”

They may judge of your *outward condition*, and know that you live above your income, and that you had better lower some of your sails.

They may judge of some things with regard to your *conduct* too, and of your *consistency* as professors of religion. “What do ye more than others?” they may ask; and they have a right to expect more of you because you profess more than others. They will not therefore, allow things in you which they allow in themselves, and they do right. You profess more than others, and you are to be judged of by your own pretensions.

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They can, also, judge, though not of your feelings and experience, yet of the effects—of the *moral* and *practical effects*. You should, therefore, seek to *abound* in all the fruits of righteousness, and to *adorn* the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things.

Finally, therefore, brethren, “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

## SERMON XI.\*

FILIAL BOLDNESS, THROUGH CHRIST, IN APPROACHING  
THE FATHER.

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“In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence,  
by the faith of Him.”—EPHES. iii. 12.

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“How shall we come before the Lord, and bow before the High God?” Of all questions this is the most important and interesting. Where shall we find an answer? “The world by wisdom knew not God.” Philosophy says, “It is not in me.” Nature says, “It is not in me.” Providence says, “It is not in me.” But God has “magnified his Word above all his name.” And this blessed book contains the revelation of the mystery; and in words so many, and in a sense too plain to be mistaken, tells us, that “No man cometh unto the Father but by Him.” “He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” We come unto God by Him. Yea—“We have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of Him.”

Our text, therefore, speaks of an exalted privilege, and furnishes us with three things concerning it:—The *Matter*, the *Manner*, and the *Means*. Do you apprehend these? Will you be able to remember

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these divisions? I assure you, my hearers, I take no little pains to render my discourses not only intelligible, but easy of remembrance; being fully persuaded that what evaporates in the mere act of bearing, will avail little. The benefit to be derived must result from what you comprehend and carry away: what you think of when alone—talk of, when in company,—and applaud, as circumstances render it appropriate. Therefore, Paul says to the Corinthians, “I declare unto you the Gospel, which I preached unto you, which, also, ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which, also, ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” Let us consider—

I. The *Matter* of the privilege: it is called “*access*.” But access to *whom*? The Apostle does not mention this: it was needless. God was the being necessarily implied. For, “it is with Him we have to do” mainly and principally in the concerns of the soul and eternity, lie is not only the greatest and the best of Beings, but we are most perfectly related to Him. We derive everything from Him. We depend upon Him. We are responsible to Him. He is “the Fountain of life,” and He must be to us the supreme good.

We may view man in *three* states with regard to God. *First*, we may view him *before* the fall, and in his original condition. Then, he was one altogether with God. He wore his image. He lived in his presence. He enjoyed his smiles, and carried on continual intercourse with Him, and he was no more afraid to meet Him, than a child was afraid to meet the tenderest of fathers, or the most endeared of mothers.

But, *Ah!*—“How is the gold become dim, and



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the most fine gold changed!" This condition was broken up by sin.

We must, therefore, view him, *Secondly*, IN HIS FALL. Here we see him in a state of alienation, or "distance" from God, as the Scriptures call it: in which we are "far off," *penally* far off, *morally* far off, from God. For, indeed, when man departed from God in a way of obedience, God withdrew from him in a way of favour. When the angels sinned they were banished from heaven. When Adam and Eve sinned they were driven out of paradise. When the Jews transgressed the commandments of the Lord they were exiled from the land of promise. When a man under the law was pronounced to be a leper and unclean, he was excluded from the sanctuary.

All these things are designed to show us, that the tendency of sin is to "separate between God and us. And hence results our degradation and wretchedness for, says God, "Woe unto you, when *I* depart from you."

Then, we may view him, *Thirdly*, in his *renewed state*. Here we behold him no longer "without God in the world." He now feels his need of God. How his inquiry is, "Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night? How he returns to Him from whom he so deeply revolted, "with weeping, and with supplication saying, with the Church, "O Lord, other lords beside thee, have had dominion over us, but henceforth will we make mention only of thy name." Or, with David, "Lord, I am thine; save me." He not only seeks, but he finds Him, and is in a state of access to God.

But we must enter a little further into this state of

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“access.” Let us observe some of the characters under which we have access to God. And, my brethren—

We have access to Him as a *pardon*ing God. Everything must begin here. Until we can view Him as able, willing, and most ready to forgive, it is impossible to love Him—cordially to serve Him—or cheerfully to approach Him. Yea, we should rather shrink back from his presence; and, like our first parents, try to hide ourselves among the trees of the garden.

But we soon find, that, “with the Lord there is mercy, and that with him is plenteous redemption.” We see Him coming towards us with open arms, and we hear Him say, “Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”—“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.”

We have access to him as a *supply*ing God. We need not only forgiveness, but supplies. We are poor. I mean now spiritually poor. We are as poor as poverty itself. We have no righteousness; we have no strength; we have no wisdom of our own. We have no dwelling-place: we have no place where to lay our head. We have no raiment, no apparel to hide our nakedness—no friend to sustain us, or nourish us—and no means whereby to get anything; but here, again, a voice says, “Him that hath no money, let him come, buy and eat; yea, let him come and buy wine and milk, without money, and without

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price;" and "Whosoever will, let him come, and partake of the water of life freely." We hear a voice saying, "Come, for all things you stand in need of are now ready and "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."

We have access to Him, also, as a *communing* God.

Do not imagine that we are multiplying particulars to eke out the discourse, or that we have a distinction without a difference. You may pardon a criminal, and not relieve him. You may supply his necessities, and not enrich him—not dignify him. You may take him into your service and not into your friendship. You may give him your commands, and not call him into your counsel and reveal to him the secrets of your heart.

But how is it with regard to the blessed God? Here, says John, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"—"and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

We have access, not only to his door, but into his house; and not only to his house but to his table, and even to his pavilion—we can come, "even to his seat." We have access to his ear, and can pour out our hearts before Him. We can speak familiarly with Him and hold converse with Him. We can lean upon his arm. We can rest on his bosom: we can "rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

So much for the matter of this privilege.

II. Observe the *Manner*: We have boldness and access with *confidence*. What is the confidence here referred to? The Apostle cannot mean the boldness and confidence of presumption, of rudeness and irre-

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verence, in dealing with God. I have heard persons addressing God in prayer in language which, I am sure, they would not have dared to address to a fellow-creature a little above them in rank and condition. How have these persons read the Scripture? Have they read that the cherubim and seraphim veil their faces when they approach the Lord of glory? Have they heard the Apostle say, "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." Have they not read the words of David, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence by all that are round about Him."

And, my brethren, nothing can contribute more to our edification when we engage in religious exercises, than our being under a solemnity of mind, impressed deeply with a sense of our unworthiness and vanity, and the grandeur and glory of God. Thus it was with Jacob, after he had seen the vision, and after he had heard the voice of God, he exclaimed, "How dreadful is this place: surely, this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Thus, when David says, "I will go into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy," he adds, "and in thy *fear* will I worship toward thy holy temple."

We now remember another passage of Scripture, which will serve to expound the words before us, and show what the Apostle means by "boldness and access with confidence;" there he addresses the Hebrews, saying, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We are to come to this throne boldly. But what can this boldness be? It is expounded by the objects for which we are to come to Him, namely,

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“mercy and grace;” for if we come sensible of our need of mercy and grace, the boldness can only be the boldness of penitence; the boldness which is becoming those who know that they have no claim upon the Giver; whose language therefore must be, “God be gracious—God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

But we must further enlarge on this boldness and access with confidence. *First*, by considering it as an exclusion of that despair and that despondency which very naturally arises from conviction of sin. When a man is awakened and enlightened to reflect upon his character, and upon his condition, he must feel his need of strong consolation at the thought of entering the presence of a Being so great and so glorious; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, whom we have offended times and ways without number, and who can as righteously, as easily, destroy him. And *dare* I approach Him? And shall I *succeed*, if I do?

Now, to meet this, the Scripture says, “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, for this purpose, He has placed before us in the Scripture, a number of persons, none of which could possibly have any claim upon the Giver. We have a Manasseh, who sinned away all the advantages of a pious education, and became an idolator, a necromancer, a persecutor, and a murderer—a murderer of the innocent and of the righteous, and who made the streets of Jerusalem to run down with blood; yet, *he* obtained mercy. We have the murderers of our Saviour, whose souls “were washed and made white in the blood” they had just shed. We have the Corinthians, of whom the Apostle gives such an infamous character, that the devil himself

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could not have made or wished them to have been worse than they were: "But," says he, "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 the Apostle Paul, referring to himself, says, "Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."—"And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." And "for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." As much as to say, "Hone should DESPAIR; YOU CANNOT; for I found mercy."

Then we may view it in opposition to the bondage of Judaism. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—"We are not under the law, but under grace." Therefore, our Lord himself said to his disciples, "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear: for I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

God was much less accessible under the former dispensation, *as* a dispensation, than under our economy. You remember Sinai. While God was upon Sinai, he was surrounded by bounds which none of the Israelites were allowed to pass without danger of their lives.

Into the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt between the cherubims, only one person in the whole nation was allowed to enter, and he, as the high priest, was

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to go in only once in the year, and then to stay there but a few minutes.

God revealed himself more as the sovereign, and as the Lord of hosts, than as the Father of mercies and God of all grace.

And the disposition of the worshippers partook of the nature of the dispensation itself in a measure; therefore, the Apostle says, in his epistle to the Galatians, "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." Such is the difference, says he, between the Jew and the real Christian. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law; to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And, because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of *his* Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant but a *son*; and, if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Through Him we have boldness and access with confidence.

Then, we may conceive of it, *Thirdly*, as distinguished from the usual access and modes of approach among men. Now, look at earthly monarchs, they cannot give you real access to them at all times, it would lower their dignity. For as they have no real greatness, they must substitute the show of it; and this is very difficult, for real meanness underneath will often break through all external greatness; and if they were easy of access, they would be, unquestionably, invaded and incommoded. They are obliged, therefore, to have modes of distance and reserve. There

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must be guards and established rules of etiquette, and the sovereign can only be approached at particular times, seen only on particular occasions, and heard only on things of importance. Then, too, the interview is short, and frequently is the subject full of intimidation. Such is the impression of external greatness, that Madame Guion, though accustomed to a court, tells us, she "was always breathless when in the presence of Napoleon." But you, brethren, are not breathless in approaching the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,—“who only hath immortality,”—“before whom all nations are nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity.” You can approach Him at all times; you can have access to Him on all occasions! Nothing is too little to bring before Him; and we are encouraged in “all things, by prayer and supplication, to make known our requests unto God!” Here, the offender you come, the welcomer you are! The more you ask, the more is He pleased with your application! What does He say? Was thereover such infinite condescension on the one side, or freedom allowed on the other? “Ask me,” says He, “of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me as though He should say, “I am at your service, though seated on the throne of universal empire!” Here, “we have boldness and access with confidence.”

But, my brethren, this is better known by experience, than it can be described, after all.

You know we have lately considered the words of the Apostle, when he says, “He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

Much of the Christian's life is now hidden; it is hidden in its principles and in its resources; his



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heart's bitterness is known only to himself, and "a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy." And, "he has meat to eat of which the world knows not."

III. He will not, therefore, he backward to acknowledge the *Medium* of all this. "We have boldness and access with confidence by the *faith* of Him." When Elisha, in answer to the application of Naaman, said to him, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean," Naaman was wroth and went away, and said, "Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." And he nearly missed his cure.

Now, there are many Naaman's still living; and you will find that when they begin to think of religion, or to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" they turn away from the simplicity of God's provision and appointments, and think that some devices of their own are superior. Accordingly, you will find, that some have even contended for their own innocence. Not, indeed, absolutely innocent: this, they know, is impossible to prove; for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." No one can entirely deny this: but partially and comparatively innocent. "If their lives," they say, "have been had, their hearts have been good! If they are not saved, what is to become of others?" Thus the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself; "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adul-

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terers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

"Well, there are some who have "confidence," derived from self-righteousness, which is made up of outward reformations, external formalities, almsdeeds, penances, and mortifications. These are what they call "good works," and upon which they depend. In regard to which we observe, that many of these are not good in themselves—not enjoined in Scripture, and not acceptable to God, because they flow not from faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; and many of which our reformers denounced so much, which led some to suppose they were Antinomians. But they only condemned those popish good works which are not good in themselves: they never ran down those which were really good—they recommended them in their place. But oven those that were really good, they would have opposed them, and did oppose them, when found not in their places,—when, instead of being a part of the building, they were made a part of the foundation; for, "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." They did well, indeed, to oppose them then; for, when placed as the ground of our hope, when placed in the room of Christ, and when we derive righteousness from them, they become abominable in the sight of God. Then they are subversive of the whole scheme of the Gospel; "they frustrate the grace of God," and "make Christ to have died in vain."

Then there are some who have confidence arising from the absolute mercy and goodness of God. But what do we know of this goodness and mercy? All our concerns with God are through a Mediator. We

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acknowledge the greatness of God's mercy, and say, He is abundant in mercy, and rich in mercy to all that call upon Him.

We allow that his mercy is the source of our salvation; but the question here is, not as to the origin of our salvation, but as to the way of it and the medium of it.

"Tis from the mercy of our God,  
That all our hopes begin."

We acknowledge this, and all our hopes end too. But the question here is, *first*, whether God has a right to determine the way in which He shall exercise this mercy towards the guilty, as we can have no claim upon Him. And, *secondly*, whether He is not the only infallible Judge, and the most proper, whether we refer to his own glory or our welfare. And, *thirdly*, whether He has so determined; and, *fourthly*, whether he has revealed this determination, and assured us, again and again, that He will have mercy and grace only through the merits of his Son Jesus Christ. And if He has revealed this, whether anything but ignorance and pride can lead us to oppose this determination; or anything but ruin and wretchedness can be the result?

Well, we contend, that He *has* expressed such a determination—that "there is salvation in no other"—"that there is no name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus." And here we have it—"We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." Here we see that He is the object of faith; and that, as faith can only, as exercised upon Him, bring the relief we need; thus we see your faith is as necessary in

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one sense, as Christ is in another. Yes, the one is necessarily meritorious; and the other instrumental. But the faith is as necessary as the Saviour himself. That is, here is the remedy; but the application of that remedy is necessarily to be procured as well as the remedy itself. As, for instance, eating is as necessary to our support, as the food we partake of. At the deluge, there was an ark, yet no one was saved but those who entered it, and whom the-Lord, it is said, "shut in." And so it is here—"We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him."

Now, faith takes in three views of it, each of which is perfectly encouraging: and the more we exercise faith in Christ, the more freedom shall we find in drawing near to God.

*First*, we have "boldness and access with confidence through the faith of Him," as the gift of God. "He so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son!" And the Apostle tells us the use we are to make of this: "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The conclusion is so obvious, that a child may draw it here—that, if He should give us the greater, will He withdraw the less? If He has given us the one, without our asking, will He withhold the other upon our asking?

Then, *Secondly*, "We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him," as a sacrifice for sin. When a man is awakened to a concern about his soul and eternity, nothing but this discovery will satisfy him. Dr. Owen wisely remarked, that "only that which satisfies the justice of God will satisfy an awakened conscience." But, surely, this ought to be

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enough, which tells us, that every end which would have been answered by our destruction is much better answered by his death. Now, we come and plead with God through the atonement of the Lord Jesus. We don't ask Him to save or bless us contrary to his law, or in a way that would be derogatory to his glory; but here, in the light of the Gospel, we behold "that mercy and truth are met together," and that that which proclaims "peace on earth," also ascribes "glory to God in the highest."

*Thirdly*, We have "boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him," as our risen and exalted Saviour. Thus "God raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God." Thus the Apostle says, "If, while 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." As "He was delivered for our offences, so He was raised again for our justification." Not that his resurrection adds any value to his sacrifice; this was impossible, because the value was infinite; but his resurrection showed the allsufficiency of his sacrifice, and the acceptableness of it; that it was "an offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweet-smelling savour!"

Then, brethren, He "ever liveth to make intercession for us." He is our Advocate with the Father; He pleads on our behalf; "He has received gifts for men, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them!" Thus "we have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of Him."

In conclusion, let me ask, What is your religion? What is the essence of your religion? Does it con-

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sist in your being a true Christian? What is your worship? Is it an access to God? Is it “bodily exercise that profiteth little?” Is it “drawing near to Him with the mouth and honouring Him with your lips, while the heart is far from Him?” Or are you concerned to “worship God in the Spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, while you have no confidence in the flesh?” And do you feel humbled and distressed when, in some measure, this end is not obtained and accomplished, and when you have no access to God?

Then, we hail the happiness of the believer in Jesus, who is free and ever welcome to have access with confidence to God. So David says, “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.” So Watts paraphrases it—

“O happy souls, O glorious state  
 Of overflowing grace;  
 To dwell so near their Father’s seat,  
 And see his lovely face.  
 They find access at every hour  
 To God within the veil:  
 Hence they derive a quickening power,  
 And joys that never fail.”

Then, Christians, make *use* of this privilege. You have access to God, make use of the privilege for *yourselves*. Be more enlarged in your desires; be more emboldened in your hopes; be more importunate in your applications.

“You are coming to a king,  
 Large petitions may you bring;  
 For his grace and power are such  
 None can ever ask too much!”

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“Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name,” says the Saviour; that is, you have asked nothing compared with what you *might* have asked, and compared with what you *ought* to have asked. “Ask, and receive, that your joy may be full.”

Then, Christians, make use of this privilege on the behalf of *others*: when it is well with you, remember those that are around you. And surely you will make use of this privilege on behalf of your dear children; surely you will make use of it on behalf of your dear friends and relations. Yea, and you will put in some petitions for your *enemies* too; and you will plead with God on behalf of your country, and of the world at large.

*Finally*, what shall we say to those who are living away from God—who are saying unto God, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” And who is it that says so? Actions speak louder than words: God *hears* your actions—God puts your actions into language, and then they are dreadful. Then, as Isaiah has it, you say to the prophets, Get out of the way, “prophecy smooth things, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” According to this, you desire to get rid of God himself: it is your own determination and language. You say, you think to go on without Him—without his presence and aid. How do you mean ‘to pass through life? How do you think to meet its -duties, and to meet its trials? Feel you not that you are passing through “a vale of tears?”—know you not that life is uncertain—that “riches make to themselves wings, and fly away”—that your connections are dropping off from you, like withering flowers—that everything here is fleeting, and rapidly passing away.

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And, if you pass through life without Him, how do you intend to meet *death* without Him? It is a solemn thing to die: and, says "Watts—

"Death, 'tis a melancholy day  
 To those who have no God;  
 When the poor soul is forced away  
 To seek its last abode.  
 In vain to heaven she lifts her eyes,  
 But guilt, a heavy chain,  
 Still drags her downwards from the skies  
 To darkness, fire, and pain."

You may immerse yourselves for a while in the world; and its possessions, and amusements, and pursuits may even divert your minds; but they can never afford you satisfaction. You have made the experiment, but you have returned jaded from following its diversions and follies, and feel an empty, cold void within, that leads you to ask, "Who will show me any good?"—"In the midst of your sufficiency, you are in straits." And if you are under the power of delusion for a while, the delusion will soon end, and you will have to depart from all these amusements and dissipations, and enter into a world of thought—of pure thought, and a world of spirits; and, as Dr. Young says,—

"O ye dreamers of gay dreams,  
 How will you weather an eternal night,  
 Where all expedients fail?"

When the traitors were executed a few years ago in London, Thistlewood said to his comrades as they were ascending the drop, "How we shall soon know the great secret." *What* secret? Why, whether they had a soul as well as a body; whether there was



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another world after this; and whether, after death, there would be the judgment. But what folly to leave the discovery till it can be of no avail to us. Oh! what a mercy, if, before you learn this "great secret," you are brought to say with David, "All they that are far from thee shall perish; but it is good for me to draw near to God."—"Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee."—"My heart and my flesh fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." The Lord grant that this may be our happiness, for his grace and mercy's sake: and to Him be all the glory.—AMEN.

## SERMON XII.\*

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, ALL IN ALL.

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“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”—COL. iii. 11.

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A POWERFUL writer has justly said, “that there are some persons who have no essentials, and that there are others who have no circumstantials in their creed.” And, my brethren, this testimony is, at least, comparatively true. There are some, who seem perfectly regardless of doctrinal sentiments and principles; everything is the same with them. It is nothing to them whether they address the Supreme Being as “Jehovah, Jove, or Lord”—whether the Saviour is a Divine person, or “a man, or an angel at most:”—whether he “gave Himself as an offering and a sacrifice for sin,” or came merely to be our example.

Then, there are others who regard everything as equally important in religion. They lay as much stress upon the discipline of a church, as upon its doctrines—upon the mode of administering an ordinance, as upon the ordinance itself. They plead as much for “the tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, as for the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and truth.” While the one of these parties

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\* Preached March 28, 1852.

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has no room for faith, the other has no room for charity. The former are the slaves of licentiousness, and the latter are the dupes of legality. Both these extremes are to be avoided. We are to distinguish things that differ, and to regulate our attention by the degree of their qualities. Surely, there are differences between things—there are differences between a speculative opinion and a practical truth. Surely, there is a difference between the ornament of a bridge, and the key-stone of the arch; between a man maimed, and a man dead! A man may be in want of an eye, of a hand, or of a foot, and be a man still, and still alive. But what would he be, without a head, or heart, or lungs? I, therefore, love those parts of Scripture which diminish the value of inferior things in religion, and magnify the importance of superior ones:—those Scriptures which inspire us with “everlasting consolation and good hope through grace”—incite us not to make proselytes to a party, but converts to Christ:—which tend to reconcile Christians to each other, and embattle them only against a common foe. So that, if they must strive, they may be led “to strive together for the faith of the Gospel.” And, if they must contend, they may be led to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” And, my brethren, such is the language of the Apostle, when he says, “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” And again, when he says, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” And, also, when he says, as in the words of our text, “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all.”

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“Christ is all in everything.” Such is the Greek, and so modern writers have rendered it. But we cannot consider Christ in everything, or even in many things this morning. Your time, or rather your patience, calls upon me to confine your attention to a selection of articles, and these, also, must be few.

Let us, therefore, bring forward four exemplifications of our text, and endeavour to show you that “Christ is all and in all,”

I. In the *Operations of grace*.

II. In the *Testimony of Scripture*.

III. In the *Work of the Ministry*, and

IV. In the *Estimation of his people*.

I. Christ is all and in all in the *Operations of Divine grace*. He came into the world to save sinners. This was his grand design, and he accomplished it himself. “He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him.” And “there is salvation in no other”—for “there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”—“He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by him.”

Do we speak of *redemption*! Here he is “all and in all.” You need not, Christians, be informed that “you are bought with a price,” and that this price is “the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

“A price, all price beyond.”

And, being infinite, allows of no addition. Therefore, he exclaimed, when expiring on the cross, “It is finished.”—“There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus and wherefore? Because “He hath borne their sins in his own body

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on the tree"—“He hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them.”—“In Him,” therefore, says the Apostle, “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Speak we of *Justification!* Here He is all and in all. And “by Him, all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.”—“In the Lord, therefore, shall all the house of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”—“In the Lord they have righteousness and strength.” The righteousness which they mention only, in all their dealings with God, is *his* righteousness, for they have none of their own And there is not one of them but can say—

“The best obedience of my hands  
Dares not appear before thy throne;  
But faith can answer thy demands,  
By pleading what my Lord hath done.”

And they are accepted, as to their persons and services—“accepted in the Beloved.” And they could not originally have been dearer to God than they now become, clothed with his righteousness, and sprinkled with his blood.

Jesus Christ came not to teach us how to reconcile ourselves to God, but he came to reconcile us. “He made reconciliation for the sins of his people.” Men talk of “making their peace with God and our judges, when they pronounce sentence upon a poor criminal, take care to admonish him to lose no time in making his peace with God.

My brethren, if any prayers, or vows, or resolutions, or alms of ours could have made our peace with God

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the world would never have witnessed the sufferings and death of the Son of God!

If our peace with God be not made, it never will be made, but it was made, and "He is our peace."—"He made peace by the blood of his cross and we may, therefore, say, with the Church, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But 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."

Speak we of *Renovation!* Here He is all, and in all. If we are Christians indeed, we are "new creatures,"—"old things are passed away, and, behold, all things are become new." But it is "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which hath made us free from the law of sin and death."—"We are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Indeed, we live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit; we are led by the Spirit: and we worship God in the Spirit: but then it is the Spirit of Christ. He procured it for us upon the cross, and he communicates it to us upon the throne—

"Tis by the merit of his death  
Who groan'd upon the tree;  
The Spirit is sent down to breathe  
On such dry bones as we."

And "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ"—the source of all holiness—"he is none of his."

Do we speak of *Final Perseverance!* Here he is all and in all. "His hand laid the foundation of the house—his hand shall also finish it; and shall bring

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forth the topstone with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it." We are assured, that "the righteous shall hold on their way they shall reach the end of their course, and obtain the salvation of their souls. But they do not found their dependence upon their own thoughts, or wisdom, or resolutions—Alas! what would become of them, if they were left to themselves? What became of Adam, when he was left to his own standing, even in paradise, and with a holy nature?—He immediately became a prey to temptation. But we found our belief of this perseverance upon their union with Him, who is "the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" who is "mighty to save;"—"able, also, to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him;" for, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Who has said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." So that whatever enemies may assail them, and whatever fraud they may employ—"In all these things they shall be more than conquerors, through Him who loveth them." Therefore, Paul was able to say, though he was such a sufferer, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ:"—"I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that He will keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Speak we of *Glorification!* here He is all, and in all. It is He who is with them in the valley, and by his rod and his staff, comforts them there; that will receive them to glory as to their departing spirits after death. It is He that will raise them up again at the last day, that will "change their vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able to sub-

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due even all things unto himself!" It is He who will own them before an assembled world, and say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." He is, therefore, "All and in all," in the operations of grace.

It is no less true that He is all and in all,

II. In the testimony of Scripture. The Scriptures are a revelation of Christ. They are, therefore, called "The word of Christ." And they are called "the word of Christ," not only because they came from Him, but, also, because Christ speaks of himself: and he not only speaks of himself as the author, but as the subject of the whole. Yes, this blessed Book is full of the Saviour. Therefore, he said to the Jews, "Search the Scriptures—they are they which testify of me." He refers here to the Old Testament—there was then no other. The Old Testament contains infinite treasures, but Christ is the key by which alone we can open them, and make these stores our own. The Old Testament may appear like a dark and barren field, but when He, the Sun of Righteousness, arises upon it, then, all is illuminated; then, it appears a beautiful landscape, abounding with every kind of striking and interesting scenery and fruitfulness.

If this be the case with the Old Testament, what is it with the *New!* It is a fine remark of Mr. Best, that "the New Testament is hid in the Old, and the Old Testament is revealed in the New."

We may arrange the whole Scriptures into six divisions, and upon examination it will be found, that He is all and in all in every one of them.

*First*, He is "all and in all" in the *Historical* part. Look at the characters recorded there, and they will



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all remind you of Him. In *Adam*, you see Him as the head and representative of his people. In *Noah*, you see Him as the restorer of the new world. In *Isaac*, as a burnt offering. In *Joseph*, as humbled and exalted, and becoming the saviour of his father's house. In *Aaron*, you see Him a High Priest. In *Moses*, a lawgiver. In *Joshua*, as the leader and commander of his people. In *Solomon*, as the Prince of Peace. In *Jonah*, you see Him as dying, as being buried, and rising again the third day.

*Secondly*, He is "all and in all" *Ceremonially* in the Levitical part. The Socinians do not consider this as having any reference to Christ in a way of type. "We need not wonder, therefore, that they speak so disrespectfully of it, as being so childish, so trifling and absurd, in many of its parts. But we have good authority for concluding that it was "a shadow, of which the body was Christ."

Leviticus was the Gospel of the Jews of old: and I well remember that, when Mr. Romaine was delivering a course of lectures on the Book of Leviticus, he always gave out his text as being in such a chapter and verse of the Gospel of Leviticus.

"Well, everything in this dispensation reminds us of Christ. The smitten *rock*, that followed the Israelites through the wilderness with its refreshing streams, was Christ. In the Manna, He was seen as "the bread which came down from heaven." In the Mercy-seat, as the propitiation for sin. In the Passover, as the lamb whose blood, sprinkled upon the conscience, secures us from the stroke of the avenger of blood. In the daily lamb that was offered, and in every slaughtered bullock, was to be seen an emblem of that blood

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which cleanseth from all sin, and by which we enter into the holiest of all.

*Thirdly*, He is "all and in all" in the *Prophetical* part. We are expressly told that "to Him gave all the prophets witness." Some more partially, others more fully: some more obscurely, others more plainly. Some by express mention, and others by undeniable allusions: but, as the voice from heaven says, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

*Fourthly*, He is "all and in all" in the *promissory* part. The promises are innumerable. They furnish us with provision for every condition we can possibly be in, and for every exigency we can feel. They are said to be exceeding great as well as precious. But not one of them would ever have been given but for Christ. And we are expressly told that all the promises of God are "yea and amen in Christ, to the glory of God by us."

*Fifthly*, He is "all and in all" in the *Evangelical* part. What is the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? What is the *meaning* of the word Gospel? It is the history of Christ. It is the record of his incarnation, of his birth, and of his life: of his miracles, of his sayings, of his sufferings, of his death, of his resurrection, and of his ascension and session at the right-hand of God. All this is "written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name." It is all written with matchless simplicity, and, also, with incomparable brevity: for the life of the Lord of All for thirty-three years, is found in much less compass than the lives of thousands of poor mortals, who have derived their

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only importance from the representation of their friends!

*Lastly*, He is "all and in all" in the *Epistolary* part. Here, in these epistles, we may look for more explicit narration concerning his person, and character, and office; and for this the writers were prepared by inspiration itself. As to his personal preaching, he said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of himself; but, whatsoever ye shall hear, that shall ye speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." Accordingly, they were enabled to testify of Him. So we find that the Apostles were more enlightened in their ideas. They had more clear, more enlarged views of his divinity, of the unworldliness of his kingdom, of the spirituality of his service, of justification by his blood, and of the grand and glorious purposes of his death: so that, what scandalized them before, now inspired them with "all joy and peace in believing." So that they could exclaim, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" So then He is seen to be "all and in all" in the testimony of Scripture.

III. He is equally so in the *Work of the Ministry*. He is "all and in all" in its *institution*. "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "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."

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Here we are expressly informed, that the work of the ministry of the Gospel, which is to be perpetual to the end of the world, is a proof of his exaltation, and one of those benefits with which we are made partakers of Christ. So, also, in its *commission*:—"Go," said the Saviour, "go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And he said to Paul, "I send thee to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me." And if He sends us, it matters not who denies the validity of our order.

So, again, with regard to its *qualification*. Whether physical or intellectual, moral or spiritual, their sufficiency is of Him. And He makes them, and He alone, He makes them "able ministers of the New Testament."

So, He is "all and in all" in its *successes* too. We find the first preachers always triumphed; but how did they triumph? "Thanks be unto God," says Paul, "who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." When they went forth, He went with them, working in them, and "confirming the word with signs following." And when afterwards they were "scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, they went forth preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord." For they had "this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power might be seen to be of God and not of them."—"Therefore," said the Apostle, "who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by

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whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth," as to efficiency, "but God that giveth the increase."

They were soon taught this by experience; and ministers soon find that, without his presence and blessing, they will labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought. Poor Melancthon, when he began to labour for Christ, supposed he should carry everything before him, and that all who heard him would become converted; but after a while he said, "I find Old Adam is too strong for Young Melancthon."

And knowing the depravity of human nature, where is there a minister of the Gospel that could preach with anything like confidence or comfort, but for the assurance God has given him, saying, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Christ is all and in all in the gospel ministry: He is the grand theme.

I one day heard of a young sprig of divinity who said he would preach so that no party should be offended, and would so express himself that his real sentiments should not be known. I said, This young divine was almost fit for a German college or pulpit.

How different from this is it with the minister of Christ: he will be concerned to commend himself to

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every man's conscience as in the sight of God, and to preach the truth as it is in Jesus. He will desire to preach the preaching God has given him: he will be able to say, but with a better mind than Balaam, "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord to say less or more."

Unless Christ is made the theme of our ministry, we have no hope, or any promise of usefulness. "God gives success" only "to the word of his grace." On this Dr. Owen remarks, "Grace and truth are twin sisters, and they are of one spirit."

There were prophets in the days of Jeremiah, but they were successful. God himself assigns the reason. "If," says He, "they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way." And without this the preacher will never be able to finish his course with joy, and say with the Apostle, "I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God."

Yet here we do not go all the lengths of some. There are some who seem to suppose there is no real or literal meaning in the Scriptures. They allegorize the whole: they turn its figures into facts, and its facts into figures. This is what they call spiritualizing the Scriptures: so they find Christ in various places where He never was. Yet, I would the rather lean to this side than to its opposite: I would rather be a Croxious than a Grotius. These were two grand German expositors formerly, of whom, it is said, one found Christ everywhere, and the other found Christ nowhere. I should always dig hard and long with a text, before I despaired of finding anything really in it that had a relation to Him.

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But we have no need of extravagance here. There is enough plainly revealed to feed or to fill our memories; and to fill or to feed the poor with bread; and to make the Christian rejoice, without turning the Scripture into a nose of wax, or leading infidels to ridicule as if there was no fixed meaning to the words of Scripture.

Let us turn to the first preachers of the Gospel. They said, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."—"Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Each of them could say with the inspired Apostle, "I am determined not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified." If they would persuade men by the terrors of the Lord, they were *his* terrors: if they spake of the wrath of the Almighty, it was the great day of *his* wrath—"Kiss the Son lest He be angry and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little." Did they speak of the Divine perfections? they made them to shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ. Did they speak of Providence? they placed the reins of the universal empire in his hands, and made Him head over all things to his Church, which is his body. Did they speak of heaven? they made it to consist in seeing his glory,—in seeing Him as He is, and being for ever with the Lord. Did they speak of repentance? they never thought of fetching this water out of the millstone of man's natural heart: they knew that the tear of repentance could only drop from the eye of faith in sight of the cross. They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and they shall be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness

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for the loss of a first-born." If they called upon persons to pray, it was to ask in his name. Yea, said they, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Lather by him."

Here there are some who know not what they say, or whereof they affirm. There are some who, when they hear you speak a word about duty or good works, exceedingly dislike it. The difference between an evangelical and a legal preacher is, not that the one enforces holiness and good works, and the other not; but the difference is, the one makes them the source of our salvation, the other as evidences; the one lays them as the foundation, the other employs them only as the *superstructure*. Both admonish, both exhort their hearers; but here is the difference, the one waters his *dead* plants, and they produce nothing; the other waters *living* ones, and they produce the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

IV. *Lastly*. He is all in all in the *estimation of his people*. To whom does this apply? To Abraham—he "rejoiced to see his day, and he saw it and was glad;" to Moses—he "esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt to Job—who, under all his unparalleled sufferings, could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in my flesh I shall see God" to David—who said, "He is fairer than the children of men;" to the Church—who said, "Yea, He is *altogether* lovely to Simeon, who "waited for the consolation of Israel"—who embraced the Saviour in the arms of his flesh and faith at the same time, wishing to see nothing else, exclaiming, "How lettest thou thy servant depart in peace accord-



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ing to thy word, for my eyes have seen thy salvation to Paul, who could say—"I esteem all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" to the first Christians at large, who exclaimed, "Whom having not seen we love, whom though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory to the noble army of Martyrs, some of whom said, "We cannot dispute for Him, but we can burn for Him"—the hoary head trembling with weakness—pious females with all their tenderness—dear youths with their love of life: yet not accounting their lives dear unto them. There were such as these, and numbers of others, who, as they approached the stake, could say, "None but Jesus, *none but Jesus*—'Christ is all and in all.'"

And it is the same now as formerly, only Christians are not called to endure the like sufferings; yet they possess the same dispositions. When the love of Christ is shed abroad in the heart, it constrains them to live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again." It makes the servant willing to forego his place, and the mechanic his employ; and I the tradesman his customer, and the physician his patient, rather than betray the truth or deny his Lord; and willing to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing the reproach of the cross of Christ, and "*rejoicing* that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

And do you question whether he is all and in all in the estimation of his people? You know, you say, their *thoughts*, how these habitually ascend to Him, reflecting on his lovely character and history—how they can say with David, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of

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them." My meditation of Him shall be sweet. You know, you say, their *desires*. They wait for Him, "more than they that watch for the morning, I say more than they that watch for the morning." They exclaim with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee." Look at his sources—see what is their principal source of comfort. If He hides his face, they are troubled: nothing can supply his place. Their language of inquiry is, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?"

"I cannot live contented here,  
Without some glimpses of his face;  
And heaven, without thy presence there,  
Would be a dark and tiresome place.

Without Him, friends are miserable comforters; ministers are physicians of no value; promises are dry breasts; ordinances are as yells without water; all things are as nothing. But when *He* appears, "their hope, their joy begins then, if in the world they have tribulation, in Him they have peace; then, "if the fig-tree should not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine, they can rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of their salvation."

You see this is a strong proof, an undeniable proof, of the estimation in which they hold Him. See how they value persons and things in connection with Him; for you will find that they make Him the standard by which they judge of everything and value it. If you ask them why they feel so much love to Christians, you will find it is because they belong to Him and wear his image—why they so love the habitation of God's house, it is because it is the place

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where his honour dwelleth—why “they call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable?” it is because it is *his* day;—why they love the Scriptures so? There says the Christian—

“There my Redeemer’s face I see,  
And read his love who died for me.”

To conclude. Is this the case with you all? Do you thus regard Him? I suppose there are few to be found in a country called by his name, and where to be a professed infidel is a scandal—I suppose there are but few to be found who do not pay some regard to religion. People talk of *our* Saviour, though He never heard their voice, once in their lives! saying—“Lord, save or I perish.” And there are others—Oh, what honour—they even bow and courtesy to the name of Christ, while their proud hearts will not submit to the righteousness of Christ: and while they ask, “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?” they depend, in a measure, upon some merits and righteousness of their own. They resemble a man in a tree with one foot resting upon a rotten branch, and the other upon a living one. They had better place both upon the living one.

How is it that some of you do not “enter into rest?” You know nothing of that “joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.” Is it not because you do not completely yield yourselves to Him as a Saviour? He is a physician, and He will have the whole management of your case, or He will have nothing to do with it.

How is it that Christians are frequently found to be so happy in death? Why, they have done then

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with every false dependence. They cannot look back upon a well-spent life, (for they find they have had much imperfection,) they examine themselves and find there is nothing upon which they can depend, and simply to the cross of Christ they cling. They are driven from everything else to Him, and say—

“A guilty weak and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my all.”

Brethren, there is provision made for the same happiness in life as in death. There is a way to be filled with all joy and peace in believing. This is the way, walk ye in it.

“Venture on Him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude.”

We would, also, remark, what a difference there is between Christ and creatures. One, you see, is everything, the other nothing: that, according to Solomon's estimation, and he had a fine opportunity to make the trial.

It may be hard, perhaps, to persuade some of you now, but you will believe it easily enough when you come to die. You will then be convinced that there is nothing true in this world but its troubles and mortifications. And, perhaps, long before this hour, you may be made to know that laughter is mad, and mirth doeth nothing, and that it is in vain to seek for satisfaction or relief from creatures.

And what if health should be taken from you—

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what if your connexions should be removed—what if you should fall into spiritual distress—“The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can hear?” or, who can cure—*ah, —who?* But I hail the Christian who is united to Him, who is “all and in all,”—who feels his deficiencies, but is complete in Him; who may have no inheritance here, but who, “having nothing, yet possesses all things” in Him. Everything that is valuable, and noble, and honourable, and immortal, belongs to him and to his Saviour for ever.

Learn, therefore, to whom you are to betake yourself in all your exigencies and trials. There was a time when Joseph was all and in all to Jacob—it was in the time of famine. To the famishing multitudes Pharaoh said, “Go to Joseph, he has all the stores.” The Gospel says the same to you, poor sinner. Go to Jesus,—in Him all fulness dwells. There you will find wisdom and grace, and in Him you can be “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places” in Christ. Oh repair to Him and say, “I am perishing, but thou hast bread enough and to spare. I am guilty, my heart is stone. Oh turn it to flesh. I am guilty, blot out my transgressions. I am depraved—‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.’”

And, for your encouragement, remember that He is as willing as He is able, and as free as He is full; that He is now saying, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”

I have stood longer than my strength would well

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permit, and I fear I have exceeded your time, but the subject is peculiar and important, and far more belongs to it than we have been able to bring before you.

Now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Lather, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you!—AMEN.

## SERMON XIII.\*

THE DESIRE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO BE WITH  
CHRIST; YET HIS PERPLEXITY.

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“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.—PHILIPPIANS i. 23, 24.

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NOTHING is more unpleasant or distressing than a state of uncertainty and indecision, in which the mind is equally poised between two contrary attractions. Now, one side preponderates, now, the other. Shall I take such a journey, or not? Shall I make such a purchase, or refuse? Shall I form such a connexion, or forbear?

Sometimes, the case is very important and interesting, and requires much attention, deliberation, and reflection. Such, for instance, as marriage, where the connexion is for life, and upon which so much of our happiness or misery depends.

What a strait was poor Jacob in, between starvation lit home, with his family, and letting his beloved Benjamin go down into Egypt! And what a condition must David have been in one morning, when God gave him, from the Lord, three things to choose; the

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\* Preached April 4, 1852.

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famine, the pestilence, or the sword. No wonder he exclaimed, "I am in a great strait."—Well, Paul was now in a strait; but it was an inviting and a blessed strait. He was not in a strait between two evil things, but between two good things, both having powerful claims upon him. It was the strait of a man in a garden, between a peach and a nectarine; between a rose and a lily. He was in a strait between living and dying. But as Christ was connected with both, the thing was, whether he should die, and enjoy his presence in heaven; or whether he should live, and serve his people upon earth:—"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Nevertheless, says the Apostle, "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Now let us consider *three* things—

I. The representation of death as a "*departure*" and "to be with Christ, which is far better."

II. His *desire* after it. "Having a desire to depart." And

III. The *counterbalance*, by which he was willing to remain. "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

I. We have his representation of death. He calls it a departing to be with Christ, which was far better than anything and everything else.

Consider, *First*, its *nature*. He calls it a *departure*. We are much more affected and influenced by words and terms than we are aware of. And as there is so much to render death dreadful, it is very desirable to soften it as much as possible even in the representation. And the Scripture does this. Thus our blessed Lord, addressing Martha, says, "If any man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Is not he then



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mortal? Yes, he is mortal. And death will come to him as well as to others. But then it comes to him so changed, so modified, so blessed, so glorified and glorifying, that it deserves not the name of dying. The Apostle, therefore, says, "He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." And here you see he calls it a *departure*. The idea may be easily exemplified by the departure of the traveller from the inn, where he has remained for awhile, to go on his way—by the departure of a prisoner from the confinement of the dungeon to return home—by the mariner weighing anchor, and departing to sail away to his desired haven.

But, by calling it a departure, Paul clearly showed that man is a compound being. You never say of an ox that he has departed this life. Cowper does not inscribe upon the tomb of his dog, "Here lies the body but "Here lies poor Dansy"—Here lies the whole of him. But when a man dies, it is said, "Here lies the *body*." For "there is a spirit in man and when the dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Then this departure was to be the inlet to future blessedness. Nothing is more plain than that Paul looked for a state after death, as he says, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Had he not expected to be with Christ till the resurrection of the last day, he could not have viewed death as an advantage. It might, indeed, have delivered him from his present sufferings. But he is not speaking of what he is to *leave*, but of what he is to *reach*. Besides, he was *already*, in a sense, *with Christ*. He enjoyed communion with Him. He took pleasure in serving Him,

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and even in suffering on his behalf, And was not this better than sleeping till the last day?

It is in vain to say that the interval would seem to be only for a moment; for this is not the point. The thing is not what it would be in review, but what it would be in prospect. Did he now in prospect—could he now in prospect—consider a state of insensibility and inaction, and putrefaction in the grave, as far more desirable than knowing, and serving, and enjoying his Lord here?

I love the very words the Holy Ghost teacheth, and would always make as much use of them as possible. Paul does not say I long to be in heaven—but I long to depart, and to be with Christ. This was his end and aim. And, brethren, is it yours? It is often said, as a reason for the exercise of candour, that “all hope for the same heaven at last than which nothing can be more false and absurd. All long for *a* heaven, but not for *the* heaven of the Scriptures—not for a *holy* heaven. Only the holy can long for this—not a Christian heaven, or a heaven, so to speak, made up of Christ. This can only be hoped for by those who now place their happiness in the enjoyment of his presence, and in a resemblance to Christ.

This is the heaven of which the Saviour spake to the poor dying thief, when he said, “This day shalt thou be with *me* in paradise.” The heaven for which he pleaded on the behalf of his disciples, saying, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” This, I say again, is *the* heaven of the Scriptures, and it is the Christian’s. And oh,—what lies before you, therefore, Christian? You see heaven will be a *social* state. It will not be good for

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a man to be alone, even there. How delightful is the prospect of social intercourse there! If Socrates could feel pleasure at the thought of going to Musæus, and other worthies who had lived before him—oh, what must be the attraction of the believer in Jesus! There, Christian, you will be with your dear connexions who have died in the Lord, and who are waiting to receive you into everlasting habitations. The mother

“Who bare thee, and who bred,  
Who nursed thee on her knee,  
And at her bosom fed.”

“The desire of thine eyes taken away with a stroke”—the beloved child of thy bosom—the friend who is as thine own soul!—Oh, to be with these!—To be with patriarchs, with prophets, with apostles, with the noble army of martyrs, and all who have shone as lights in the world—the servants of God, and the best benefactors of man!

But, above all, to be with Him—to be *with Christ*—to be with Him who called you by his grace, and who redeemed you by his own precious blood, who agonized for you in the garden, and bled for you upon the cross, and who is now your Intercessor and Advocate with the Father, and who is making all things work together for your good. This will be your consummation.

You will, therefore, observe, the *preference* he gives it. “I long to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” *Better*—“*far better.*” Far better than what? Far better than to be stoned in the streets of Athens—far better than to fight with beasts of Ephesus—far better than “being a night and a day”

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upon a floating plank in the midst of a tempestuous ocean.

But it would be saying very little to make the Apostle say that it was better than his trials here. For who could question this. And it would be saying very little if he said it would be far better than his temporal mercies and enjoyments. A Christian does not overlook these, he does not undervalue these, he is thankful for them; but they are not his God. They are not his portion. They do not attach him principally to life. He can often say, in the language which Miss Protheroe wrote in her pocket-book, the day before her sudden death:—

“I could renounce ray all below,  
If my Creator bid,  
And run, if I wore coll'd to go,  
And did as Moses did.”

There are things, even in this life, which the Christian deems far better than any of his temporal possessions and enjoyments. There are the means of grace—there are the ordinances of religion—there is Christian communion, the communion of saints—there are the comforts of the Holy Ghost. These are “**FAR BETTER!**” And if the dawn be so good, the day will be “better,”—“*FAR better.*” If the earnest are so sweet, the inheritance will be “better”—“*FAR better.*” If the streams are so sweet, the fountain will be “better,”—“*FAR better.*” Even now, Christians delight to worship with their brethren; but they worship with a few, and with those who are surrounded now and encompassed with infirmities like themselves, but it will be far better to join “the general assembly and Church of the first-born” in heaven. The Christian

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now has only glimpses of the Saviour, and frequently he cannot espy Him at all. And how distressing is it then! But there “he will behold his face in righteousness, and be satisfied in awaking up after his likeness.” He can “now call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable,” and can say with Dr. Doddridge—

“Thine earthly sabbaths, Lord, we love;  
But there’s a nobler rest above:  
To that our labouring souls aspire,  
With ardent pangs of strong desire.”

He can now say with David, “I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwellest.” Or, with a beautiful writer—

— “My father’s house;  
There was I born and bred.  
'Tis there I have been taught,  
And there have I been fed.  
There have I seen thy power and glory share,  
And there e’en days of heaven on earth have known.  
But one attraction can more draw my heart.  
To he with Christ—’tis *better* to *depart*.”

Having considered the representation he gives us of death, let us

*Secondly*, Observe *his desire after it*. “I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” This seems to have been commonly the case with the first Christians, and, therefore, they are described as waiting for his Son from heaven; as looking for that blessed hope—as loving his appearing, and exclaiming, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!”

This was much the case upon the revival of religion in this country, and with those who were awakened

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and converted under Whitfield and his fellow-labourer. They are all gone to heaven now. But in the novitiate of my ministry I was acquainted with many of these early converts. I did not admire everything in them, but I observed many things about them, and superior to our moderns in this respect, that they seemed always familiar with death—that they never were unwilling to be reminded of their approaching dissolution—that they spake of it as the consummation of their happiness and desires; and very much expressed the experience described by Watts:—

“’Tis pleasant to believe thy grace,  
But we had rather see;  
We would be absent from the flesh.  
And *present, Lord, with thee!*”

“And oh!” says the great John Howe, “Oh! the happy state of things that such experience supposes; that now, in order to their perfect blessedness, nothing is wanting but to die, and the certainty of death completes the certainty of glory. And how grateful do we feel that there is nothing doubtful here—that there is no danger of an immortality on earth, and that nothing can keep us here always.” “Oh!” says Adams, “I bless God that I am to die—I bless God that I am capable of dying—I bless God that I am appointed to die, and that the season draws so near.” Good Dr. Gouge was accustomed to say, “I have two friends in the world, Christ and death. Christ is my first, and death is my second.”

But oh, how little of this do we find now! How few are there who seem at all longing to “Depart and to be with Christ, which is far better!”

What are we to do here? How are we to har-

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monize this with many other things? Will you favour me with your continued attention while we observe,

*First*, the desire of death can never be natural. It must dislike its own dissolution. And we observe,

*Secondly*, the fear of death is as natural as it is to hunger and thirst and sleep; and there is no more evil in it. Adam felt it in Paradise. Had he not feared death, the denunciation of it would have been no threat. If, therefore, anything can raise us above the fear of death, it must be something supernatural. Then observe,

*Thirdly*, there may be more who feel this desire than you are aware of. Deep rivers make less noise in flowing than bubbling brooks. The most eminent Christians are not always the most forward to proclaim their faith. Humility sometimes restrains them; at other times they love not to speak of their higher degrees of experience, lest they should discourage weak and tender souls.

This experience, you should remember, is mostly found with those of whom many of you are least acquainted. The poor, the afflicted, the desolate; these are the most indulged with divine comforts. As their sufferings abound, their consolations much more abound. Some of you move only in other circles—among those who are prosperous—among those who have all things richly to enjoy—among those who are accommodated with every gratification of their desire, and with every temporal comfort; and if you find religion among them you are not likely to find it to the greatest advantage.

Then, observe, Christians have more of this readiness to die as they approach death. The love of life is a very important principle; therefore, it is a duty

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to encourage it. But when the love of life can be no longer useful for the preservation of it, God suffers it gradually to decline; and many ligatures and ties which hold us to life then begin to loosen, and God affords peculiar succour and assistance when his people most need them.

You must not, therefore, conclude, that what you feel at the present time you shall feel when you come to die; for the promise is, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." And God gives "grace to help in time of need."

It is not right for you to indulge in forebodings concerning the future, or even concerning death itself; but you should remember that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." How many have I found who have wept upon the mountains of Zion, yet have rejoiced in the valley of the shadow of death. Then, their faith has been more strong and lively, and they have exercised more entire reliance on the promises of God—then legality has dropped off their minds—then they have found that they were unprofitable servants after all that they have done, and must look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. They find their need of strong consolation, but where are they to find it then? In looking back upon a well-spent life? In dwelling upon the excellencies of their performances? *No*; but in looking off from their duties, as well as their sins, to *Him* in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; in looking to Him alone, and saying,

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my all."



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The author of a work on sanctification said, when he was dying, "I cannot say I have so lived as that I am not afraid to die; but I can say I have *so learned Christ* that I am not afraid to die."

You will observe, there is a difference between dying and death: there are some who are not afraid of the one, who seem alarmed at the other.

"The pains, the groans, the dying strife,  
Fright their approaching souls away;  
Still they shrink back again to life,  
Fond of their prison and their clay."

The excellent Dr. Clark often remarked, "I am not afraid of death, but I am afraid of dying." He knew the serpent was now harmless, yet he shuddered to take it into his bosom. And I once heard the excellent Mr. Newton say, "I sometimes feel as if I were in love with death, and could embrace it, if it appeared: but there are other times when, if it opened the door and looked in, I should draw back and say—*I cannot go to-day.*"

Something of this kind, my brethren, was experienced even by Paul and his brethren: they said, "We who are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." That is, they wished, if they could, to enter heaven without dying. And you find a considerable number of Christians who have this desire. Yet they must, and they *do*, desire to serve God completely; to enjoy Him fully; to delight in Him perfectly. It is the very nature of grace to produce this in them.

And you would not question whether a man loved life, and desired to live, because he shuddered to take

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what might be necessary for the purpose. A man's beloved family is in America, can you question whether he wishes to be with them, and to be on the other side, because he dreads the thought of crossing the Atlantic? Here Watts has finely expressed it, when he says,—

“Oh could we make those doubts remove,  
Those gloomy doubts that rise;  
And see the Canaan that we love  
With unbeckoned eyes.”

Ah! they love this Canaan—they love this better country—they love Immanuel's land, while they feel this dread. But then they are standing by the side of the Jordan, and see its cold blue stream flow by; and they draw back and shrink at the passage. But still there is the desire—they have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Let us—

III. Remark the counterbalance which reconciles them to this intervening state: “Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” Here the Apostle shows the sense he had of his own importance, and the self-denial he was willing to exercise in order to be useful and to “serve his generation according to the will of God.” Paul was a humble man. Paul said “I am nothing,” and yet he said, “Am I not an Apostle?” He said, “By the grace of God I am what I am.”—Yet he made no scruple to say, “I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

Paul was conscious that he had a capacity to do good and to be useful: and humility does not consist in ignorance. A mother may be humble, and yet feel how necessary her life is for the rising of her infant

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charge: for if it be easy to repair the place of a wife, this can never be the case with regard to a mother. A minister may feel humble, yet when he sees numbers hanging upon his lips he feels ready to express himself with the Apostle, and say, "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." A sense of self and relative importance is very compatible with humility. It was a fine remark of Dr. Chalmers, "We commonly think too highly of our talents, and too little of our influence."

Where is the person who has not some influence? And where is the person who feels his influence as he ought to do, or exerts it as he should?

We often talk of charity; but you should judge of charity by the self-denial that accompanies it. How many are there who would pass for being very liberal and generous, yet show very little disposition ever to deny themselves. They will not give up even the luxury of their tables, and this is all we require them to give up. They will not give up the vanity and *excess* of dress, though this is all we would wish them to give up. We don't wish to withhold from them the enjoyment of the bounties of Providence in a proper degree. See the poor widow in the Gospel. The rich cast into the treasury of their abundance; but she gave two mites; she gave of her penury; it was all she had; it was all her living. They went back to a table spread with wine and viands; she, poor creature, went to a dry crust, perhaps to an empty cupboard. But see Saul here. He is willing to forego even heaven itself, though he was assured of it, though he was exposed to every kind of suffering here, and though he could say, "Even to this present hour, we both hunger and thirst and have no certain dwelling-

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place," yet he was willing to abide here from year to year, if he could but be useful. And there is one privilege which Christians on earth have above the saints in heaven: That is, they have opportunities of usefulness. And, I believe, there is not a glorified saint in heaven, but if God required or allowed him, would be willing to come down for a season again into this vale of tears, if he could but have those opportunities which perhaps many of you are now neglecting—the opportunities of showing candour to those who differ from you, of forgiving offences, of clothing the naked, of feeding the hungry, of teaching the ignorant, and of converting sinners from the error of their ways, and hiding a multitude of sins.

Why, have we not seen this in an infinite instance? Did not He who was rich for our sakes become poor, that we through his poverty might be rich?—

"Down from the shining realms above  
With joyful haste he fled;  
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,  
And dwelt among the dead.

"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills,  
Their lasting silence break;  
And all harmonious human tongues,  
The Saviour's praises speak."

To conclude, What an experience has come before us this morning! This man who has been instructing and admonishing us was once "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious;" but he obtained mercy, and "the grace of God was exceeding abundant towards him with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." Who can reflect upon this and not exclaim, Who is justified in despairing? Who should not be encouraged to

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draw near and rely upon this Saviour? Has He not "a mighty arm? High is his hand and strong is his right hand!" And is He not as willing as He is mighty to save?

What a fine and finished example have we here: Here is a man with light, not without heat; and he has heat, not enough to burn up his brains, but enough to warm his heart. He has the intensest zeal, yet nothing like fanaticism or enthusiasm. He does not refuse to suffer when called to it; but He does not seek after bonds and imprisonment. He does not refuse deliverance and freedom when they come, nor does He value these principally on the score of indulgence, but on the score of usefulness.

What do we see here? The Apostle longs for dismissal, but he is not impatient. He is ready to go, but willing to stay, if God has anything for him to do or to suffer. And is not this the very essence of religion? And what can the world enable us to do compared with this?

"When I reflect," says Lord Chesterfield, "upon what I have seen and heard, I can hardly persuade myself that all the pomp and pleasures of the world can be a reality. But I look upon all that is past as one of those thousand dreams upon common occasions, and I do not wish to repeat the noxious dose for the sake of the vagaries produced thereby. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy state with that manliness which most people boast of. I bear it because I must bear it whether I will or not. I think of nothing but of killing time the best way I can, now that it is become my enemy. It is my resolution, therefore, to sleep in a carriage during the remainder of my journey."

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Here you see what a poor, abject, miserable creature was Lord Chesterfield, at a time when he, especially, wanted help and succour, when about to leave the world.

Now see another extraordinary character, when he was about to take his leave of earth, and the time of his departure was at hand: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all those that love his appearing."

Turn to Voltaire: I was lately looking over his correspondence with one of his literary female acquaintances, and no less than three times in his letters does he say, "I *dread* death, and *hate* life." Was it so with the Apostle Paul? Did *he* dread death? What is his language—"I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Did he *hate life*. "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you, and, having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." Oh! may the God of all grace inspire us with the same spirit which animated the Apostle; and may we be "filled with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." AMEN.

## SERMON XIV.\*

BELIEVERS RISEN WITH CHRIST, AND THEIR DUTY IN  
CONSEQUENCE.

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“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which  
are above.”—COL. iii. 1.

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AN individual one day reading a passage of Scripture, much like this, was induced to exclaim, “Either this is not Christianity, or these are not Christians.” And it must be confessed, that there is often a sad and awful discrepancy between the pretensions of professors and their practice. And it is easy to see that there must be a change, either in their condition itself or their lives—before there can be such a resemblance and harmony between them, as that the one can be considered an accurate and adequate representation of the other.

But the question is, On what side is this change to be made? Jesus Christ is “the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever: not only in his person and perfections, but in his principles and demands. The change must be in *us*: therefore, says the Apostle, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”—“And we, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are

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\* Preached April 11, 1852.

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changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Holiness must impress. A creed that allows men to be easy in sin, call it by what name you please, is not the Gospel. The language of the Gospel always is, "These things write we unto you that you sin not."—"Behold what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness."

"Ungodly men may turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness," (by perverting it) but "the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

There is no truth in that religion, however speculative it may appear to a superficial observer, that has not a practical bearing upon the conscience and upon the life. Our Saviour said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." True gospel faith is a faith that "worketh by love." The doctrines our Saviour taught are "doctrines according to godliness." We have "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

There is an assurance, that "when we shall see Him we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is but, "every one that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." And hence the language of the text, in which the Apostle says to these Colossians, "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." The words correspond to the season, and furnish us with four sources of reflection.

The first is a fact admitted. This is the resurrection



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of Christ. The *second* is a *privilege supposed*. This is *our being risen with Christ*. The *third* is a *duty enjoined*. This is to *seek* those things which are above. And the *fourth*, is the inference to be derived from it, "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, you ought to seek those things which are above."—"Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things." Amen.

I. The subject of reflection is *a fact admitted*: this is the resurrection of Christ. That he was dead, really dead, is a fact that cannot be questioned. The soldiers who broke the legs of the others that were crucified with Him, "found that He was dead already: but one of them with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith flowed thereout blood and water and, had He been living, this would have proved fatal. His body was then taken down from the tree, and embalmed and buried. "What became of it? Did it remain in the new tomb in which he was laid? If so, "our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain, and you are yet in your sins and then "they also who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

But if He be risen, then the reproach of the cross is rolled away—then his Divine mission is clearly evinced, and He is "declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead"—then is established the perfection of his sufferings, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, "an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour—then He hath accomplished salvation for all who believe. Then "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Then death hath ceased to be the king of terrors, and the grave has become the avenue to life

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and immortality. "Remember, therefore," says the Apostle Paul to Timothy, as if this was the chief thing—"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel."

Ecclesiastical history tells us it was customary for the first Christians when they met on a Lord's-day morning to exclaim,—"*He is risen.*"

By the overruling providence of God, many circumstances transpired to render the resurrection of Christ most obvious and undeniable. "They rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre they "sealed the tomb," they "appointed a Roman watch." But, on the morning of the third day, as it was dawning, "behold there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, 'Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen, as He said; *Come see the place where the Lord, lay.* And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Gallilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you!"

What was the report of the soldiers? They told their employers that the "disciples came by night, and stole Him away while men slept."

"How, in the first place, such was the strictness of the Roman discipline, that death was the penalty of the watch being found asleep. And then, if they were asleep, how could they distinguish the thieves

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who carried it away? We presume this is the first time that ever a witness came into court, in order to depose concerning things that occurred while he was fast asleep, and so incapable of observation.

Then, in regard to these disciples, "They all forsook Him and fled." They were full of fear and distress. Instead of eagerly looking forward to his resurrection, they esteemed it an incredible thing; and instead of looking for his appearance, they began to despair and to return to their own homes and business, saying, "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel, but we find our hopes are vain."

But the weakness of their faith proves the strength of ours. Our Saviour, therefore, in a peculiar manner made them witnesses of the deed. "He showed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Thus He made them "witnesses of the things to the ends of the earth."

And you see what witnesses they were. Thus we read, "How when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." After that He appeared, in another form, unto two of them as they walked and went into the country."—"Afterwards He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them who had seen Him after He was risen."—"After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." They were eye-witnesses, and ear-witnesses, and sensible witnesses; for they even "*handled*" Him, as well as saw and heard Him.

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It was impossible that they themselves could have been deceived. And could any one imagine that they deceived others? What could have been their aim in so doing? We know they could have obtained nothing by it but reproach, suffering, and death.

“Unheeded was their pain,  
Ungrateful their advice;  
Starvation was their gain,  
And martyrdom their prize.”

There is one thing which not only proves, but absolutely demonstrates, that these men were not impostors. Had they been impostors they could not have performed miracles themselves; and, had they been impostors, God would not have interposed on their behalf, and affixed the broad seal of heaven to their falsehood and wickedness.

But how was it? Our Saviour assured his disciples, if He rose from the dead, He would “endow them with power from on high,” and enable them to perform miracles as marvellous as those He himself performed. Such is true. These men came forward and said, “He is alive who was crucified: we speak in his name—we act upon his authority. And, if you ask for evidences of this, we will speak fifteen languages off-hand, and you shall hear, in your own tongue, ‘the wonderful works of God.’ Bring forward your deaf, and they shall hear; your blind, and they shall see. Place your sick before us, and we will heal them with a word: your dead, and we will restore them to life.”

“Hence and for ever from my heart,  
I hid my doubts and fears depart;  
And to those hands my soul resign.  
Which bear credentials so divine!”

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That is the *fact admitted*—the resurrection of Christ. Let us now observe,

II. The privilege supposed. It is our being “risen with Christ.” How is this to be understood? In what way, and in what respects, can we find this realized? It would be needless for me to take up your time to prove, that this cannot be understood literally, that they arose with Him at the same time; but it is in consequence of it, and it may be exemplified FOUR ways.

And here, in the *first* place, observe, Christians are risen with Christ *Professedly*. By joining a Christian church, and coming to the table of the Lord, “they show forth the Lord’s death till He come;” and they proclaim to the world that they are “waiting for the Son of God, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come.” They thus “give themselves unto the Lord, and unto his people according to his will,” each of them saying, “I am the Lord’s, and I will surname myself by the name of Israel.” Thus, they not only “believe with the heart, but confess with the tongue.”

*Secondly*, They are risen with Him *Representatively*. Let me explain. There is a union between Christ and his people, which is both vital and federal—a union which no distance of time can effect, and which no power can ever alter; for, “What shall separate us from the love of Christ?” So, then, when He died, they might be said to die; when He arose, they arose also. What was done by Him, was done for them in his person. For He did not arise from the dead as a private individual; but He arose as the Head and Representative of all his people. Hence, therefore, it is said, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead

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body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead." And hence, says the Apostle, in his epistle to the Ephesians, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." *Thirdly*. They are risen with Christ *Spiritually*. Now, observe, this regards the soul, and is accomplished by Divine agency, as the Apostle says in his epistle to the Ephesians. "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Every resurrection necessarily supposes a preceding death, and by this name the Sacred Writers have been accustomed to express that state in which all mankind are by nature. The Apostle, therefore, speaking of the widow who had been living in pleasure, says, she "is dead while she liveth;" that is, morally and spiritually. This, as we said, is the condition of all naturally; they are dead. They have no spiritual life, they have no spiritual desires, and can perform no spiritual actions: but they are not suffered to remain in this state. Hear how the Apostle refers to it in his epistle to the Romans: "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For, in that He died, He died unto sin once; but, in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye, also, yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive

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unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," through his raising them from the death of sin to the life of righteousness—a holy, a divine life; a life of faith, a life of hope, a life of acceptance, a life of dedication to his service, and to his glory.

Then, *fourthly*, they are risen with Him by anticipations of his exaltation.

Though the sacred writers admit that there is an intermediate state, this state must be acknowledged to be an incomplete one. Man is an incarnate being. He was embodied in his original state, and he will be embodied in his final state: a separate state, therefore, must be an imperfect one, because there is only one part of it living.

The body is an essential part of human nature, and was purchased by the Saviour as well as the soul. It is "the temple of the Holy Ghost therefore, though the sacred writers allow that there is an intermediate state, yet, when they speak of the Christian's complete and perfect blessedness, they pass on at once to the resurrection, saying, "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."—"I will raise him up," says the Saviour, four times in one chapter—"I will raise him up at the last day:" and, says Paul, "The righteous Judge will give me a crown of glory at that day." How, our Saviour's body is the model of our resurrection body, and he is able and engaged to conform us to it; therefore, "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, by the working wherewith he is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

How, you will observe, that this state of glorification with Christ is not only assured to the Christian,

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but is even at present commenced. They have pledges of it, and earnestings of it, and first-fruits of it: they have foretastes of the glory, which shall be fully and completely revealed in them hereafter. Faith and hope go forth as spies into the land of Canaan, and they come back, bearing on their shoulders some clusters of the grapes of Eshcol!

“The men of grace have found  
 Glory begun below;  
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground  
 From faith and hope may grow.  
 The hill of Zion yields  
 A thousand sacred sweets,  
 Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
 Or walk the golden streets.”

These anticipations of our Saviour’s exalted blessedness differ in different Christians: how much more of heaven do some Christians enjoy than others. And how much more does the same Christian enjoy at one time, than at another.

We read of “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” They may well be called so, and we read of “days of heaven upon earth.” There are, I think, *four* seasons when Christians are peculiarly favoured with these anticipations of the Saviour’s blessedness above.

*First.* In the solitude of the closet. There you have, as it were, God entirely to yourselves; there you draw near even to his seat; there you can unbosom yourselves to Him as you could not do to your nearest and dearest friend upon earth. There He also manifests himself unto his people, as He does not unto the world. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them his covenant.”



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Friendship's chief delights are those which it enjoys in communion with its object alone. David, therefore, says, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, while I remember thee upon *my bed*, and meditate upon thee in the night watches." And, says our hymn—

"Be earth with all her scenes withdrawn,  
Let noise and vanity be gone;  
In secret silence of the mind,  
My heaven, and there my God I find."

*Secondly*. In the ordinances of his house. Hence, said David, in the absence of these exercises, "When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me, for I had gone with the multitude, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that keep holy day." And hence, also, the earnestness of these desires to have these privileges restored. "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

Some of you can enter into these feelings—who love his house, and who have been, by afflictions, detained from it. What have you sometimes enjoyed in hearing the glad-tidings of salvation! Have you not said with Jeremiah, "I found thy words, and I did eat them, and they were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart!" Have you not, in reference to his table, been able to say, "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste."

Also, *thirdly*, in seasons of *affliction*. God hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee:" but He has specified a time of trouble. As, therefore, if their

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sufferings abound, their consolations also abound. The mother regards all her dear children, but the knee and the bosom, and indulgences are for the weak and sickly: and so it is with regard to God's afflicted ones. They have never had so much enjoyment of the word, as when they have had the least of the world about them! They have never had so much peace in the Saviour, as when they have had tribulation.

Then, *lastly*, these actual participations are afforded *peculiarly in the dying hour*. Think of this you who have all your life time been subject to bondage through fear of death; and do not imagine that you shall feel then what you fear now. "Let the saints be joyful in glory, yea, let them shout aloud upon their beds"—their *dying* beds, if you will. How often has it been that, after all their apprehensions, they have been led to say—

"Jesus, the vision of thy face  
Hath overpowering charms;  
Scarce shall we feel death's cold embrace,  
If Christ be in my arms."

In all these respects, therefore, it is the privilege of Christians to be risen with Christ. They are risen with Him professedly and representatively. They are risen with Him spiritually, and, also, by heavenly anticipations.

Here is a duty enjoined: this is to seek those things which are above. The things themselves which are to engage the attention are not described by their nature, but by their residence; but the one involves the other. Their residence shows their excellency: for, unless they were excellent, they would not be admitted there—where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

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“There is no night there”—there is no pain there—there is no sin there. Everything there is pure and attractive. *There*, indeed, is a “peace which passeth all understanding.” *There*, indeed, is a “joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory.” *There*, “the light of the moon is as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days when the Lord healeth the breach of his people, and bindeth up their wounds.” Here we “see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face for, “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

*There*—Do you not see them by faith?—there are your beloved connexions, with whom you “took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company.” There are the spirits of the just whose faith is made perfect. There are the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs. There is the “innumerable company of angels.” There *He* is, who is “fairer than the children of men,” and who is “all and in all.”

“Nor earth, nor sky, nor sun, nor stars,  
Nor heaven his full resemblance bears;  
His beauties we shall never trace,  
Till we behold him face to face.”

“In his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

It is, therefore, easy to see why we should “seek those things which are above,” because they are necessary. While many things are desirable, and some things are important, one thing is needful, absolutely needful. As Watts says,

“Without his graces and Himself,  
I were a wretch undone.”

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And this would be the case whatever of earthly possessions and enjoyments we can command; because these alone afford satisfaction, and earthly things can never do this! They can never fill the void in the immensity of a man's expectations and desires; but God can fill the soul with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Yes, these blessings can throw a satisfaction even into temporal things, and teach the possessor of them to learn, that, "having food and raiment, therewith to be content."

We should seek those things because, also, they are attainable. You are not quite sure whatever earthly course you engage in that you should meet with success. You may reckon upon success and be disappointed; but, here, "He that goeth forth weeping, hearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"—here "grace insures the cross." If, like Mary, you have "chosen the good part, it shall not be taken away from you."

It is easy, therefore, to see how these things are to be sought.

Solomon says, "The sluggard desireth and hath not, because his hands refuse to labour." Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," regardless of any concern to live his life. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" but waited not for a reply. Herod wished to see our Lord perform miracles, but would never stir forth for the purpose. And our Saviour himself refers to such:—He says, "Many will *seek* to enter in, but shall not be able." *Why?* Because they do not seek *principally*—because they do not seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness—because they do not seek these *intensely*, so as to hunger and thirst after

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righteousness—because they do not seek *perseveringly*, or, in a course of well-doing, “seek for glory, honour, and immortality,” till they obtain “eternal life.”

IV. And *finally*. There is an inference derived from the subject. “*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.*” As if the Apostle should say, you *will evince* that you are risen with Christ; and if you are Christians indeed, you will act becoming your condition and rank. This is the import. “*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above,*” and hereby *evince* that you are risen with Christ.

Surely, it is very desirable to *know* this. Surely, there are many who disregard it: who never pray, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.”—“Show me a token for good.” There are many, also, who if they do seek evidence build upon a sandy foundation; or rely upon dreams, or impulses, or partial reformations. Tor persons may be *near* the kingdom of God and not *in* it. They may be convinced and not converted. Like Saul, they may have another heart given them, and not a new one.

There is no evidence of your religious condition that can be depended upon separately from heavenly mindedness, or from your setting your affections on things above. “He that is of the earth is earthly.” But, says the Apostle—“As is the heavenly, such are they, also, that are heavenly,” and “as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also, bear the image of the heavenly,” or we cannot indulge “the hope of the glory of God,” with safety.

Then, if you are seeking “those things which are above,” they must correspond with your condition; and then your practice must accord with your profes-

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sion. Hence there is such a frequent exhortation to this in the Scriptures of truth. Hence says the Apostle, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ."—"Walk worthy of God who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."—"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." "Walking" here is not meritorious, but implies suitability and correspondence. He who wore the name of Alexander, the conqueror of the world, said to one, "Either drop my name, or act becoming it." So says the Apostle Paul, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

If this be not the case with you, the world will soon perceive it, and will ask, "What do ye more than others?" Whereas, if you "seek those things which are above," and live with your conversation in heaven, you will be like the Church of Christ spoken of in the Song of Solomon, that "Looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Now, brethren, see how it was with Christ, after He arose from the dead, "He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him." He remained here, only for a few weeks, and that entirely for the sake of others; then He "ascended to his Father, and our Father; to his God, and our God."—"He is not here, He is risen." Why are you here that belong to Him? He is not here, He is risen. Why are you not after Him? Why do you not put off your grave clothes? And "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—"Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth."

I wish I had time to "commend myself to every

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man's conscience as in the sight of God," in the conclusion of these remarks, but here we must be very brief.

There are some who entirely disregard the things which are above. Heaven is hid from their view. They are "like Esau who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright." Like the Gadarenes, they would expel Christ, rather than lose their swine. Like the Pharisees, they seek the honour which cometh from man only. Like Reuben and Gad they are satisfied with their position, *this side* the Jordan. Rut *what a portion* will it prove eventually? Perhaps, you are successful in the world—perhaps, you are saying to your soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." *But*,—suppose God should say—"This night thy soul shall be required of thee!"—"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?"

There are some whose regard to things above is *doubtful*. We have many of these perplexing characters in our day.

In the time of the Apostles, we find one possessed of an evil spirit, saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" upon which passage, says an old commentator, "Some persons are so inconsistent, that the devil himself does not know what to make of them."

There are some whom our Lord calls "lukewarm," "neither cold nor hot."

But observe here, the Scripture does not leave us in suspense with regard to the state and destiny of such. It tells us plainly, that no man can serve two masters—

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that, if we “love father or mother more than Christ, we are not worthy of Him”—that if we “mind earthly things” supremely, we cannot be his disciples.

There are some, blessed be God! who have weighed both worlds, and who prefer the future to the present—some who are able to say:

“Farewell, world, thy gold is dross,  
Now I see the bleeding cross;  
Jesus died to set me free,  
From the law, and sin, and thee.”

Some who “declare plainly that they seek a country,” who show that, “truly, their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” But, surely, you may often say, with David, “My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word.” Obey, therefore, the admonition of the Apostle, “If ye then be risen with Christ *seek those things which are above.*” It will have a most beneficial influence over you. It will tend to enliven every grace. It will enable you to “go forth without the camp bearing the reproach” of the cross. It will enable you to live above the changes which discompose these lower regions, and your mind will thereby be kept in perfect peace being stayed upon God! It will, also, open a resource in every trial, and “these light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work out for you a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory; while you look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”



## SERMON XV.\*

THE CHARGE GIVEN BY OUR LORD TO HIS APOSTLES,  
IN RELATION TO THEIR MINISTRY.

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“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”—LUKE xxiv. 47.

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IN proportion to the importance of a principle should be the clear and full evidence by which it is supported. This remark, the truth of which no one can question, is applicable to the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour. “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain; your faith is also vain, and ye are yet in your sins and no one is there to appear in the presence of God for us, as our intercessor and advocate with the Father. But, if He be risen, a whole volume could not express the consequences and the blessings arising from it. Hence so many means were employed to establish the momentous fact; hence, by the overruling providence of God, his enemies were led to make use of every precaution to preclude the possibility of collusion. They rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre; they sealed the tomb; and they deputed a Roman watch. Hence, also, the

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\* Preached April 18, 1852; on behalf of the English and Irish Missions.

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strong and culpable unbelief of his disciples, was overruled to draw forth so many proofs, in order to convince them who were to be “the witnesses of the thing to the ends of the earth: “To whom also He showed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

Two of these appearances are recorded in the chapter before us—the one to the two disciples as they were going to Emmaus; and the other, in which he appeared to the eleven as they were assembled together with closed doors for fear of the Jews, in Jerusalem, “Jesus stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you.” And after various salutations, He said unto them, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

How these words correspond well with our design this morning, which is to plead on behalf of the English and Irish Home Missionary Society; and they lead us to ask, and enable us to answer, *four enquiries*. *What* were they to preach? “repentance and remission of sins.” *How* were they to preach these? “in his name.” *Among whom* were they to preach them? “among all nations.” And *where* were they to begin their work? “at Jerusalem.” Consider

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what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Amen.

*What* were they to preach? “repentance and remission of sins.” They were to go forth and to proclaim, that “with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption,”—that an act of grace had been passed in the court of heaven in favour of all the rebel subjects who throw down their arms and acknowledge allegiance to King Jesus.

*First*, they were to preach *repentance*. The religion which has nothing to do with repentance is not the religion of a sinner, nor the religion of the Bible. John began his ministry by crying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The Apostles went forth “preaching everywhere that men should repent.” Our Lord more than once expresses the solemn decision, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

But what is repentance? Repentance, like everything else, admits of more than one meaning. We read that Judas repented, and he went out and hanged himself. We read that Pharoah repented, but he went on still in his trespasses, and was drowned in the Red Sea. And we read, also, of that “repentance which is unto life,” and which needeth not to be repented of. And *this* is what we are to look after, when we examine ourselves: yes, brethren, this repentance consists in conviction of sin, contrition of heart, in godly sorrow for our transgressions, and ends in real conversion to God.

*Secondly*, they were to preach *remission* of sins. Remission does not deny or disprove the reality of our transgression, but only removes our liability to suffer the penalty due to them, so that the guilty are treated

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as if they were innocent, and rendered as safe as if they had never sinned.

The remission of sins published by the Gospel is free, full, and final, that is irreversible. It is expressed by God's "blotting out our transgressions as a cloud by his "casting our sins behind his back by his drowning them "in the depth of the sea;" by his removing them away "as far from us as the east is from the west, so that, if they are sought for, they shall not be found."

And the Forgiver here *retains no anger*. He is completely reconciled to the pardoned. He employs them in his service! He adopts them into his family! He blesses them with "all spiritual blessings in Christ." "Well, therefore, might David exclaim while reflecting upon this subject, "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered!" He is blessed in his *comforts*, which possess a sweetness which others can never taste;—blessed in his *duties* with acceptance and assistance;—blessed in his trials with Divine support and consolation;—blessed through life with the supplies of grace, and blessed in death with the riches of glory!

*Thirdly*. They were to preach *both* repentance and the remission of sins. We are not to separate what God hath joined together. To encourage the hope of pardon, without repentance, is rebellion against common sense, and treason against the whole spirit and letter of the word of God. Not that the one is to be considered as the condition of the other: unless, indeed, by condition, you only mean what some of our old orthodox writers mean, when they make use of the word; that is, they intended by it *connection* only;

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not a *meritorious* connection, but a *certain* connection; not a procuring cause, but an essential and never-failing effect. And it is easy to see the wisdom of such a connection: for, without repentance, you could not feel your need of pardon; you could not prize it; you could not seek after it; you could not be thankful for it.

Who, but those who “labour, and are heavy laden,” would ever come to Christ for rest?—who, but those who are sick, would value and employ this Physician?—who, but those who know and feel themselves lost, would ask, “What must I do to be saved?”

Now, on the other hand, there is no true repentance without proper views of, and faith in, God’s pardoning mercy and grace. Without these the heart may be terrified, but it never can be softened.

“Love and terror only harden,  
All the while they work alone;  
But a sense of blood-bought pardon  
Will dissolve a heart of stone.”

Therefore, says God, “I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.”

II. *How* were they to preach this? They were to preach repentance and remission of sins *in his name*.

This may be exemplified in *three* ways. When it is said, they were to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name, it must mean *in his stead*; as his subjects and successors, for He himself had been the

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preacher. He himself had preached these for more than three years; and He never wanted hearers: multitudes followed after Him, and they all “wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth and even his enemies exclaimed, “Never man spake like this man.”

But, when he left the world, He committed the continuance of the work to them. And to qualify them for it, “He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” That is, he authorised them to lay down infallibly the character of the justified and of the condemned; and by which all will be judged hereafter, and by which you should judge yourselves now.

Then, *secondly*, By preaching these in his name, is to preach by his authority. They would, doubtless, be often asked, “Who are you? Who has authorised you to come and preach? Who are you who issue these orders for us to repent and believe?” And it was desirable that they should be able to answer at once—and they were able. Why Christ Jesus, the Lord, whom you crucified, we speak in his name—we deliver his message—we display his colours. And we call upon you to believe us for his sake, for the miracles we work are all performed in his name—and who, brethren, could hear this language, and not reasonably, answer as Nicodemus did to our Lord, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

Now, we have no such vouchers as these; but, so far as we preach “the truth as it is in Jesus,” we, also, preach in his name, and He gives testimony to the word

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of his grace, as dispensed by us. And, therefore, if we have no apostolical sanction, we have a *Divine* sanction. A useful minister is the most valid minister; and we do not require a dark and uncertain apostolical succession if we are enabled to apply to those who have been converted under our ministry, and fed by our ministrations; if we can appeal to these and say, "You are our epistles written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." And such trust have we, through Christ, to God-ward.

But, *thirdly*, To preach these in his name was to preach through his mediatorial influence. What blessings, my brethren, are there which do not come to us from Him, and by Him? There are many who, perhaps, will readily acknowledge this, in regard to the remission of their sins; for "who can forgive sins but God only?"—"Through this man is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins;" and, "By Him all who believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."—"In whom, therefore," says the Apostle, "we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."—"For without shedding of blood there is no remission." Without this, how could God have been not only merciful and gracious, but "faithful and just, to forgive us our sins?"

There is no difficulty here with regard to the wicked that perish. They sin, and are punished, and thus the Scripture is fulfilled, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." But here are others that sin and do not

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die! They are not punished! And where now is the truth of God in regard to them? Why this is vicariously to be explained. Their sins have been punished, though not in their own persons, yet in their Surety! "Surely He hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But 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."—"He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God."

Now, whatever some may think this is as true in regard to repentance, as it is in respect to remission of sins. To think of deriving repentance from the corrupt heart of man, is to think of fetching water out of a millstone. And it is equally absurd to think of producing this repentance by preaching the Law. There is nothing legal in repentance. Repentance is peculiar to the Gospel. The law neither affords the space to repent, nor gives us ability to repent. But both these are derived from the glorious Gospel, and Christ is exalted to be a Saviour, as well as a Prince, to give repentance unto Israel as well as remission of sins. Hence his own declaration and promise—I say his own, for they are his own words—"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look *upon me*"—mind these words—"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 who is in bitterness for his first-born." But for this, my brethren, our preaching repentance would be "labour-



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ing in vain, and spending our strength for nought." Our encouragement is, that with Him is the residue of the Spirit; that He can make "rivers of waters in a dry place that He can even make "the valley of *dry bones*" to *live*; that He can "of these stones raise up children unto Abraham that He can "take away the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh feeling heart—hearts susceptible of divine impressions; hearts in which his grace shall reside, as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life!"

III. Among whom were they to preach this repentance and remission of sins? "Among all nations!" This must have sounded strange to the Jews. The Jews had been considered God's peculiar people, and were distinguished by a number of exclusive privileges, according to the words of David; "He showed himself unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation. They were thus exclusively privileged. Others were the waste wilderness; they were "the garden of the Lord." They were "nigh," others were "far off." They were "subjects," while others were "strangers and foreigners."

There was, therefore, a wall of separation between them and others, which the Gospel was to break down—and it broke it down, and made both one; so that, through the Mediator; "we," both Jews and Gentiles "have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father."

The apostles themselves seemed backward to go at first among the Gentiles and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; and it required a divine interposition to remove their prejudices. But, at length, they understood the will of God more perfectly, and more than acquiesced in it, and exclaimed, "Then hath

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God granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life!"

"Among all nations." "What are we to do with this universality? "Why, first, Christianity was designed to be universal; to enter and to pervade all nations of the earth. Christ was to "sprinkle many nations." "It is a light thing," said God to Christ, as the Mediator, "it is a light thing 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 end of the earth. Thus, again, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And again, "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered to my name and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts." And John "saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel, to preach to them that dwell on the earth; and to *every* nation and kindred and tongue and people."

*Secondly.* Christianity is *adapted* to universality. This was not the case with Judaism; though Judaism was of a divine original, it was necessarily confined to a single people. In the nature of the thing it never could be universal. How could all the males in every country under heaven go up to Jerusalem three times in the year to offer sacrifices there?

"But we have no such lengths to go,  
Nor wander far abroad.  
Where'er thy saints assemble now,  
There is a house for God."

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The God of Christians is not a local deity. He has no material temple. His worship is not confined to any particular mount; but all who "worship Him, must worship Him in Spirit and in truth and,

"Where'er we seek Him he is found,  
And every place is holy ground."

There is no people upon earth, however polished they may be, who are above the end and aim of the Gospel. And there is no people upon earth, however barbarous they may be, beyond the reach of its blessed and hallowed influence.

The Gospel knows nothing of adventitious distinctions. It overlooks all these, and comes and addresses man as man—speaks to all as guilty, as depraved, and as immortal beings; and, therefore, great even in their ruins, bringing them pardon and renovation—the resurrection of the body, and eternal life to the soul! And thus it suits all the human race!

*Thirdly.* Enough has already been done to encourage our hope of its actual universality in due time.

How improbable, when our Lord spake these words, was the scene which soon afterwards followed. He seemed to have only a few fishermen from the lake of Galilee, and he said to *them*, "Go ye and teach all nations." But what could they accomplish? They had no power to compel; they had no riches to bribe; they had no learning to perplex; they had no eloquence to persuade; yet what had they to overcome? the subtlety of philosophy, the craftiness of covetous priests, and the profligacy of the common people. They had to preach doctrines that seemed incredible to human reason. They had to enforce duties sub-

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versive of every evil passion. They had to announce that in consequence of the adoption of their cause, they would have to suffer reproach and persecution. And yet their cause was adopted not by a few, but by many. Thus, before the close of the third century, the Gospel had reached the boundary of the Roman empire. And how many churches were established, and how many were added to the Lord! "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!"

But, you say, "here were miracles." Miracles ceased at the end of the apostolical era. "What was, therefore, accomplished, after this, was accomplished by the blessing of the Lord upon the use of the means.

How was this country evangelized at first? Not by miracles. What produced the change in the South Seas? Not miracles. It was all accomplished by the blessing of God upon the use of the means. We have no greater difficulties to overcome than others have overcome by these means before us; while we have much better resources and instrumentality than they had. Why, then, should we despair? Though we cannot reckon upon miracles, we feel a firm persuasion that Christianity will be universally spread in due time—that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas," by the blessing of the Lord upon the use of the means. The Lord hasten it in his time.

Where were they to begin their work? "At Jerusalem." There they *did* begin. There they prayed and waited for the promise of the Father. There they preached their first Gospel sermons. There they established the first Christian churches; and there they "continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in

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prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.”—“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.”

“Beginning at Jerusalem.” Many reasons may be given for this order. We will mention five.

The *first* was to fulfil scripture, as our Saviour says here. Therefore it must take place. Where was it foretold? Why here:—“The Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion.” Why here, “Out of Zion,” says Micah, “shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Why here, says Zechariah:—“In that day living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be.”

*Secondly*. It was to attest more strongly the truth of Christianity. They were to begin to preach the facts of the Gospel in the very place where it is reported they occurred; and so recently as to be in the memory of those they addressed. Would impostors have done this? Would they not have gone to a distance? Would they not have known that distance of place, as well as distance of time, adds to the difficulty of deciding a question? But the apostles were not to begin at a distance, but they were to begin at home—to begin at Jerusalem. They knew the Gospel

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could bear examination, and, therefore, they carried the news of the truth to the very spot, and said, "These things have taken place in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."

*Thirdly.* It was to afford proofs of the Saviour's compassion. "When He came to our world, "He came to his own, but his own received Him not." There "He went about doing good;" there he preached the truth and performed his miracles; there He appeared as "the image of the invisible God." But they hated Him and his works, they pursued him with remorseless malice, and at length, hung Him on the accursed tree, where He was to expire in agony. And yet he sends his ambassadors with offers of mercy and pardon to a city whose inhabitants were reeking with his blood. We might easily imagine the apostles' saying, "Yes, we will go into all nations and preach thy Gospel, except to the Jews, who have crucified you."—"Nay," says He, "you shall preach it to them as well as to others."—"Well, then, we will begin with others, and end our commission with them."—"No," says the Saviour, "You shall *begin* there. They who smote the Rock shall drink first. They who shed my blood shall be the first to be washed in it. *Go, Go, Ye*—and if you meet with my murderers, tell them I am exalted to have mercy upon them!—If you meet with the soldier who pierced my side, tell him that there is another and a better way to my heart than this even for him."

*Fourthly.* It was that his ministers should afford encouragement to all; so that none should have a just pretence "To perish in despair." For, after this order, "beginning at Jerusalem," surely it is to go to Jerusalem, when we proclaim mercy to the very

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chief of sinners—to Jerusalem sinners! And when we say, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

*Lastly.* It was to encourage his servants in their endeavours to evangelize. The apostles were not to begin at a distance, but as near as possible. Suppose, now, you had a wilderness covered with briers and thorns, and you wished to make a smooth passage through it; would it be wiser to begin at the farther end, and work homewards, or at home first, pursuing your course to the farther end? Would not the latter way save you some time and trouble? and, as you went on, would not the little parts you cultivated afford supplies to aid you to proceed with your cultivation? Just so is it with missionary operations; and this is the very principle upon which we have acted in the formation of the English and Irish Home Missionary Society.

We are far from being hostile, or even indifferent, to those institutions which have for their object the evangelization of the heathen world; yea, we *rejoice* in them. We rejoice in their success; and great has been their success, and far more than at one time we could have reasonably expected.

I well remember when our London Missionary Society was “a day of small things.” I remember some said, “As to India, you may as well attempt to pull God from his throne, as to attempt to break castes there!” but yet castes *have* been broken there, again and again! I remember how insultingly they said, “You may as well attempt to evangelize oxen and hogs, as to attempt the conversion of Hottentots and Kaffirs but Hottentots and Kaffirs *have been*

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converted; and many of these, by their piety and excellence, have been examples to those who have had privileges and advantages far before them! You remember, how the Ammonite said—"Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." But now, blessed be God! if an *elephant* went upon it, he would not be able to break it down. "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." I am not for straining after things at a distance, while we overlook claims which are nearer home. Surely, persons have not less claims, because they are our countrymen and our neighbours; and, surely, the old proverb is not an improper one, that charity must *begin* at home, but it should not *end* there. Yea, all our home successes, instead of injuring our foreign Missionary Societies, *benefit* them. Every church formed may be considered as a little magazine. Every person converted at home, is a friend to missions, and to the dissemination of the truth as it is in Jesus. Every minister of Christ educated at home, becomes a helper in the vineyard of his Lord. And some of our most laborious ministers and missionaries have been the fruit of village preaching. Toplady was converted in a bam. The late excellent Dr. Williams was converted to God while listening to a preacher in a bam; and, were it not egotism, I could add, that he who now addresses you was the fruit of plain village preaching in a private house.

Our Society includes Ireland; and there much good has resulted from the Society's operations,—many have been disposed to attend to Scripture readers, and many have been brought to listen to the Word when they have opportunity; and not a few, blessed be God! in various places have been converted from the abomi-



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nations of Popery, by “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.”

Then, you should remember, what qualities belong to the Irish, and which admit of so much improvement, were they but evangelized. How many of them would make some of the most lovely Christians, and some of the most animated preachers in the whole world!

We, also, include our own *neighbourhood*. Here, perhaps, some may be disposed to think evangelization is needless;—for, are we not a Christian country? Have we not an Established Church? Have we not well paid clergymen for every town and village in the empire? Well, we will allow, and we rejoice in it, that evangelism has, of late, thriven much in the Establishment; and there is an increasing number of those who labour for the conversion of sinners and the glory of God. But there are places where there is but little preaching which is attended with “the power of God unto salvation but only of that kind which is calculated to keep the common people easy in their present state, seeing that, “in their baptism, they were made members of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.”

And, if you could go among some of our villagers, and see how the Sabbath is observed—if you could but hear their talk, and would converse with them on spiritual things—you would soon be convinced, if not by their actual desire, yet by their actual necessities, that they are continually saying, “Come over and help us.”

We humbly and earnestly hope you will help us. We stand much in need of help. And if you have felt the importance of the Gospel upon your own hearts, you will desire to communicate it to others.

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And you have this Gospel not only as a benefit to enjoy; but, also, as a talent to employ. You have the Gospel not for yourselves only, but for others. You have the opportunity, and, I trust, the desire also, to send it to those who are destitute of it. And you know of what you possess you are not the proprietors, but the stewards. "And it is required in a steward, that a man be found faithful."—"But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices; God is well pleased."—"And, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though He was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty, might be rich."

May God command his blessing, and his shall be the praise. Amen.

## SERMON XVI.\*

THE PUNISHMENT OF BACKSLIDERS; BUT THEIR  
ENCOURAGEMENT WHEN PENITENT.

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“For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.”—ISA. lvii. 17,18.

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Now all this was spoken of, and was long since fulfilled; and some parts of the fulfilment are recorded by the sacred writers. And “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

We shall never read the history of the Jews to advantage, unless we behold them as specimens of our common nature, as types of Christian experience, and as representations of God’s dealings with his people in all ages of the world.

Human depravity is everywhere manifest. All Scripture, all history, all observation, all experience,

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\* Preached May 2nd, 1852.

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join to confirm the truth of the mortifying testimony, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Nor have we proof of this from the children of darkness only, but, also, from the children of light.

The people of God are made really to differ from others. They are "called to be saints." They are saints; but the good work begun in them is far from being completely accomplished.

Sometimes they fall under the power of temptation, and give evidence that as everything in them is not nature, so everything in them is not grace. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would so that the Christian's life is more than a warfare, and his death more than a victory.

Let us plunge into the subject at once; "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him; I hid me and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will lead him, also, and will restore comforts unto *him* and to *his* mourners."

These words remind us of the language of the Apostle to the Romans; "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound."

Let us consider, first, the *accusatory* part; and, secondly, the *promissory* part. The *accusatory* part: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him; I hid me and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways." And the *promissory* part: "I will heal him; I will lead him, also, and will restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners."

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I. The *accusatory* part. This furnishes us with four things which require our attention. The *first* is, the evil complained of—"The iniquity of his covetousness."

Now, you are prone to confine the love of money to misers. They, indeed, love it, and in order to hoard and to hide it. But then there are others who equally love it, for expenditure and extravagance, for the purposes of the pride of life, or excess in dress, or in ornaments, or in expensive amusements and travels. There are many who idolize money as much as ever Old Elwes, the miser, did. Have you not heard even of females of rank and fashion, who have stolen ornaments of finery, and have been tried for the same? though, alas! they have seldom been convicted. "Money is a defence," and "money procureth all things."

But, "the iniquity of his covetousness." Why, then, covetousness is iniquity. Well, so the Apostle considered it, or he would not have called covetousness "idolatry."

All idolatry is not gross, or corporeal. Much of it is refined and mental. We read of some "who make gold their hope, and fine gold their confidence; who "love the praise of men more than the praise of God who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God who "love and serve the creature more than the Creator—God over all, blessed for evermore." They transfer to some other being the love, the hope, the confidence, the dependence, the homage, of the soul, which is supremely due to God's holy name. This is idolatry. Idolatry is the alienation of the heart from God to something else.

"The iniquity of his covetousness." Why, then, there is iniquity in covetousness. And what else is

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there not in it? The Apostle tells us, that "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." What crime has it not led to the perpetration of? See the influence and effect of it in Balaam, in Gehazi; see it in Judas, who, for thirty pieces of silver, could even betray the Lord of life and glory!

It is lamentable to think that this evil so commonly prevails. You will find, by the sacred writers, that the Jews were always given to it. God himself says, "Who is there among you that will shut the doors of my temple for nought? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought?"—"They sold," says He, "the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes!"

Hence the complaint of Jeremiah, "For all of them, from the highest to the lowest, are given, every one of them, to covetousness." And we find even the prophets and the watchmen not free from the charge:—"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter."

Is it not awful to see how this vice prevails in our country? Why, the god of our idolatry is, obviously, Mammon! Professors of religion, alas! are not without fault here. Indeed, they are peculiarly chargeable with this evil. And for this two reasons may be assigned. The one is, that religion in various respects and instances, is favourable to the acquisition of wealth,

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by cutting men off from expensive vices and amusements, and making men frugal, industrious, prudent, and confidential. But it is frequently the case, as riches increase, the love of them and the appetite grow with the indulgence.

Then the sin of covetousness does not expose professors, like other vices, or acts of immorality, such as lying, drunkenness, lewdness, and such-like, which deservedly exclude persons from church membership. But this is not the case with regard to covetousness. The reason is, the thing cannot be easily substantiated. If we could bring forward the evil, as it is in reality, we should make this the ground of excommunication, as much as any other iniquity. Oh! Christians,—oh! Christians,—beware of this evil! Oh! remember, you are not “men of the world who have their portion in this life.” Oh! remember, that you are only “strangers and pilgrims upon the earth,” and not only is the language of softest poetry, but also of Scripture, continually addressing you, saying:—

“Turn, pilgrim, turn! thy cares forego;  
All earthborn cares are wrong;  
Man wants but little here below,  
Nor wants that little long.”

“You brought nothing into this world, and it is certain you can carry nothing out.” And “having food and raiment, let us therewith be content.” “Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said,”—and is not this enough?—“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

Then observe, *secondly*, the reward of transgression. “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth.” Sin is

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the same in whomsoever it is found. The evil is not lessened when it is found in the people of God; yea, it is even increased. They stand in nearer relation to God than others. They sin under greater obligations to God than others. They sin against a renewed nature and an enlightened conscience, which stands with a sword in the way: so that "the way of transgressors is hard." Hence God is peculiarly angry, "because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters. Hence he says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you."—"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

"Sin never hurts the believer," is an Antinomian sentiment: but what saith the Scriptures. "Search the Scriptures,"—turn back to the history of Moses and Aaron. God said to Moses, "Because ye sanctified me not before the children of Israel, therefore, ye shall not go thither unto the land, which I give the children of Israel. And though Moses was so very desirous of entering Canaan, though thrice he besought the Lord, and said; "I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon," the Lord forbad the repetition of his importunity; yea, the Lord was wroth with him and said: "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter."

Turn to the history of David, even when God assured him that his sin was pardoned. "Yet," said He, "because thou hast despised me, the sword shall never depart from thy house." Bead the 51st Psalm, and there you will see that, when he fell, it was to the breaking of his bones, and when he arose again it was



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to the breaking of his heart. Then study, also, the language of our text. See God's hidings, God's smitings, and God's anger. God loves his people too well to let them go on offending Him without rebuke. To others, indeed, He may say, "They are joined to idols, let them alone but He will never say this to those whom He "loves with an everlasting love." No; rather than they should come short at last, He will turn every friend into a foe, every comfort into a cross; and the sources from whence they expect the greatest refreshment, shall be dried up, or embittered.

Oh, how wise, how merciful, are those hidings and those smitings He employs to bring them to himself—to remind them, by walking upon nettles and briers, that they are not now walking in those ways which are pleasantness and peace! and to induce them, by a wretched contrast to say with the Church, "I will go, and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." And, says God, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding 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 of Hosts." This is the law of the house: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my commandments, I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail."

Then observe, *thirdly*, the *perverseness under this*: "And he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Oh, what an evil is sin! Oh, how it grows—how it abounds—how it hardens—how it deceives—how it degrades!

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It is said of Ahaz that, in his affliction, he sinned yet *more and more* against the Lord. So Jeremiah says, "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."

I have known persons who have longed, yea, who have even prayed for affliction. They have supposed that some great calamity would bring them to a decision as Christians—infer their condition, and deepen their convictions. But afflictions of themselves, without the blessing and grace of God, will not answer the purpose.

"If one went unto them from the dead," said Dives, "they will repent."—"No," said Abraham; "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Why, "Bray a fool in a mortar, with a pestle," says Solomon, "yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

And when we, as ministers, have visited sick and apparently dying beds, what expressions of penitence have we heard—what vows of future amendment! Yet, when God has said, "Return, ye children of men;" they have returned again to folly!

But, you say, "Do afflictions produce no benefit?" Let us distinguish. There are many who have been afflicted, and yet have not been humbled by the dispensations of Providence, by which they have been exercised.

We have known persons whose very hearts have been broken; yet their afflictions, have been like the breaking off a piece of rock, which has retained the same hardness with the whole mass. We must not ascribe to afflictions what is due only to the agency of

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Divine grace, which alone can render our outward afflictions effectual to accomplish their purposes.

But, you say, "Can this be, in any measure, the ease with real Christians? What, will they require the rebukes of Divine Providence?—will they go on in the frowardness of their hearts?" Yes, for a while; and, sometimes, for a long while.

There is Jonah—he was disobedient to the word of the Lord. The tempest rolls over his head, and he is plunged into the deep: and though, according to his language, he was three days and three nights "in the belly of hell," yet he came out *Jonah* still: and told God that he did well to be angry, "even unto death and woidd rather that the whole inhabitants of that great city, Nineveh, should perish, than that he should lay under any suspicion of being a false prophet. "*Lord, what is man,*" and even a gracious man, after all his experience, is left to himself!

Then, *Fourthly*, here is God's knowledge of all the ways and works of man. "I have seen his ways." For, my brethren, "his eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings."—"There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves."—"His eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good."—"The darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."—"Hell is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering." And, therefore, the speaker is authorized to say, "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*"

Many of your fellow-creatures know much more of your wickedness than ever you are aware of; but the keenest observer has never seen a thousandth part of it. Yea, you yourselves have not known a thousandth

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part of your own wickedness. "Who can understand his errors?"—"Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" But all has been known to God. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." *He* hath seen all your goings. He saw the first deviation from the rule of righteousness—what was this? Henry says, "Apostacy and backsliding always begin at the closet-door." He saw that. Ah, He saw all the aggravations of your sinful ways; He knew all the exercises you had to form—all the motives you affected to be influenced by—all the difficulties you had to break through, in order into your perseverance in an evil course.

And now, after all—after all that He has seen, what shall we certainly expect to hear next from Him? Surely, after all this, He will say, "I have counselled them, but they have refused to hearken; I have corrected them, but they have despised all my counsel, they would none of my reproof." I will, therefore, have nothing more to do with them. I have tried long enough, I have employed means long enough I will now "avenge me of my adversaries." "Israel would none of me." I have long made the trial—"Israel would none of me." I, therefore, give them up to follow their own heart's lust, and to walk in their own counsel.

*But, no.* "Be astonished, oh, ye heavens, at this, and hear, oh earth!" for though this knowledge of God is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin, it is also mentioned to magnify the grace and the mercy that follow after. "I have seen his ways,"—and *what* ways!—"and will heal Him. I will lead Him, also, and will restore comforts unto Him, and to his mourners.

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II. Now in this second and *promissory* part, observe the extensiveness of the engagement.

It takes in, you see, four things.

First, says God, "I will heal him." All sin is a disease, and it affects the soul much in the same as affliction affects the body; depriving it of liberty, of enjoyment, of usefulness.

It is the same with *backsliding*. This partakes of the same quality. This may be considered as a relapse, and requires the same "balm in Gilead," and the same "Physician there." The spiritual invalid here is only to be restored by the same means which originally cured him. He sends his word and heals him. He renews him by his Holy Spirit. Above all, "*He* hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But 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."—"He healeth the broken in heart and now the man "runs, and is not weary—walks; and is not faint."

*Secondly*, "I will lead him, also." Now this implies, that, when he is healed, his strength will be not to sit still, and his desire will be to go forward. But the man will be made sensible of what is here promised, and that he needs a Divine Leader, as well as a Divine Teacher. He therefore makes it a matter of prayer, and comes to God in the language of David: "Lead me in thy truth, and guide me. On thee do I wait all the day."

Are you convinced of this—that we need Divine leading, as well as Divine healing? How do we need it? We need it under two characters. I lead a blind

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man, and I lead a child. I lead a blind man, because he cannot see his way; and I lead a child, because he cannot go alone. Both these will apply to us; we are both *blind* and *weak*. And God graciously accommodates himself to our condition and exigencies.

We are blind and need direction, and, without this, we shall assuredly go astray. But "He teaches us to profit." He "leads us *into all truth*." He affords his people a measure of doctrinal and experimental and practical knowledge. He fulfils the promise, "I will give them a heart to know me." "I will," says He, "bring the blind"—*observe*, "the BLIND"—"I will bring the blind by a way they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them."

But, then, He leads them, also, with regard to *assistance*. Christians are children; but, as Bishop Hall says, "though God has a large family, not one of them can go alone." And there is none so dull, but He can teach them. He says, "I taught Ephraim to go, leading him by the arm," as you would a little child. Without this, they would be discouraged because of the way; they would not be able to contend with the difficulties they meet with, and afraid to proceed; but He takes them by the hand—He leads them on—He strengthens them with strength in their souls. He says, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I *will* help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Thus, He led the Jews of old, from Egypt to Canaan, through the wilderness. He *led them* about;

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He instructed them; "He kept them as the apple of his eye He afforded them the fiery cloudy pillar; to be a cloud by day and a fire by night; He gave them not only *direction*, observe, but *protection*. They stood, in need of something beyond mere direction; they wanted his interposition continually. Well, He fed them with manna, He refreshed them with water from the rock, He sent them Moses and Aaron. They had, also the Ark, and above upon this was the mercy-seat; and there God held communion with them. He gave them statutes and judgments. He defended them from their foes. "He made the mountains to skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs;" and He opened a passage through the Jordan, for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over.

Thus much of God was displayed in his leading them. Isaiah says, therefore, "So didst Thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name." David, also, tunes his harp to this same strain, and says,—“To Him who led his people through the wilderness.” Ah, this is enough to excite our highest admiration and praise; “for his mercy endureth for ever!” This will be part of the enjoyment of heaven to look back upon the way, and see how He has led us by the dispensations of his Providence and his grace.

*Thirdly*, God says, “I will restore comforts unto him.” This shows he once had these comforts, and had been deprived of them. David makes use of the same expression: “*Restore* unto me the joy of thy salvation,” He had it once, but by sin he had been deprived of it. Christians, by their backsliding, lose the peace they once possessed. They no longer enjoy the smiles in waiting upon God they once did. They no longer find the promises to be their support and

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“songs in the house of their pilgrimage.” But God can restore these comforts. He can again say to their soul, “I am thy salvation.” He can again “make them joyful in his house of prayer.” He can again give the minister “the tongue of the learned, that he may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.”

Luther said, “I could as easily make a world as I could comfort a distressed conscience, unless God accompanies my exertions with his blessing.” And this is true. Ministers now know this from various trials they have made; but then here is the “God of all comfort,” as the Apostle says. Here is One who is “able to do for us exceeding abundantly above that which we can ask or think.” Here is One “who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” Who can, as tribulations abound, make consolations much more to abound. However dark may be the sky, if He says “Let there be light,” it shall be light. However agitated the mind, if He says, “Peace, be still,” there shall be a great calm. Then, after the darkness of the night, shall be the light of the morning; and, after the dreariness of the winter, comes the loveliness and the fertility of the spring!

*Lastly.* “And I will restore comforts unto *his mourners*,”—for he had made others to mourn as well as himself. And this is always the case. Did you never observe what is said of Korah,—that “this man perished not alone in his iniquity.” His poor wife perished along with him, and all his children, and all his servants. Such a man never sins and suffers alone. He draws others after him, by his example, by his



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errors, by his vices, and by his influence. The wicked are not only corrupt, but they are “children who are corrupters.” They are always endeavouring to bring others into the same condition with themselves. “Oh!” says the distracted mother, “oh, that that unhappy wretch had died before he had seduced my poor child.” And “Oh!” says the anguished father, “that that infidel had been removed, before he had poisoned the mind of my dear son!”

You are shocked with the thought of a murderer—if you met with him, you would be ready to shrink. But, alas! how many are there? How many do we continually meet with? Sometimes we meet them even in the house of God! There are murderers of the reputation—of the comforts—of the health—of the body, and murderers of *the souls* of men! No; men never sin or perish alone in their iniquity!

But, ah! who are they of whom the Prophet here speaks? Who are called *his* mourners? because *he* made them mourn—because they mourn *with* him and *for* him?

You may be sure that they are not men of the world. *They* are not his mourners. They rather rejoice. They say, “Ah! so would we have it,” instead of grieving over the falls of professors of religion and of the people of God.

But “his mourners?” They are his *ministers*,—they who only live, when you “standfast in the Lord.” They who say with Jeremiah, “If he will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears.” They are the humble believers in Jesus, who are “sorrowful for the solemn assembly,” and to whom the reproach of it is a burden. Oh, how desolate are

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their hearts, while they mourn before the Lord, for these things! If, therefore, they weep with them when they weep, they rejoice with them when they rejoice. If comforts are restored unto them, they are comforted, also, by their mourners. They can say with David, "They that know thee will be glad, when they see me, because I have hoped in thy word."—"Bring," says he, "my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name. The righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me."

Let us press the subject a little more by way of application. Let us see how this subject commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It certainly conveys the idea of terror to some. Did you never observe the language of Solomon,—“Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: how much more the wicked and the sinner.” Yes, if God deals so severely with saints, what will become of you, sinner? If he makes one to feel so severely the *rod*, shall the other be allowed to escape the *sword*? No, —*no*. “If,” says Peter, “If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end of them be that obey not the Gospel of God?”—“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” AH! WHERE INDEED? Go home with your Bible—retire with your Bible, and this blessed book will tell you where. “The wicked shall be tinned into hell, with all the nations that forget God.”

*Secondly*. This subject should lead to self-reflection and self-examination. Why, Christians; why should God deal with you as he does? Has he withheld from you some of the privileges you once enjoyed? Has he smitten you? if not, has He hid his face from

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you? Does he maintain anything like communion with you now? Are you constrained to say,

“Where is the blessedness I knew,  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and his word?  
“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still;  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill!”

Now, let me ask, is there not a cause? As Solomon says, “As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.”—“A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back.”

Never imagine that God is dealing with you sovereignly in these cases, as some represent. God is a Sovereign: but God’s sovereignty always regards good and never regards evil. He does, indeed, bless sovereignly, but He never punishes sovereignly, but only according to man’s desert. If God, as a Father, chastises a child for his faults, we should commend Him; and should commend Him, even if He would “not spare for his crying.” But the man who corrects his child simply to put him to pain, or to show his hate, and says he has a sovereign right to do what he will with his own, must be a sovereign scoundrel.

You would not attribute such conduct as this to the blessed God. Hear what he says in his Holy Word:—“Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy, that he cannot heal; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his

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face from you." Search, therefore, "and try your ways, and turn again unto the Lord," and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me."

Then you should derive from hence a lesson of submission and patience. If you have suffered—"Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" Why, then, says Jeremiah should you complain? "Why should a living man complain—a man for the punishment of his sins?" Rather say, with the Church, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him."

And, while you remember that you deserve these corrections, you should remember, also, that you need every one of them—that

"They all are most needful;  
Not one is in vain."

And while they are the effects of sin, they are often "the fruits to take away sin."

Then, are there any backsliders here this morning? I do not mean backsliders in heart—that we all are; but backsliders in life. Oh, let them be abased, but not be in despair! Let them, "with broken hearts and contrite spirits," "take with them words, and turn again unto the Lord," saying, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips."—"Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy!"

*Lastly.* How obviously from all this, is it, that our salvation is of the grace of God. Yes, it flows from "the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus. And where but there

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can a Christian find recourse for his hopes? And where can he find satisfaction, while in looking back, and when he shall be laid upon a sick and dying bed? Could it be derived from a review of a well-spent life? Must he not look off from his duties, as well as from his sins—crying, “Enter not into judgment with me, O God; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified.”

Thus the groat John Howe went off, saying, “I am looking for eternal life, not as a profitable servant, but as a pardoned sinner.” And when Paul had been eulogizing Onesiphorus for his zeal, and charity, and love, and diligence; he says, after all these encomiums upon him, “The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.” What! would such a character as this need mercy at the last? Yes; and who will not?

Well, Christian, you will also find it. The love of God passeth knowledge: but while you admire and adore, be concerned also to imitate and resemble Him. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.” “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”—“Be ye followers, of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.” AMEN.

## SERMON XVII.\*

### THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL.

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“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”—ISAIAH lv. 10,11.

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THE literal scenery of this fine passage is once again partially fulfilled. The winter is over and gone; the clouds have poured down their treasure, and the grateful soil is productive of every kind of loveliness. And now two things seem to be required of us. The first is thankfulness, calling upon ourselves, and upon each other, to bless and praise His holy name, who never “leaves himself without witness,” but is “always doing us good, and filling our hearts with food and gladness.” And the second is, to improve it in a way of spiritual instruction. There are, I consider, few *real* lovers of nature. The greater part of mankind are carried away

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by something artificial, and are much more struck with the doings of man, than with the works of God.

I was one day walking with the late Dr. Cogan, the philosopher, who, after casting his eyes around him said, "When I am in London I always believe in the devil; but, when I am in the country, I always believe in a God." Thus, Cowper says, "God made the country, man made the town." And again, says he,

"The achievements of art may amuse,  
 May even our wonder excite;  
 But rocks, hills and valleys, diffuse  
 A lasting and sacred delight."

But, my brethren, it is a possible thing for persons to have a taste for the wonders, excellencies and beauties of nature, while they never regard them as remembrancers and emblems of better things! But there is a surprising analogy between nature and grace; and the one was designed to furnish illustrations of the other,—

First, in their origin. Secondly, in their usefulness. Thirdly, in their operations; and fourthly, in their success. The rain and the snow come down from heaven; so does the Gospel. The rain and the snow replenish the earth, and cause it to yield seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so does the Gospel. The rain and the snow produce their effects by a peculiar agency; so does the Gospel. The rain and the snow are never in vain; they always answer their purpose: "So shall my word be," says God, "that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

I. There is a resemblance in their origin. The rain

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and the snow come down from heaven. So does the Gospel.

I presume there is not an individual here that questions this with regard to the rain and the snow. You all know that it is not in our power to cause a fall of the one, or a shower of the other. And, I believe, people are never so grateful as they are when rain comes after a drought; for they have previously had a proof that, whatever is under their control, the *clouds* are not. Jeremiah asks, "Can any of the gods of the gentiles give rain?" What, then, is the inference we draw from this? Does God only give the *less*? Does he not also give the *greater*? Is natural life from *God*, and his spiritual illumination from *yourselves*? No. God shines into your heart, to give you "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ." Does the life of an insect,—of a plant,—and of a flower, arise from God? and does that life which is emphatically called "the life of God in the soul," arise from yourselves? *No!* If you are "filled with all the fruits of righteousness," it is "by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God."

Now let us apply this to the Gospel. We are not going to review all the evidences of its divine original. We design employing only what analogy supplies.

It is commonly, and justly supposed, that the works of creation necessarily lead the mind to God as their author; that they are indications of his deity; that such is the grandeur of some, the minuteness of others, and the perfection of all,—infinitely surpassing human imagination,—as to constrain the contemplative beholder to exclaim, "This is the finger of God!"

How is it, then, with regard to the Gospel? The Bible is full of God. I open it and read, and find it



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is infinitely suited to my state and exigency; that, if I am a wanderer, it brings me a guide; if I am guilty and weak, it proclaims one in whom "I have righteousness and strength and that if I am enslaved, it shows me a Redeemer.

Again, I open the Bible and read it, and I am soon persuaded that the Being who composed this book must have perfectly known me, and have been infinitely concerned for my welfare, and that he is possessed of the highest benevolence.

Again, I open my Bible, and I read the admonition, "Owe no man anything, but love one another and again, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

And from whence could all this flow, but from the Fountain of holiness and benevolence? Only prove to me that the Bible is designed to be useful—that this alone can free my mind from perplexing doubts, and my conscience from tormenting fears; that this alone can deliver me from the tyranny of evil passions—that it can preserve me in prosperity, and sustain me in adversity; that it can raise me above the fear of death, and make me a blessing to those around me; and I want no other evidence to convince me that it is "identified with the word that is gone out of the mouth of God."

II. There is a resemblance in their *usefulness*. The rain and the snow water the earth, and "make it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater." So is it with the Gospel.

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Both these are beneficial and necessary. "Were these natural influences to be withholden, our earth would soon become a mere desert: there would be no "grass for the cattle, and herb for the service of man." We should soon be in a condition so pathetically described by the prophet Joel, where he says, "The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley, because the harvest of the field is perished."

But you know that, by the kindly influences of the heavens, God blesses the springing of the earth; "his paths drop fatness; the valleys stand thick with com; the little hills rejoice on every side and here is "seed for the sower and bread for the eater."

It yields not only for present use, but for future supply: for, if *all* that is produced was required, what would become of those who live after us? But now provision is made not only for consumption, but for propagation. Thus, in the beginning of Genesis, we read that "God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, whose seed is *in itself* upon the earth."

Now, apply this to the *Gospel*. What our earth would be, without these influences of heaven, our world would be without the Gospel. The condition of every country, of every town, of every village, of every individual, would be, as the Scripture describes it, as "sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death." But, when the Gospel comes, "it makes all things new it is the staff of life, the staff of spiritual and eternal life—it brings relief to the troubled conscience—it brings pardon and reno-

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vation, and all the fruits of the Spirit, as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And hence, says the Apostle to the Romans, "I am persuaded that, when I come to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace."

But as the husbandman is a *sower*, as well as a reaper, and has to provide for the future, as well as to gather in the harvest, so is it with Christians. They who enjoy the blessings of the Gospel, and who have received the truth as it is in Jesus, feel it to be their duty to extend the knowledge of the truth—to inform and to invite others who are ignorant of it; and their desire is that God would "send out his light and his truth and then Christians have a disposition produced in them, which makes their duty their *delight*. Thus they breathe out their souls in the prayer which is accompanied with a promise—"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Drop a single grain of com, and it will produce very many more; and, by a repetition of germination, by the blessing of God upon the means, there will be enough to enrich a whole field, or a neighbourhood, or a province: and this, in time, has been actually accomplished.

In reference to this image, God says, "I will sow them in the earth;" and they are made to produce their like, and instrumental in "turning many unto righteousness."

I often feel persuaded that no Christian goes to heaven alone; that, as, He desires to be useful, and endeavours to be useful, so God indulges him, and,

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in some measure and degree, renders him a blessing, as well as blesses by his example, experience, and influence.

David who "served his own generation according to the will of God," prayed, saying, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit, then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." And look again at Nathanael; he brings his own brother Andrew to Jesus. The woman of Samaria said to the men—"Come, see a man who told me all that ever I did! Is not this the Christ? And many believed on him because of his own word." The little captive girl taken in war by the Assyrians makes the God of Israel known through all the regions of Assyria.

We will suppose a case. A villager goes on a Sabbath into a town, and is privileged to hear from the minister of the place, "the truth as it is in Jesus." From this period, his views, and feelings, and conduct, are otherwise than formerly. He soon shows this. He is now kind to his wife, tender to his children, and endeavours to instruct and impress them.

This is not all. He now feels for his neighbours, and talks with them according to his ability. He tells them what God has done for his soul. He goes to a neighbouring minister, tells him what a state his village is in, and begs that he would come and preach to his poor neighbours, who are "perishing for lack of knowledge." How can I come and preach there, says he; the hands of no Bishop have ever been upon my head. But still he presses him, saying, come and preach the word, and you can do so under a tree near my habitation.

Ah! my brethren, I have thus *stood* under many

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a *fine tree fifty or sixty years* ago. The first time I preached at Colerne,\* was under a large tree, and the Lord owned and blessed the word. It was on a Lord's-day, between the morning and evening services, and many of my own congregation accompanied me hither. Since this, we have a good place of worship there, in which Christ is faithfully preached.

We proceed to observe—

III. There is a resemblance in their *operation*. The rain and snow produce these effects, by a peculiar mode and agency. So does the Gospel. But what is this peculiar mode? We will mention four things.

*First*, they operate *gradually*. So does the Gospel. Nothing is produced in nature *immediately*. It is carried to its maturity, from small beginnings, and by imperceptible progress: so that, though we can see its growth, we can never see the growing. Yea—we may remark that things in nature are slower in their growth, in proportion to their excellence. How much sooner does the osier reach its stature than the oak. Nathanael, at first, knew but little, but *he* became “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” Nicodemus was, at first, very timid. “He came to Jesus by night but at length he came forward, and owned a crucified Saviour.

Let us not “despise the day of small things.” Greater ones will follow. Let none be discouraged, because, at present, they have only a little strength. “For whosoever hath, to Him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.”

*Secondly*, They operate mysteriously, so does the Gospel. What do those mean who say they will believe no more than they can comprehend? For

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\* A village in Wiltshire, near Bath.

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what can we comprehend. We all believe in the heat and colour of the blood, yet I never heard of any one who professed to conjecture how the one and the other are produced. So, says our Saviour, it is with the wind. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is horn of the Spirit." So, in allusion to the imagery before us, our Lord says, "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."

*Thirdly.* They operate according to the nature of the soil; so does the Gospel. In the parable of the sower there was the same seed, and the same sower. Yet what different results; one soil was the way-side, another was stony, another was thorny, and a fourth was good ground. This yielded some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold.

The ground of the human heart is not good naturally; but it is prepared for the reception of "the good seed of the kingdom."

It is God, who, by his grace, worketh in us according to the good pleasure of his will, and He does one thing in *order* for another.

Two persons may be sitting in the very same pew, and hearing the very same words; but the effect produced may be very different. One hears the word to advantage, with a believing heart, not so the other; and, as the Apostle says, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith."

So said the Apostle in regard to the Thessalonians; "When ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but, as

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it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you who believe.”

*Fourthly.* They operate in connexion with human exertions: so does the Gospel. The husbandman knows that he cannot make a blade of grass, or an ear of com: but he knows, also, that he can manure, and plough, and sow; and he knows also that he would be a fool, if, without these, he looked for a crop. For, though God could produce the seed without human instrumentality, he never does. And though these endeavours would be in vain, without the rain and the snow from heaven, the snow and the rain would be nothing without them. In the Divine economy the means are as necessary as the end. “I have planted,” says the Apostle, “and Apollos watered; but God giveth the increase.” And Paul must plant, and Apollos must water, though it is “God that worketh all in all.” Let the ministers, therefore, of the Gospel, pray fervently, and study hard, and “seek to find out acceptable words,” which may be understood, and tend to the instruction of their hearers. And let parents “train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

IV. and *Lastly.* There is a resemblance in their success. The rain and snow from heaven return not thither again; they always produce some results according to an ordained order; so is it, says God, with my word, “it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

The rain and the snow fall not in vain. It is easy to see that they are useful, when they fall upon the field or the garden: there they bring forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiving bless-

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ing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." When these influences fall upon the fields or gardens, we see their usefulness. But, when the clouds empty themselves upon the sea, or upon the sands, or upon the rocks, would you say they are thrown away, even there? Would you say that God pours them down there in vain? But is it for us to determine what is vain in the Divine dispensations?

So God sends his Gospel, and truly blessed are the results, where it is received in the love and power of it. But what does it, where this is not the case? Yet, would you say, that, *even there*, it returns to God void? Ah, no! It leaves the man without excuse at the bar of God—it will leave him without excuse and speechless at the grand inquiry: "How earnest thou in without a wedding garment?" No, it shows there "has been a prophet among them"—yes, and a Saviour among them too—standing at the door, and knocking day after day, and year after year, complaining, "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye may have life."

We may consider man in reference to this world, as well as in reference to another. And we may consider him socially, as well as personally. Christ is "the Saviour of all men, but especially of those who believe."

"If," says Whitfield, "we cannot save men's souls we will do all we can to humanize them." How much good has temperance and teetotalism done? If these cannot convert them—and who pretends to say that they can?—yet, if they turn brutes into men—if these save their poor wives and children from want



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and rags, and bring into their families peace and plenty, bow immense the consequences! And these things have we known or heard of? Why, then, let certain physicians and philosophers and professors of religion sneer as much as they choose; we will bless God, if any measure or degree of moral good has been produced, and pray for more.

Is the Gospel useless, when it tames the fierceness of the passions, and softens the manners of the multitude; when it mitigates the horrors of war, and ‘banishes the hells of slavery? How many useful and charitable institutions are there which have arisen from the introduction of Christianity, even where the Gospel may not appear to us to have been “the power of God unto salvation.”

You might have gone from one end of the pagan world to the other, and not have seen a hospital or an infirmary.

But there is always some certainty with regard to the spiritual effects of the Gospel, which are incalculable and stupendous.

As to these, sometimes the poor minister may say, “I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought.” But he is not qualified to judge of the success of his ministry.

Perhaps, one person converted by his means was on a journey, and he never saw him again. Another may be removed to a distant land, and never hear him more; and another who was edified and blessed through his instrumentality, was perhaps afraid to go and tell him his experience, lest he should be found, after all, to be wanting.

Oh, what secrets will be displayed hereafter! when many who have laboured, as it were in despair, will

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find many to be “their joy and crown in the day of the Lord Jesus!”

Who can tell what has been done, under God, during a long ministry, where the man has laboured always in the word and doctrine, and his walk has been according to the truth?

Who can tell what has been produced in a large congregation, like the present, by even a single sermon? Or, who can tell what is being effected now, under the agency of the blessed Spirit of God, by this discourse! Perhaps, in one place, there is a mind alarmed by reflecting upon its condition, and asking, “What must I do to be saved?” Perhaps, in another, an individual is made to sorrow after a godly sort. There is another, who is “weary and heavy-laden,” but the preacher has “a word in season” for him. Perhaps, in another place, there is a poor sorrowful widow, with her fatherless boy by her side; and, as she wipes away the starting tear from her eye, she hears a voice, saying, “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Another perhaps, entered this house at his wit’s end—sinking in the deep mire where there is no standing, but he has found “God in his palaces for a refuge.”

An eloquent and impressive appeal was delivered in conclusion, on behalf of the Schools at Argyle Chapel, in which the venerable preacher took a lively interest.

## SERMON XVIII.\*

THE SUPREME DESIRE OF THE APOSTLE OF THE  
GENTILES.

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“That I may win Christ.”—PHIL. iii. 8.

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To *win*, is to obtain something by games of chance, or trial of skill, or exertion of strength, in opposition to purchase or donation; for we never apply the word winning to anything bought or given. The Apostle, therefore, here uses the word in a half metaphorical sense, and means by winning, *gaining* the thing, and making it his own; and therefore it is, as if he should say, It is my wish, my grand desire, to realize Him, to possess Him, to enjoy Him.

He expresses himself much in the same way in another part of the chapter, when he says, “That I may apprehend that for which I, also, am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” And in another place, where he says, “Then are ye made *partakers* of Christ,”—partakers of his righteousness, of his strength, of his image, of his presence: “Then are ye made partakers of Christ, if ye hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

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\* Preached May 23, 1852.

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This being premised, we hasten to observe four things,—

- I. The person who wishes to win Christ.
- II. The value of the prize.
- III. The possibility of winning him; and
- IV. The dreadfulness of losing him.

“Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” Amen.

I. The person who wishes to win Christ. You say, this is Paul. It is. And if this were all our intention on this head of the discourse, it would have been needlessly and triflingly made.

But you must be aware how much more striking the same words are according to the character and condition of the person who uses them. For example, now, take the exclamation, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit!” How much less forcible would this be as coming from the lips of a hermit or recluse, than as the language of Solomon, who had every resource, and who possessed every opportunity, and who tried every experiment and indulgence with regard to “all that earth calls good or great.” So this language—“That I may win Christ”—coming from *Paul*, is peculiarly worthy of our attention, and will naturally awaken both admiration and inquiry.

*First*, Admiration. For what an instance of the influence of Divine grace have we here! And how well could he have said, with his illustrious countryman, “I am a wonder unto many!” For now, who *is* he that here expresses such an unparalleled regard for the Lord Jesus? Why, the man who had been his foe—his *bitterest* foe! Who, verily, thought within himself that he *ought* to do many things against his name, and which, also, he did, in giving his countenance

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to the death of Stephen, and holding the garments of them that slew him; in "haling men and women to prison;" in "persecuting them even to strange cities," and "compelling them to blaspheme," and, when they were put to death, giving his voice against them. So incomparable was his malignity, that he seemed beyond the possibility of reclaim; and even they who had experienced the power of Divine grace seemed unanimously to despair of him. When, therefore, he essayed to join himself to the Church, they were all afraid of him, and shrunk back as sheep from the offered intimacy of a wolf! But here we find the raven changed into a dove, and the lion turned into a lamb; "the blasphemer and persecutor, and injurious," now preaching the faith he once sought to destroy, and the hater and *abhorer* of the Lord Jesus "taking pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, for Christ's sake willing, "not only to be bound, but also to suffer death, for the name of the Lord Jesus! " Here we see the prophecy fulfilled: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name and for an everlasting sign, which shall not be cut off."—"Thou hast a mighty arm, O God! Strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand!"

*Secondly.* It will, also, excite *inquiry*. You are ready to ask now, "Had not Paul won Him already? And was he not now living a life of faith upon Him? And had this not been his happy experience for many years? Why then does he say, ' that I MAY win Christ ' "

You will here distinguish between Paul, as an Apostle, and as a Christian. Viewed as a Christian, his experience was the same with that of all other

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Christians; in whom we find not only grace but nature; in whom some good work was begun but not completed—in whom “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that he cannot do the things that he would.” Do Christians find in themselves now “another law in their members warring against the law of their minds?” So Paul says, “When I would do good evil is present with me;”—“for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”—“Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Do you, Christians, sometimes dread death? So did he. “We that are in this tabernacle,” says he, “do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life and so we would enter into heaven without dying.

And do you sometimes feel doubts and fears with regard to your perseverance? “Well,” says he, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

Christians desire to be more and more assured of their state, to be better acquainted with its treasures, and to enjoy more of its privileges; and this was precisely his case.

Now, there are some who say, “It is a very easy thing to believe what we wish;” but, as Paley remarked, “universal experience gives the lie to this. And we all know that in proportion as our happiness is wrapped in anything, we are alive to its certainty; we want evidence upon evidence, and assurance upon assurance, and never seem to be certain enough.”

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Do you think a Christian only once in his life prays, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation?"—"Show me a token for good?" Oh, how often, all through life, does he sing or sigh—

"Oh I tell me that my worthless name  
Is graven on thy hands;  
Show me some promise in thy book,  
Where my salvation stands.  
Give me some kind assuring word  
To sink my fears again,  
And cheerfully my soul would wait  
For threescore years and ton."

The believer not only wishes to be more and more assured of his state, but he wishes to be more alive to its importance and excellence. He wants to "see still greater things than these he wants to understand "more of the heights and depths and lengths and breadths, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." He wants to know more of "the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure to know more of "the exceeding great and precious promises." He knows that—

"The cross, the manger, and the throne,  
Are big with wonders yet unknown."

And that never as yet has been fulfilled in Him the exceeding great and precious promise,—"The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as the light of seven days, when the Lord healeth the breach of his people, and bindeth up their wounds." Hence it is that the Apostle also says, "That I may know Him;" that is, know more of Him—that I may know Him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

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Neither is this all. He wishes, also, to experience more of the privileges and influences of this state; and not only to “have life, but to have it more abundantly to have not only a living hope, but a lively hope. Not only to have peace, but a peace which passeth all understanding. Not only to have joy, but “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” for, as our hymn expresses it—

“Whoever says he wants no more,  
Confesses he has none.”

We pass on to observe—

II. *The value of the prize.* “That I may win Christ.” He is the treasure hid in the field—He is the pearl of great price—

“Nor earth, nor skies, nor sun, nor stars,  
Nor heaven his full resemblance bears.”

To describe Him worthily would beggar the tongue of angels, as well as of men. I suppose my brethren in the ministry are never so dissatisfied with themselves, as when they see his glory, and endeavour to speak of it.

Oh, how often have I sat down in this desk after attempting to praise Him, after lisping a little of his excellencies, and have said within myself,

“Weak is the effort of my heart.  
And dull my warmest thought;  
But when I see thee as thou art,  
I’ll praise thee as I ought!”

We can never do this while we are here. His praise exceeds all conception as well as expression.

Now, “saints” are said to be “the excellent of the earth;” and some of them, also, are much more excellent



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than others: but *He* is "fairer than the children of men:" YEA, He is "ALTOGETHER, *lovely*." They have some excellencies, but he has *all* excellencies. The excellencies in them are *derived*; in Him they are *original*. In them these excellencies are *imperfect*; in Him they are *complete*—in them they are *finite*; in Him *infinite*. And all these excellencies, if they could be combined in one aggregate, compared to his glory, would be no more than a beam to the sun, or a drop to the ocean!

He is the Fountain of Life. From Him proceeds all that is truly great and good. Every advantage is derived from Him, and from Him only; for, if you win *Him*, what is there you do not win?

Let us *then, first*, ask—Are wisdom and knowledge valuable? These you have in Him. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He makes us wise as to the soul and eternity—"wise unto salvation!" He implants in our very hearts "the wisdom which is from above; which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Are power and strength valuable? These we have in Him. "I have understanding," says He, "I have strength." And strength not only residing in Him, but strength to communicate from Himself to us; so that "He gives power to the weak, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Thus, as is the day of his people, so shall their strength be. So that, through his strengthening them, they can do all things. And, thus aided, "the lame take the prey," and the "worm Jacob threshes the mountains;" and they are "more than conquerors through Him that loveth" them.

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Is wealth valuable? This we have in having Him. "I cause them that love me," says He, "to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures."—*I will fill their treasures*. You have in Him wealth which is current in another world, as well as in this. You have in Him "durable riches with righteousness." You have in Him *unsearchable* riches." You have in Him "bags which wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not; where no moth corrupteth, and where no thief can break through to steal."

Is life deemed valuable? This we have in Him. As Solomon says, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." And the father of lies told the truth, when he said, "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life—"this vain life which we spend as a shadow"—this vexatious life, full of cares and crosses, and fears and pains, and aches and disappointments; yet how it is esteemed! How, then, ought we to value that life which is eternal, and over which the shadow of death will never flit! "Well, says he, "He that findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Says the apostle John, "He that hath the Son of God hath life, and shall not come into condemnation."

Is peace valuable? This you have in having Him. "This man," says Micah, "is the peace when the Assyrian cometh into the land." He speaketh with a figure, but our Lord speaketh without a figure, when he expresseth the same thing, saying, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace."—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."—"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Is security valuable? This you have in Him. "He that hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely,"

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says He, "and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Not only from the reality, but, also, from the fear of it. "In the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh thee." Yes, says David, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my heart; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me in this will I be confident." "With regard to them, enemies have no power, afflictions no curse; death has no gloom, and hell no existence!

Well,—these are only a few clusters, and not the full vintage—they are but a few clusters to tell you what blessedness is before you, and will serve just to show you what they win who "win Christ."—"All things," says the Apostle, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or things present, or things to come,—all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

The Apostle, therefore, in the former chapter, says, "For me to live is Christ." The Drench translation seems fuller than ours: "For me to live, or to die, living and dying, Christ is gain."

View the gain you derive from Him, living and dying, in these two conditions—What gain from Him living, and what gain from Him dying. What gain do his people derive from Him even in life! From what evils does He preserve them! With what blessings does He indulge them! How often does He make them joyful in his house of prayer! How does He make them "to lie down in green pastures and feed them beside the still waters?" How does He enable them to "walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost!" For,

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“The men of grace have found  
 Glory begun below;  
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground,  
 From faith and hope may grow.”

But, if they gain so much from Him in *life*; what will they not gain from Him in *death*? “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”—“It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” And is this nothing?—Nothing to see Him as He is!—Is it nothing to “behold his face in righteousness?”—Nothing, to “awake up in his likeness?”—Nothing, to “be for ever with the Lord?”—“There nothing shall be seen but joy and gladness; nothing heard but thanksgiving and the voice of melody!” For, “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away!” Living and dying Christ is gain.

Let us consider the possibility of winning this prize. What purpose would it be to display the value and glory of the prize, if it were not attainable? Is it *attainable*? and is it attainable *by us*? Is it attainable by *any* of us, and is it attainable by any of us *without exception*? Let us endeavour to meet these inquiries.

There are, indeed, two questions which require very different answers. The *first* is, “Am I now a partaker of Christ?” The *second* is, “May I become a partaker of Him, if I am not?”

Now with regard to the first of these questions. If you come to us and ask, “Am I actually in Christ, and may I claim all the benefits of his salvation as my own?” Why, here we must pause a moment—we

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must catechize you. You must allow us to ask,—Have you ever felt your need of Him? Have you ever sought Him? Have you received Him? Do you believe in his name? Do you renounce every other foundation? Have you built upon this cornerstone? Do you place all your dependence upon Him? And are you “coming to Him continually as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious?” And is He precious to you, as He is to all them that believe.

But now, as to the second inquiry, If you come to us, and ask, “May I go to Him, and will He receive me if I do?” Here we do not hesitate for one moment. Whoever you are thus praying, we open this book and read the title, “Come and welcome to Jesus Christ.” We call upon you to hear his own language, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”

He exhibits himself, therefore, to view for this purpose. He says, “Behold me, behold me!”—“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” For this purpose He sends forth his servants to awaken your attention, to invite, yea, to “compel you to come in, that his house may be filled,” and that his “table may be furnished with guests.” And what does He say, when He sends his servants forth? “As many as you find, bid to the marriage.” This must include all. You must be either good or bad. And if you do not deem yourself too good to be saved by Him, He does not deem you too bad to save. “As many as you find, bid to the marriage.”

So He calls upon you to buy; and you object and say, “You have no money.” Then you are the very persons He addresses; and He says, “Him that hath

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no money, let him come and buy wine and milk, without money and without price.”

Do you remember the dreadful character He gives of the Laodiceans, telling them, that they were “poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked and “yet,” says He, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.” And what proofs would you have that you have not, to induce you to come? You hear Him even complaining that “you will not come to Him, that you may have life.”

In order to hinder your downward progress, He throws a thousand impediments in your way. He cries, “Why will you die?” Then He throws himself down in the road. And if you *will* proceed, He says, “You shall go over my body.” And the sinner does this; and, as the Apostle says, “TRAMPLES *underfoot* the Son of God,” who there calls upon him to stop and live! Yes, he tramples “underfoot the Son of God,” and counts the blood of the covenant where-with he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and doth despite to the Spirit of Grace.

How, there are many things which are not attainable, and there are many things which are not attainable by *all*. It is not in the power of every man to be wealthy. All have not a capacity or the opportunity to gain learning. A man is a candidate for a prize, and he may pursue the boon month after month, and year after year; and when he is ready to seize it, a rival may come in and carry it off, and leave himself in a state of mortification. By various efforts

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he may bring up the cup to his very lip, and then it may be dashed to the ground. There is no enterprise in which a man may be actually sure, but it is otherwise here. Here, if you “ask, you shall receive; if you seek, you shall find; if you knock, it shall be opened.” Here, “they who sow in tears, *shall* reap in joy here, “they that go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall, *doubtless*, come again with rejoicing bringing their sheaves with them.”

Let us, therefore, finally observe,

IV. The dreadfulness of *losing* this prize. And, oh, that I could convince those of you, who are without Christ, what a state this Christless condition is. Now, perhaps, you think otherwise. Now, perhaps, you are insensible of your awful condition. But this does not render it the less, dreadful. You do not pity a man the less, because he thinks that he is the Emperor of China. You would say, this is a delusion—this is disease; this shows the state his mind is in. I have been at the funeral of a mother, and have seen the motherless children, instead of mourning, amusing themselves with the emblems of her mortality around the tomb! Did I pity them the less? “Ah!” said to myself, “you dear bereaved ones, you little know the loss you have sustained in the death of her—

“Who bore you and who bred.  
Who nursed you with her arm,  
And at her bosom fed.”

But, alas! you will know in time; for, though another may fill her place, no other can ever feel her affections.”

Oh, ye Christless ones, you may be now sporting yourselves with your own deceivings, and you know little now of what you lose; but, alas! you will know

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sooner or later. Allow me, therefore, to ask you a few questions.

*First.* What would you do without Christ, if you were to meet with *prosperity*? We know what a Christian would do. If a Christian met with it, he would possess it with safeguards; he would receive it with thankfulness; he would enjoy it with fear; he would use it with diligence;—he would relish the love of the Giver in the gift; he would partake thereof and distribute it with prudence, as a “good steward of the manifold grace of God.” But, oh! you careless ones, what would you do without such a Guide? It is a lamentable thing to see worldly professors rising in life, prospering in the world, and increasing in goods; for, as the goods increase, they will set their hearts upon them; as they rise, they will “fear not God, nor regard man.” If the worldly man rises, he will resemble a child climbing a ladder, or seizing a razor: for Paul says, he “will fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition—“his table will become a snare,” and the things ordained for his welfare will become “a trap.”—“The prosperity of fools destroys them.”

Let me ask again, What will you do if you meet with *adversity*? And this is not an impossible thing—it is not an improbable thing. You have seen that this world is a vale of tears; you have seen that here there is nothing solid and durable—that “riches make to themselves wings and fly away”—that “lover and friend” may be removed far from you—that health may be exchanged for sickness—that you may be “made to possess months of vanity, and have wearisome nights appointed unto you.”



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Now we know how a Christian will meet all this, because he has with him "the consolation of Israel—the Saviour thereof in time of trouble and he has access to a throne of grace and of mercy. We know how the Church met her troubles in the days of Micah—"Therefore, said she, will I look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." We know how the Church again met her troubles in the days of Habakkuk, when she said, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall finit be in the vine; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." We know how David met his troubles when he came to Ziklag and found his house destroyed, and his vines carried away: brave as he was, "he lifted up his voice and wept but he did not weep only—he soon recovered himself, and, it is added, "David encouraged himself in the Lord, his God"—*He* is not gone, says he, *He* is left, and *He* is "the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." But, oh! ye Christless ones, how would you meet such things as these? To whom would you flee for help, or where would you leave your glory? Why, continuing in your present state, you would sink, by and by, in the day of adversity, for "your strength is small," or you may "look up," as Isaiah says, "and curse your king and your God;" and then pass from a hell of trouble, to a hell of torment.

Again, let me ask, what would you do, without Christ, when you come to die? You may, perhaps, escape trouble, but you cannot escape death. You must all here say—"I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the place appointed for all living." And we know how a Christian can meet death—we know

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how he can say, "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." And we know his saints can be joyful in glory, and shout aloud upon their dying beds.—Oh, we have *heard* their shouts—"Oh, death, where is thy sting, Oh, grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But, oh, you Christless ones, how will you meet death? You must (living and dying as you are), meet it with all the force sin has invested it with. You must meet it as "the king of terrors," you must meet it with "a roll of lamentations, and mourning and woe," which you will read for ever.

Without Him, let me ask you, how will you do in the judgment of the great day? For death is not the extinction of existence; but only the *termination* of *one mode* of it, it is the transition from a mortal to an immortal state; from a state of action, to a state of decision; from a state of probation to a state of retribution. For then, "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." "After death, the judgment," and how will you meet the judgment?

Now we know how a Christian can meet this awful event. He can "lift up his head with joy, knowing that his redemption draweth nigh." He knows that the Judge is his Brother, that he is his Friend and his Advocate. He can say, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also, maketh intercession for us."

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But you who are “without Christ,” how will *you*, meet it? how will you appear at the bar of God? God, without Christ, is a consuming fire. And it is only *in* Him that we can ever approach Him with joy.

But I love not to close a discourse (and I see it is time to close), with the language of terror. I think, ministers should never use terror, but as the Apostle did, who said, “knowing the terror of the Lord we *persuade* men,” that is, if we speak of his wrath, it is to persuade men to accept of the offers of his mercy. We, therefore, would call upon you to “seek the Lord, while He may be found, and to call upon Him while He is near.”

There are many here this morning, I hope, who have won Christ, and are now in a state of union and communion with Him. How can we sufficiently hail you! With what propriety can we adopt the language of Moses with regard to Israel. “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!”

“Who can have greater cause to sing,  
Who greater cause to bless;  
Than children of the heavenly King,  
Who Jesus Christ possess?”

It matters not what your outward condition and circumstances may be; having Him, you may, “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,”—“receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

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Ah, some of you are ready to say, "They *are* blessed creatures." They are; but they were not such always. They "were, by nature, children of wrath, even as others." Once, "*in* them, that is, in their flesh dwelt no good thing." They were once far off, "but have been made nigh by the blood of Christ." They once had nothing, now they "possess all things." But what He has done for them, He is *able* to do, and He is *willing* to do for you; but I leave Him to address you. Hear Him, "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."—AMEN.

## SERMON XIX.\*

THE HEROISM AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THOSE WHO  
KNOW AND CONFIDE IN GOD.

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“But the people that do know their God shall be strong,  
and do exploits.”—DANIEL xi. 32.

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THESE words are found in a prophecy respecting Antiochus Epiphanes, the bitter enemy and persecutor of the Jews.

I am not going to harrow up your feelings by a recital of his cruelties. I would only observe that, surely God would never suffer such wretches and monsters to exist, if he were not able to make “the wrath of man to praise him,” as well as “to restrain the remainder thereof.” And therefore, exclaims the Church, “O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction!” Thus the fan severs the chaff from the wheat, and the fire the dross from the gold.

So persecution has always served to enable us to “discern the righteous from the wicked, and him who serveth God from him who serveth him not.” And so we find it here. The faithless Jews, by the promise

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\* Preached May 30, 1852.

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of place, and wealth, and power, would be led to sacrifice their consciences; "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupt by flatteries." Not so those who are "upright in heart." Their principles shall be unyielding and triumphant; "But the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits."

Now this tyrant has, in various respects, been considered as typical of the man of sin; and the son of perdition has always, by persecutions, distinguished those who are on the Lord's side, who are called by his grace, and who serve him with purpose of heart. Therefore, says the Apostle, when addressing the Thessalonians, "Then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." But he adds (in verse 13), "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

But we hasten to our text, for I hate long introductions.

Let us consider three things with regard to the persons here spoken of:—Their knowledge; Their strength; Their exploits. "Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things." Amen.

I. Their Knowledge. "The people that do *know* their God." "For the soul to be without knowledge is not good." Knowledge is the prerogative,—the distinction of humanity. For whatever we may think

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of instinct—and it is wonderful—“He teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the fowls of the air.”—“For there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.”

The principal object of this knowledge must be God himself; whether we consider the perfections of his nature, or the various relations in which he stands to us. Indeed, we know nothing as we ought to know, unless we know Him.

But this knowledge of Him is not our knowing Him as the Almighty and Eternal God, who made all things, who upholdeth all things, by the word of his power; who is “righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” This knowledge will not answer the purpose of a poor perishing sinner. Tea, it may operate upon his depravity to produce *distance*, and *dread*, and *dislike*. “We are saved,” says the Apostle, “by *hope*,” and nothing can be accomplished in our restoration, till we are enabled by his grace to *hope* in Him, and to say that “with the Lord there is forgiveness, and with him is plenteous redemption.”

God in nature, is God *above* us; God in providence, is God *beyond* us; God in law, is God *against* us; but God in Christ, is God *for* us, and God *with* us, and God *in* us.

We must, therefore, know him in the person of his dear Son; and therefore, when the Apostle is speaking of this spiritual illumination, he says, “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it is in the face of Jesus Christ.” He is “the image of the invisible God.”—“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son

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who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." So that "We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him," and to "lay hold of his strength, and make peace with him."

Observe, also, this knowledge is not merely speculative, but experimental. There is a great difference between knowing a thing only in theory, and knowing it in experience by the confidence of the heart, the bias of the will, and the glowing of the affections. Thus it is expressed by *tasting*; "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."—"O, taste and see that the Lord is good." This is very distinguishable from reading, and hearing, and talking about it.

There are some professors of religion who resemble December nights,—very clear, but very cold. Their knowledge never descends lower than their heads; but in the New Covenant, God says, "I will give them a *heart to know me*." And this knowledge is ever accompanied with three things:—With *confidence*. "They that *know thy name* will put their *trust* in thee."—With *affection*. "He that *loveth* not, *knoweth* not God, for God is love."—And with *obedience*. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

For knowledge is always to be viewed in the order of means, and when it does not reach the end, the sacred writers consider it no better than ignorance: and indeed it is not.

This knowledge is, also, *appropriating*; and there are some who can say, "This God *is* our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide, even unto death."—"God, even our own God, shall bless us." And O, what a happy experience! O, to be able to exclaim—



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“When I can say this God is mine,  
When I can feel his glory shine,  
I’ll tread the world beneath my feet,  
And all that earth calls good and great.”

But where this appropriation is not actual experience, it is always really desired. We consider the desire is evidential of a work of grace in the heart. The Christian is, therefore, upon his knees, praying with David, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” “Give me a token for good.” And “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

Consider their *Strength*. “The people that do know their God shall be *strong*.”

This strength is not natural. The fall has left us as much without strength, as without righteousness. I know men are not willing to admit this. We have always found it much easier to convince them of their guilt, than of their weakness. They will acknowledge and say (how can they deny it?)—“We have done the things we ought not, and have left undone the things we ought to have done”—and, for form’s sake, they may add—“there is no help in us though one word of which they do not believe: and, therefore, though they neglect, for the present, those “things which belong to their peace they never question their ability to do them. Therefore, at some future season, when they have leisure, and when circumstances will admit of it, they mean to do this. But, *ah*, the trial; the *real trial* would convince them of their inability of themselves to believe, to repent, to obey, and to become “new creatures;” this would bring them upon their knees, and then the great business would soon be accomplished.

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Even Christians themselves acquire the knowledge of this weakness slowly and gradually. *First*, they are found to rely much upon their convictions, purposes, and resolutions, and, perhaps, vows too; but their iniquities, like the wind, after all, carry them away." And, by their failings and falls, they are taught that they only are safe "who are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation." They, also, learn to pray more and more, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

This was the case with Peter. Our Saviour had announced to him that the prophecy should be accomplished in the cowardice of the disciples. "Ye shall forsake me this night." Peter, feeling warm, sincerely replies, "Though all be offended, because of thee, yet will I never be offended." And when the Saviour came nearer and said, "This very night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice he said, "Though I should *die* with thee, yet will I not deny thee." But a very few hours elapsed, before we find him denying his Saviour, and that with oaths and curses.

"Beware of Peter's words,  
Nor confidently say,  
I never will deny thee, Lord,  
But, *grant I never may.*"

But Christians, by experience, learn more and more where alone their strength lies, and they are led, at length, to trust in the *Lord* only, for "in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." They find that all their "sufficiency is of God that his grace, and his strength alone, is sufficient for them. Hence the command: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power

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of his might!" Hence the promise: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Hence the prayer: "Be Thou my strong Bock, for a house of defence to save me and hence the confident acknowledgment: "I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me."

Surely, when Christians are cast down under a sense of their own weakness, and of the duties and difficulties, and dangers of their course, their memory may fail them, according to the beautiful words of Watts:—

"True 'tis a strait and thorny road,  
And mortal pilgrims tire and faint;  
But they forget the mighty God  
Who feeds the strength of every saint.  
The mighty God whose matchless power  
Is ever new and ever young;  
And firm endures while endless years  
Their everlasting circles run."

There are *two things* with regard to this strength you must remember. The one is, the supplies of it are communicated *seasonably*. This is the meaning of the promise addressed to Asher, "As thy day *so* shall thy strength be." His grace is communicated in time of need; active grace for active services: suffering grace for a suffering hour, and dying grace for a dying hour.

And the other, as it is obtained by the use of means. Hence it is said, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint." Your souls can

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never prosper, if you neglect the use of the means, as I have often told you. A *painted* fire can be kept in very well without fuel, but a *real* fire cannot. It is "the diligent soul" that "shall be made fat."

There are some who have a stupid notion, namely, that we should not engage in the exercises of religion, unless we feel a suitable and lively frame for them. Good Lady Huntingdon was carried away with this notion for a time. The Society of Friends very generally act upon it. Some years ago, when a sovereign was over here from the continent, he went, on Lord's-day morning, to the Friends' Meeting House, in London. It was a silent service: and when he was coming out, he said to one of the Friends, "Have you no prayers in your worship?"—"O," said he, "We never pray without the Spirit."—"But," said he, "I thought you were to pray *for* the Spirit." He was a better divine than the Friend.

This accords with our Lord's own words:—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give his Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." And it accords with the experience of the Church:—"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." And it accords with the very nature of things: for why are these called *means* of grace, but because they are the means, in the use of which, we obtain the supplies of the Spirit for all the purposes of our religious life. Therefore, if we are in a bad frame, we need to come to God by prayer, and in the use of the means he has appointed, that we may get into a good and lively frame. A man needs the fire to warm him when he is cold.

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Have you not found by experience, that when apart you have read the precious word, when you have kneeled before God alone; and have been, perhaps, dark and cold; that, after a while, in these exercises you have become lively and animated—your hearts have been comforted—your hope has been confirmed—you have tasted a little of “the glorious liberty of the children of God your principles have rallied and strengthened, and you have verified the language of the Scripture, “Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you.”

Let us now consider their *Exploits*—“The people that do know their God shall be strong and *do exploits*.” Exploits are rare, difficult, curious, marvellous, illustrious acts and achievements. What are these achievements? In order to prepare you for a consideration of them, it will be necessary to remind you that you are to judge of them by a proper standard.

There are many important things belonging to real religion, which are not deemed worthy of the name by men of the world. “The world,” says John, “knoweth us not and Paul says, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

But, my brethren, those things are the most valuable and wonderful, that are so in the view of God, and of angels, and of the children of light.

Take a man who “walks by faith, and not by sight”—who makes the Word of God, the rule of his conduct—who judges by the Scripture, that man will be led to this conclusion, that there is nothing really great but what relates to the soul, or eternity, or to God; whose judgment is always according to truth.

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When, therefore, the disciples said to our Lord,—a strange question to address to Him—“Lord, which of us shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He took a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and when He had taken him in his arms, He said unto them, “Whosoever shall receive one such child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent me; for he that is *least* among you, the same shall be *great*.”

Now here we have “the mind of Christ,”—concerning this there can be no mistake. We see that simplicity, teachableness, sincerity, and dependence are far superior—that “a meek and gentle spirit,” is of greater worth in the sight of God, than the spirit of prophecy, or the power of working miracles.

If an angel were sent down from heaven to search upon earth for the most eminent Christian; think you he would enter a palace, or a mansion? Would he not rather be found in the chamber of sickness and confinement; where the bedridden sufferer without notice, “in patience, possesses his soul and is saying,—“I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”

Or in a mud wall cottage;—even a peasant there, amidst all his privations and difficulties, learning in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content;—hardly known beyond a few neighbours around him, he is seen, like Zechariah and Elizabeth, “walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless and is “a spectacle if not “to the world and to men” yet “to angels,” and to God.

You will, also, observe, that you are not to confine these exploits to particular ranks and conditions of

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life. There is no condition in life which excludes religious greatness.

You know, I have often told you, that moral greatness does not consist in doing great and extraordinary things, but in doing little and ordinary things with a great mind;—this elevates and purifies—this turns natural actions into moral, and moral actions into spiritual and heavenly. Religious dignity and excellence, therefore, lies open to all; to the poor as well as to the rich; to the servant as well as to the master.

“Glory and shame from no condition rise;  
Act well your part, there all your honour lies.”

God, “the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is holy,” says, “To that man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my Word.”—“The Lord I aketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in his mercy.”—“The prayer of the upright is his delight.”

This being premised, let us proceed to these exploits. But where shall we begin. Shall I tell you of Abel, who bled as a martyr in the service of God? Shall I tell you of Noah, who sailed over a drowned world! Shall I tell you of Abraham, who obeyed the command of God; “Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him up upon one of the mountains I will tell thee of!” Shall I tell you of Moses, who cut the Red Sea in two, and made a passage for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over! Or of Joshua, who told the sun to stand still, till he had finished his engagement against the enemies of the Lord! Shall I tell you of Elijah, who “prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on

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the earth by the space of three years and six months, and he prayed again and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit!" "And, what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; 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 imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, 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. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect."

But these, you say, or many of these, are miraculous, and we are not going to speak of miracles this morning. Let us, therefore, view Christians under six characteristics.

*First. As Scholars.* It may be considered as an exploit to learn a new language, especially when a man is old; yet I have known persons when turned sixty or seventy years, who have learned well the language of Canaan, and have spoken it too with very



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little of the original brogue. This, surely, is a great exploit. Why, Christians can interpret the most mysterious dispensations of Providence. An old writer says, "Christians can read God's shorthand." They know that—

"Behind a frowning Providence;  
He hides a smiling face

and they can look for salvation from an arm apparently raised up to destroy them, saying, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."—"The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits."

*Secondly.* Let us view them as *Merchants*. Now, it is very strange that any persons should ever think of depreciating trade and commerce; yet this is sometimes the case, forsooth, with those whose independency was prepared for them in this very way by their own parents. One almost wishes they were deprived of a fortune who receive it so ungratefully, and were obliged to work with their own hands. How much of its greatness does our country derive from trade and commerce, of which it may be said, as of Tyre, "Whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth." A Christian is a real merchant, according to our Saviour, "A merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth it."

But, what are other merchants compared to the Christian? who trades at such a distance?—for he trades beyond the fixed stars. And who gains such immense profits as he? Other merchants deal in corruptible things, but he in incorruptible: the one trades for time, the other for eternity.

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And of wisdom, says Solomon, "The merchandise thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."—"The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits."

*Thirdly.* Let us view them as *Helpers*. Now, hear what is recorded in the book of Exodus, that Bezaleel "made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." When we consider the purpose and importance of a glass to a female, that it is the first thing that seizes her eye when she enters her room, and the last when she leaves it—when we consider the importance she attaches to the proper adjustment of her dress and ornaments—what a sacrifice did these good people here make in melting down their looking-glasses into utensils for the sanctuary! It was saying, "Let our persons be forgotten, and family and friends shift for themselves, rather than that there should be any deficiency in the service of the sanctuary."

Let me now refer you to what the Apostle says of the churches in Macedonia, how that, in a great trial of affliction, the "abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality;" "For to their power," says he, "I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us, with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering of the saints!" That was a noble exploit.

Again, "Jesus sat over against the treasury and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many who were rich cast in much. And there

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came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her *want* did cast in all that she had, even all her living." How so? Mr. Henry says, "that liberality is to be judged of not by what is given, but by what is left." These rich who, of their abundance, gave much, could go home to a well-spread table, and had all things richly to enjoy. This poor widow, when she returned home, and opened her cupboard, found nothing within—she had given all her living.

Who now give the most to our churches? the *rich*? No! The givers of shillings, of sixpences, and of *pence*. I speak the truth in Christ Jesus, I lie not. After a long life, and much intercourse with the religious world, I acknowledge I have never seen any of the greatest exploits of self-denying benevolence, but amongst the poor. And so it will be made manifest in that day "when the secrets of all hearts shall be displayed, and then shall every man have praise of God."—"The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits."

*Fourthly.* Let us view them as *Travellers*. For they are not settlers yet; they are "strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, and declare plainly that they seek a country." The return of the ten thousand Greeks under Alexander, the journey of the Jews under Moses to Canaan, and the travelling of the Jews from Babylon to Judea; these were exploits, but they were only faint types of Christians in their journeyings from time to eternity, from a state of nature to

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a state of grace, and when they were far off, farther than the Georgium Sidus is from our earth, they have been made nigh by the blood of Christ. What distances do they reach! What difficulties do they overcome! What dangers do they brave! They "tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon do they trample under feet." They "go through fire and through water but the Lord their God shall "bring them out into a wealthy place. The people that do know their God, shall be strong and do exploits."

*Fifthly.* View them as *Sufferers*. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous;" but by Divine grace they can even count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations and trials. Hear them: says Ledy Hervey, when informed of the death of her two only sons that were drowned, she raised her eyes to heaven and said, "O God, I see thou art determined to have all my heart, and thou *shalt* have it all!"

What said Job under all his trials, "and they were exceeding great."—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord."

What says the church? "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine," &c., "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation! "

What did the first Christians say under all their complicated trials? "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."—"As dying, and behold we live."

And, what said the great Apostle of the Gentiles? "in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent,

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in deaths oft. Of the Jews five time received I forty stripes, save one; thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst; in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." And was he not driven back by all this? And does he not complain? *Complain!* he exclaims, "I *take pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."—"The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

*Sixthly*, Let us view them as *Soldiers*. I pity you, if your religion is not found to be a constant warfare. If you are a Christian, you are a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Now it is deemed an exploit to take a city. Thus says Solomon: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

It is a greater thing still to take a kingdom; but "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by force."

Well, Alexander conquered the world. This was a fine exploit. But he only conquered a portion of it; and the world nearly conquered him, as he was the victim of ambition and sensuality. But, "who is he that overcometh the world really? but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."—"For what-

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soever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

"We judge of heroes by the number and quality of the foes they vanquish; and here Christians "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Other conquerors have barely conquered, their victory could hardly be called a triumph. But, as to a Christian, he is "more than a conqueror, through Him who hath loved Him."—"Having stood in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand," he is ready to engage with millions more, if they would dare to come forward.

Well, to conclude: Christians are *no ordinary* characters. They are "a peculiar people," they are "men wondered at." They profess, and they do more than others, and you should glory in their characters.

"A Christian is the highest style of man,  
And is there who the blessed cross wipes off,  
As a foul blot from his dishonoured brow?  
If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight."

Our Saviour says, "If any man be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of Him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of the Father, with the holy angels."

Once more, there is no motive to become a Christian, but religion itself supplies. So that, if you are actuated by a desire after pleasure, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." If

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you are influenced by a love of wealth; here are "unsearchable riches," here are "durable riches and righteousness." Or, if you desire distinction and glory, here you obtain the honour that cometh from God only.

Oh, may each of us say, "Remember me, Oh God, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people, Oh, 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."\*—AMEN.

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\* The above Sermon is eminently characteristic of Mr. Jay.

## SERMON XX.\*

THE PRINCIPLE BY WHICH EACH PERSON IS TO BE  
PERPETUALLY GOVERNED.

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“Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”—  
PROV. xxiii. 17.

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IN a country professing Christianity, religion commonly obtains some reputation and regard. There are few, comparatively, but make some pretensions to it; but with them it is an external concern, not an internal—a subordinate concern, not a supreme—a partial concern, not an universal—a casual concern, not a constant. In them opinions pass for convictions, and professions for principles, and “the form of godliness” for “the power” thereof. They have many excitements, and, as these excitements vary and vanish, so it is with their affections. Therefore, their goodness is like Ephraim’s—“as the morning cloud, and early dew, which soon passeth away.”

The mistake of many is that they view religion as separate from common life, and as hardly to be made to accord with it. But the religion of the Bible is not to be confined to particular places, seasons, and exercises—it is not to be displayed on rare and great, and striking occasions only. If Graius, according to John,

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\* Preached June 6th, 1852.



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was to bring the brethren on their way, it was to be *after a godly sort*. And these are the directions we meet with in this Book of absolute authority: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."—"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—"Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

Let us now, *first*, consider the principle which is to actuate us; *secondly*, the extensiveness of its influence; and, *thirdly*, the advantage of its habitualness. "Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."—Amen.

I. The principle which is to actuate us—"The fear of the Lord." The fear of the Lord is sometimes spoken of in the Scriptures distinctly, then it is to be viewed as a grace of the Holy Spirit; but the term is more commonly employed in the Scripture as expressive of religion at large. Now there is nothing peculiar in this. The sacred writers, by a figure of speech, are accustomed to express the whole by a part; but then it is a distinguishing part—it is a prominent part—it is an influential part.

And this is the case here. There is no religion without the fear of the Lord; but the fear of the Lord attends the whole of religion, and attends the whole of it two ways. *First*, as a *quality*, to temper the whole; to bind doctrine and privilege; to keep confidence from growing up into rank presumption, and liberty from degenerating into licentiousness. And, *secondly*, as a *quickenner*, to excite and to enliven the whole; for fear is always an active and an operative principle. It is so with regard to our fellow-creatures—how much more so is it with regard to God the

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Almighty, the eternal God, who is everywhere present? Hence it is seldom mentioned without some quality. Thus we read that “the fear of the Lord is clean that is, it purifies us from the filthiness and defilement of sin. Thus again it is said, “The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil.” It induces us when we meet with temptations, however private they may be, to say with Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God.” Thus it produces a peculiarity of character, as in the case of Nehemiah, who said, “So did not I, because of the fear of God.” So says the apostle Paul, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.”

I need not here detain you by exemplifications—I need not mention instances in which the fear of the Lord is thus to be understood. I will only refer you to the language of God in Jeremiah: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” And so it is to be understood in our text; let us, therefore, proceed—

II. To consider *the extensiveness of its influence*. Now, we are to be *in* the fear of the Lord, and we are to be “in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

“We all know what is meant by the term here employed. “When you speak of a man being in a passion, or when you speak of a man being in liquor, you mean that he is overcome by it, that he is enslaved by it—that he is intoxicated by it. “When you speak of a man being in love, you mean he is possessed by it—you mean he is carried away by it, that he is *befooled* by it. So we read in Scripture of “walking in pride,”

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of "walking after the flesh," and also of "minding the things of the spirit." And so of the rest.

To be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, shows us the frequency of its exercise, and of its invariable constancy. Now let us look hard at this—let us enquire, so to speak, what are the attributes of this fear; and we shall find there are *six* things we shall come more or less in contact with every day; and let us see how religion will in all influence us.

The first regards its *devotions*. And, surely, if there be a public service in the sanctuary on that day, it will lead you to avail yourselves of it; and to arrange your affairs so as to be able to attend. And you will find a privilege in it, as it will tend to preserve your minds in the things of God, amidst all the trials, the turmoils, and the cares of life.

It will, also, surely produce a morning and evening sacrifice; and will induce you to say with Joshua, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord"—avoiding formality and prolixity, the common bane of family devotion.

It will, also, induce you to secure some time for private devotion, according to our Saviour's command, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

It will also produce what the old divines called *ejaculatory* devotion; that is, a sudden darting up of the thought and desire to God, wherever you are, and however you are engaged: and this may be done. We have an instance of this in the case of Nehemiah: he was the king's cup-bearer. When he was fulfilling his task, and Ahasuerus addressed him, in order pro-

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perly to answer the king, he prayed to the God of heaven. He did not go out of the room—he did not kneel down upon the carpet—he uttered no words; but he implored God for his influence and assistance. And so must you in all the exigencies of the day. If you are in straits, or in danger, or under a cloud, lift up your heart to Him; “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will direct thy steps.”

The *second* regards the *business* of the day. Every man has, or ought to have, some station which he fills, some profession he pursues, and some vocation which he discharges; for, if a man has nothing to do, and does nothing, instead of his being “in the fear of the Lord all the day long,” he is not likely to be in the fear of the Lord at all. His days are all vanity: and it is well if they are not worse; for, as “Watts says—

“— Satan has some mischief still  
For idle hands to do.”

And Bishop Hall says, “Our idle days are always the devil’s busiest days.” Did you never remark, that the Apostle speaks of “idlers and of busybodies” in the very same verse? There seems to be an inconsistency in this; for if they are idle, how can they be busy—and if they are busy, how can they be said to be idle? Why, very well. They may be idle enough as to what is *good*, and busy enough as to what is *evil*. But, now, a man who is “in the fear of the Lord all the day long,” if he be in business, will “abide with God in his calling.” We are commanded to be “not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord:” and it is said, “The hand of the diligent maketh rich.” Then, observe, he will act conscientiously and consistently: he will not have divers weights

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and measures, some for friends, and others for foes—some for the knowing, and others for the ignorant.

Oh! what would the fear of the Lord do for us, if it were to enter into all our concerns. It would make us moderate our desires of gaining earthly good; for says Solomon, “He that hasteth to be rich shall not be innocent.” And says James, “They that *will* be rich fall into a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown man in destruction and perdition.”

We shall, also, feel our dependence upon God in looking for success in our affairs, remembering that, “unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain; unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it and that “the blessing of the Lord *it* maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow therewith.”

It will, also, induce us, if we prosper, not to ascribe our success to our own wisdom or understanding, or the power of our arm, or the aid of friendship; *but* we still recollect the language of Moses to the Jews, “Remember the Lord, your God, that it is He who giveth you power to get wealth we shall “not sacrifice unto our own net, or bum incense unto our own drag;” as if by these “our portion had been made fat, or our meat plenteous.”

The *third* regards the *Trials* of the day; and whose path lies not through a vale of tears? Who learns not that “Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward?” Religion will teach us to look for these; or, at least, not to esteem them “strange things” when they come. If the purposes of the heart are broken off—if a Christian sustains loss—if he meets with disappointment, he will remember that as the Lord gives, so He takes away; and will endeavour to say, “The

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will of the Lord be done"—"shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" If creatures are the cause of his sufferings, he will not confine his views entirely to instrumentality, but will say with Watts:—

"They are the sword,—  
The hand is thine."

And, with Eli, will exclaim, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

It will lead him to ask, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me that He may search his ways and try his conduct, and say with Job, "If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." He will ask for grace, also, to support him under his trials; and not only so, but to enable him to improve them that he may serve the Lord in the fire, and "when he is tried he shall come forth as gold," and say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

*The fourth regards its Recreation and Refreshment.* Who can bear everlasting drudgery and fatigue?—Who need not relaxation and repose?—Who is forbidden ease and enjoyment? But religion will not allow you to turn life into mere amusement and vacation, like those of whom we read, who "sat down to eat, and to drink, and rose up to play." Religion will not allow you to make a play, or a mere amusement of life. It will keep you from everything that is expensive and beyond your condition and your means of life. You will not make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. You will indulge in no sinful dissipation or amusement. "You will put a knife to your throat, if you be," as Solomon says, "a man given to appetite." And you will remember, too, that "wine

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is a mocker"—that it is never the first glass that ruins a man, but the second and the third—that, by very slow degrees, intemperance always creeps in.

You will be peculiarly careful with regard to what is lawful too. For here is the danger of many. The *last* step of a virtue and the *first* step of a vice are often contiguous. The separation between truth and error, and between a virtue and a vice, is often only a hair's breadth. There the enemy takes his station, in order that when he finds you approaching the very verge of perdition, he may draw you over, and induce you to transgress.

Where there is nothing profane or immoral in the outward conduct there may be want of love to Christ. There was nothing wrong in itself in "buying a piece of land," or "five yoke of oxen," or "in marrying a wife;" yet you find these things hinder the men in the Gospel from attending the heavenly feast, and drew down the displeasure of God upon them.

The *fifth* regards the *Company* of the day. When can you pass through a day without some intercourse? Why you cannot help holding intercourse even with the wicked and the worldly at times, unless you go out of the world. But you are not to go out of the world before the time. While you are to forsake the world as to its spirit, and as to its maxims; you are to abide in it as a field of usefulness, and as a sphere of duty, being concerned to serve your generation according to the will of God.

But you will not be found among them all the day long, unless you are called of God. "Evil communications corrupt good manners."—"Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burnt? Can he walk upon coals and his feet not be burnt?"

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And when you are among them you will be circumspect—you will be prayerful. You will say, with David, “I will keep a watch upon the door of my lips.” “Yea, you will be concerned to do them good and not evil.” You will drop some good word, that may leave an impression. For, as Solomon says,—“A word spoken in season how good is it.” But you will say, with the Psalmist, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of those that keep thy precepts.” They are your chosen companions. You will value them as brethren; and be concerned never to “offend against the generation of them that fear God.” You will say with David—“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what God hath done for my soul.” And as to your relations, as to your families, with these you must be, with these you *ought* to be, found much: for “as a bird that wandereth from his nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place; and, especially, who spends his evenings abroad.”

But he who is “in the fear of the Lord all the day long,” will walk in his house “with a perfect heart”—“he will set no evil thing before his eyes.” He will “behave to his servants as one who remembers that he has “a Master in heaven.” He will “love his wife even as he loveth himself.” He will “not provoke his children to wrath, but will train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” He will govern them more by affection than by fear; more by gentleness than by scolding. He will know that they are more influenced by pattern, than by precept; and that they always learn more from observation than by direct teaching.

The *sixth* regards the *Opportunities* and *Occasions* of the day. Now by these you will naturally suppose



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I mean not only the opportunities and occasions of gaining good, but also of doing good. And with regard to these opportunities and occasions, we expect from religion two things; one is, that it will lead a man to seize them when they occur, and not to let them slip, not to keep them waiting. If you say, What do you mean by keeping opportunities and occasions waiting? we will refer you to the language of Solomon. "Withhold not good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it." "Say not to thy neighbour, go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee." He may be gone before to-morrow—or you may be gone before to-morrow—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

And, then, religion will lead the man not only to seize those opportunities and occasions, but to seek them, to look diligently after them. His charity, and his religious sensibilities will be kept alive and awake. The man, when he rises in the morning, will say, "How can I this day improve my understanding, and sanctify my temper?" How can I be useful to others, and "serve my generation according to the will of God." How can I "glorify God in my body, and in my spirit, which are his?"

Thus have we reminded you, my hearers, how religion will influence you with regard to your devotion—with regard to your business—with regard to your trials, your recreations and refreshments, and your occasions and opportunities of doing good.

We have now only to observe—

III. The advantage of its *habitualness*: "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

We will mention three advantages which are de-

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rivable from this habitualness. The *first* is, that it will render religion more easy and pleasant. What we do naturally, we do agreeably. And habit will render things easy and pleasing. We see this exemplified in the influence of evil habits. Jeremiah says, "Can the Ethiopian change his shin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Some of you know what a hard thing you found it to swear at first; but how easy you now find it to call for damnation upon yourselves or on others; and you hardly know when you do it. It is "practice that makes perfect" in everything. The person who only writes now and then is not likely to have "the pen of a ready writer." He who uses his feet only now and then is not likely to "run without being weary, and walk and not faint."

*Secondly.* It will render your religion more *obvious and certain*, Indeed, it furnishes the best evidences of its reality. You do not judge of a man from one or two good things he may have done, but from his habitual conduct. A man, who is one thing to-day, and another to-morrow. Why such a man as this, who is now supporting a charity, and then cheating a tradesman, such a man as this is no character. A man of character is uniformly consistent. You do not pronounce a man wise, because that, now and then, he says a wise thing. You do not pronounce a man in health, because that, now and then, he has a good pulse, looks well, and has a good flow of animal spirits; but you judge of him by what is habitual. There are but few who are not religious, if religion consists only of some emotions and performances. There are many who never will enter upon some particular engagements without religious services; as

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Nelson, who prayed when he went into action, and boasted how well he could meet a Providence, and yet could be cruel to a good wife, and live with another. A mariner, in a storm at sea, may be induced to pray, but his devotion subsides with the winds and the waves. God says, "They will pour out a prayer when thy chastening is upon them but, you have to be "in the fear of the Lord all the day long." And this principle, like the fabled philosopher's stone, turns everything it touches into gold. Hence the man, whether on the bench or upon the throne—whether in the shop, in the field, or in the way, finds his soul to be serving God, and has "the testimony of a good conscience." You are not to judge of yourselves by what you are when you are here, but by what you are when away: not by what you are, when you are in the house of God, but by what you are, when you are in your own: not by what you are on the Lord's-day, but by what you are through the week: not by what you are morning and evening, but by what you are all the day long. "Be in the fear of the Lord ALL THE DAY LONG.

To conclude: I know not what you think of the discourse, but I feel very much dissatisfied with myself. I feel I have very imperfectly treated it, but I cannot now enlarge. Yet I think enough has been said, if properly considered, to humble us, and to abase us before the Lord.

God said to Moses, "Show them the pattern." "Well, we have seen a pattern. It has been placed before you this morning. How do you feel with regard to it? Are you desirous to exemplify it? Have we been in the fear of the Lord all the day long? Does it not become us to present God with the sacri-

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fice of a broken heart and contrite spirit? Does it not become us to “walk humbly with God?” and to ask,

“What have I done for Him who died  
To save my wretched soul?  
How are my mercies multiplied,  
Fast as my minutes roll.”

And I think enough has been said to excite you to pray—

“Lord can a feeble helpless worm  
Perform a task so hard?  
Thy grace shall all the work perform.  
And give the free reward.”

To go on well in our religious course we must be strong; but we can only “be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” But he is not like an Egyptian taskmaster, requiring us to make brick without straw. His promises ensure to us ability for all that his commands enjoin: “His grace is sufficient for us.” But for all this he will be inquired of and sought after. Ask, therefore, and you shall have: pray that you may be “strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man”—that “Christ may dwell in your heart by faith that, being “rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with, all the fulness of God.”

And I think enough has been said to awaken your diligence and zeal. Oh, says Peter, “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

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everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Therefore, be concerned to exercise diligence, and to "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

And for this purpose, let me just mention five incitements:—

*Firstly.* "Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long for all the day long you are *in danger*. What hour is there in which "your adversary, the devil, is not going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" in which the world may not entice or ensnare you, or your evil hearts betray you?

*Secondly.* "Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long," because God is all the day long *doing you good*. Is there an hour, is there a moment in the day, in which "in Him you" do not "live, and move, and have your being?" in which He does not "give you all things richly to enjoy?" If you will not own your obligations to Him, why are you so mean and base as to be beholden to Him? Why will you wear his apparel? Why eat at his table? Why breathe his air? Why do you not live without God in the world?

*Thirdly.* "Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long," because all the day long you are *observed*. You are observed, even by your fellow-creatures, much more than you are aware of. You are observed by your children, and you are observed by them when they are very little ones, and when you imagine they are hardly capable of observation. You are observed by your servants. You are observed by your neighbours. You are observed by your relations. You are observed by the enemies of the cross of Christ, who "watch for your halting." Above all, you are observed by Him whose eye is ever upon you, and you should ever be saying, with Hagar, "Thou God seest

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me.” For He sees you, not only as an Observer, but as a Witness, and as a Judge.

*Fourthly.* “Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long,” because you are *accountable* all the day long. When the painter was asked, why he took such pains with his picture, he said, “I paint for eternity.” His eternity, so to speak, was a temporal eternity only. But there is before you a *real* eternity, an *endless* eternity! and all you say, and all you do, is eternal—eternal in its influence, and eternal in its effects! Your hearing is for eternity!

Have you been hearing for eternity this morning? For, my brethren, “God is not mocked; that which a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

*Lastly.* “Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long,” because all the day long you are *liable to die*. Is there an hour or a moment in the day that is not mortal? It is commonly said, “The old must die, the young may.” *The young may die!* Why, whom are you continually following to the grave? Is it those whose years and fruits ripen them for eternity? Enter our burial-grounds—measure the length of the graves—read the inscriptions!

“Few doctors preach, so well.”

Why, “there is but a step between you and death.” And, “in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.” Be ye, therefore, always ready! And for that purpose, “be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

## SERMON XXI.\*

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN THANKSGIVING—AND THE  
PERIOD AND MANNER IN WHICH IT IS TO BE  
PERFORMED.

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“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the  
Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—  
EPHES. v. 20.

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I HOPE you will always love the doctrinal parts of religion: these are the fundamental! Though there may be a foundation without a superstructure, there cannot be a superstructure without a foundation.

It is well to have clear, solid, full, influential views of the principles of the Gospel. This is what the Apostle means, when he says, “It is a good thing that the heart he established with grace.” By grace, he means the doctrines of grace. And this is the meaning of David when he says, “Blessed are 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 favour shall they be exalted.” But, while we hope you will be friendly always to the doctrinal parts of Christianity, I trust you will never be averse, or even indifferent, to the practical part.

We read of Ephraim, that “he loved to tread out

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the corn; but not to break the clods." We have known many who have been fond of the privileges of religion, who could, by no means say—

"No joy can be compared to this,  
To serve and please the Lord."

But all the enjoyments we have in religion should be excitements. They should be cordials, and not opiates. Like the refreshments of a traveller, which are not to draw him off from his journey, but to enable him the better to pursue it.

Now the obligations of Christians are numerous and various. Let us hear what the Apostle says of one of them, and of a very important and interesting one, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God, and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. Let us consider the duty enjoined. *Thanksgiving*—"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father."

II. The manner in which it is to be performed—"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."—"If ye know those things, happy are ye if ye do them."

I. Let us consider the duty enjoined—*thanksgiving*—"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father." He is the object of all religious worship, and to Him all our thanks are supremely due. I say supremely, because it is not unlawful to give thanks to others. Children should be thankful to their parents; and the poor and the needy should be thankful to them that afford them relief. For though men are but instruments, they are instruments—and they are voluntary instruments.

You never thank the ox and the horse for the benefits you derive from them, because you know they are



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destitute of knowledge and design: but men are influenced by motives, and actuated by choice; yet we are to look above them to God, who is the fountain of all good and blessedness. For, who gave these instruments their capacity? "Who placed them in our way and within our reach? Who endowed them with power to help us, and inspired them with inclinations to bless us? "He maketh *his* sun to shine on the evil, and on the good," "and *his* paths drop fatness." He maketh his "grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the service of man."—"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 the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel." And, my brethren, here we clearly perceive that whatever intermediate causes there may be in operation, that God is the first great cause, setting all his motion, keeping all in motion, and rendering all effectual. And his agency is no less real in voluntary instruments than in senseless ones. When, therefore, Paul, on his journey saw his brethren, he did not thank them, but he thanked God and took courage; and when Titus was a comforter, the Apostle thanked God by the coming of Titus. Titus could not comfort them by his coming, but God could comfort them by the coming of Titus. And, says the Apostle, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" The planting and the watering were theirs, but the increase was his. The heathens made gods and goddesses, and every one that made them afforded, or was supposed to afford the worshippers of these idols, succour or pleasure, and thus men "served and worshipped the creature more than the Creator, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

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And are we better than they? We readily acknowledge and praise those who befriend us, but there is one Being whom we continually overlook. Who is this? He, "from whom cometh every good and perfect gift!" He, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being!" He, whose air we breathe, and whose apparel we wear. He, who gives us all things richly to enjoy—who "giveth us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who hath called us to glory and virtue."

Two things are to be observed with regard to this fact:—

*First.* Thanksgiving is frequently confounded with praise; but they are distinguishable. We praise persons for excellency of character and conduct. We give thanks for favours received from them, and obligations we are under to them. The essence of praise is admiration; the essence of thanksgiving is gratitude.

And, *secondly*, you must have observed that, when the Apostle speaks of thanksgiving, he does not mean only the use of the words,—“Words are but air.” The verbal expression is nothing, unless corresponding views and feelings proceed, and corresponding actions follow it. You would not wish a man to thank you, if he were senseless of his obligations. You would rather deem yourself insulted by it. If he should commend and applaud you, and then do everything in his power to injure you and to offend you. And, yet, how much of this hypocrisy has God continually to meet with from his creatures, and even from many professors of religion! They thank Him, but, alas! their love is not in their hearts; they thank Him, but they live in transgression of his commands. They thank Him, and yet they live without Him in the world; and even say unto God, “Depart from us, for

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we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him. But, my brethren, "In vain do we draw nigh to Him with the mouth, and honour Him with the lip, while the heart is far from Him." In the beautiful language of the Liturgy, "We are to show forth his praise not only with our lips, but with the heart, by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before Him in righteousness and holiness all the days of our life." God, therefore, says, "Whosoever offereth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God." And thus Philip Henry remarks, "Though thanksgiving be very good, thanks living is much better." Let us now consider,

II. How this duty is to be performed, "Giving thanks always for all things to God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is to be done, therefore, in the name of Christ. It is to be done always. It is to be done always for all things. Surely some explanation is necessary here.

*First.* We are to give thanks to "God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." What a place does He always occupy in our religion, in our worship, public or private. There are some who seem "only to consult how they may cast Him down from his excellency they seem to fear lest He should be honoured too much, and, therefore, if they have any reference to Him, they refer to Him under an inferior character and agency. But "we have not so learned Christ." No, my brethren, why does not the Apostle say, "Giving thanks always, for all things, unto God and the Father, in the name of Moses, or of Isaac, or of Paul?" Why, "was Paul crucified for you? Or,

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were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" But our necessity for a Mediator is not, for one moment, left out in the blessed word. There we read that "there is salvation in no other "that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." That "we come unto God by Him;" that no "man cometh unto the Father but by Christ;" that "whatsoever we do in word or deed, we are to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that, if we pray, we are to pray in his name. "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you." And if we give thanks, we are to "give thanks always, for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." As if he should say, "we are unfit or unworthy even to speak of Him, even in a way of acknowledgment, without a reference to our blessed Redeemer?"

Well, if you are washed from your sins, it is by his blood; if you are justified, it is by his righteousness. It is by his Spirit alone that we can do anything well-pleasing unto God. It is His intercession on our behalf that renders our supplications accepted in the Beloved, and by his much incense which purifies our hearts. Thus, as Peter says, we "offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." And therefore, says the Apostle Paul, "Let us offer *by Him* the sacrifices of God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."

Again, as we are to do this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, so we are to do it *always*. The term must be taken with qualifications and restrictions. Religion, you know, enjoins many things upon us; and they have all their own claims, which must not be dispensed with, nor interfered with. We are to be "full of mercy and good fruits," not only "without hypo-

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crisy, but without partiality." You are to be charitable; you are also to be honest. You are to give to him that needeth, but you are also to "owe no man anything." You are to "enter into your closet, and pray to your Father which seeth in secret but you are equally commanded "not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." You are to be "diligent in business," but you are, also, to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." You are to rejoice in the Lord, but you are, also, to "pray without ceasing."

But all these things must be regarded in their place. As Bishop Hopkins remarks, "No duty will ever be acceptable to God, that appears before him stained with the blood of another."

What, then, does the Apostle mean when he says, "We are to give thanks *always* for all things unto God and the Father." Thanksgiving should always be found in our addresses to God. It should, it appears, form a part of our private devotion, of our domestic devotion, of our social devotion, and of our public devotion. Yes, *yes*, "in *everything*," says the Apostle, "let your requests be made known unto God, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."—"Be careful for nothing, but in *everything* by prayer and supplication, with *thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known unto God."

You are not to adore and praise God in *His* house only, but also in *your own*. You are not only to worship him on the Sabbath, but during the week: indeed, the week is to show *in* you what the Sabbath does *for* you. And it is a poor devotion indeed, that does not survive the sanctuary, and that is brushed out on Monday morning along with the dust of the place.

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David said, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth."—"Yea," says he, "seven times a-day will I bless the Lord, because of His righteous judgments." How, if you do not bless Him so often as this in the day, surely you will say with David, "Every day will I bless thee." Surely you will join with him in saying, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High! To show forth Thy loving-kindness every morning, and Thy faithfulness every night."

It can intend, also, nothing less than *perseverance*; "Holding fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end not "growing weary in well-doing," and not becoming cold after your first fervours in religion. We read of the church of Ephesus of their "first love;" and we read also of their "first works." And we read again of David's first ways, meaning that they were his best ways; and so they were. And is not this frequently the case? But should it be so? At your first discoveries and excitements in religion, perhaps, you thought you could never be again silent, and that if ever you should hold your tongue "the very stones would cry out." But you have had many a dumb hour in religion since. Yes, you have had many a mourning, and even, perhaps, a murmuring hour, instead of always giving thanks. You ought, therefore, to pray "Open Thou my mouth, and my lips shall show forth Thy praise." And you ought to resolve with David in saying, "While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto God while I have my being."—"I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will praise Thy name *for ever and ever.*"

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It can intend nothing less than the engagement of the heart in the exercise. David said, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." This, I apprehend, is the highest import of the language David here employs. It is to keep the mind in a frame disposed and prepared for thanksgiving, so that we can readily perform the exercise expressly and actually, whenever we have opportunity.

Now, in order that you may have this praying frame,—this readiness for thanksgiving always,—and feel these excitements to it, there are three things essentially necessary.

The *first* is, *deep self-abasement*. You will always find the proud ungrateful. Do for them what you may, you are only performing your duty; heap upon them whatever benefits you please, and what reward, what thanks, have ye from them? They think they deserve it. But, when a man like Abraham, or like Jacob, is sensible that he is "unworthy of all God's mercies," and of "all the truth God has showed him," then he will be grateful; and you will always find that gratitude is in proportion to humility. The *second* is,—it will be necessary for you, if you would live in this praying frame of mind, to be careful to observe and mark the loving-kindnesses of the Lord. According, as David says, "Whoso is wise, and will *observe* these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." And Mr. Flavel remarks, that "He who observes providences shall not want providences to observe." The *third* is, to keep these things in remembrance; for, if they are forgotten, they can no longer sway or influence you; and therefore, says David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and *forget not* all His benefits."

“Why should the wonders He has wrought,  
Be lost in silence, and forgot?”

You should, therefore, do everything to aid the matter in this case. You see an instance of this in Samuel. God appeared for him and his people, and he acknowledged it; and he said, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” But that was not all. He took a great stone, and set it up, and called it “Ebenezer,” so that whenever he passed it in future, it would remind him of the kindness of the Lord, and he would be induced to praise Him.

Upon this principle you find Moses called his son “Gershom,” which signifies “a stranger here;” for, says he, “I have been a stranger in a strange land.” So that he could never call this child by name, without being reminded of his former state and deliverance. Joseph did the same, calling his sons’ names Manasseh and Ephraim, the name of the one *signifying forgetting*, “For God,” said he, “hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house;” and the other *signifying fruitful*, “For God hath made me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

As you are to give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as you are to do it *always*, so you are to do it, “for all things.” Where are we now? Our old divines weaken God’s mercies as astronomers have treated the stars. Finding them so numerous, they formed them into distinct *constellations*, and gave them various names. So should it be, so must it be, with, our mercies. Let us unite them instead of viewing them singly.

How we cannot notice them all, “they are more in number than the sand;” but let us bring forward among these blessings, *seven pair of them.*”



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*First pair.*—You are to give thanks for *natural* and *spiritual* mercies. The former of these, indeed, are far inferior to the latter; yet, while we are here, they are important. We need them; they flow from the same pure spring; and, as sinners, we have no claim upon God for any. Yea, as “children of disobedience,” we deserve that his “wrath should come upon us to the uttermost.”

But if we are to thank God for temporal blessings how much more ought we to thank Him for *spiritual*? If we are to bless Him for civil liberty, how much more for sacred? If for the comforts of life, how much more for the means of grace—for the Gospel of our salvation, and for his unspeakable gift. Thus the Apostle says, as if He would lose sight of everything else. “Thanks be unto God for his *unspeakable* gift.”—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

*Second pair.*—You are to thank Him for *ordinary* and *extraordinary* mercies. In the experience and progress of every individual believer, there are some remarkable instances of the Divine interposition in their favour, in a way of Providence or of grace. These are like the *red-letter days* in the calendar of life. These may be considered as the master-pieces of Providence, either in our protection or our deliverance: either in our support or our comfort.

How these may be, and should be particularly regarded. At the same time, we must not forget that “his mercies are *new every morning*,” and that “He *daily* loadeth us with his benefits.”

You often overlook your mercies, because they are common; but this is the very reason why you should

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observe them, for if they are common, they must be *numerous*, and, therefore, lay you under the *greater* obligation. "Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." You may be assured, therefore, that the man who was born blind, when his eyes were opened, thanked God that he could see. Would *you* not thank God, therefore, who have *always seen*? and who have never been dark? Yet, perhaps, you never thank God yet; and you may have done it, but not "in spirit and in truth."

*Third pair.*—You are to thank God for *positive and preventive* mercies. We are aware that the former of these are always more striking to the mind. The reason is, when evils are prevented from befalling you, you are not aware of them. Yet, how many of these do we all experience. From how many *unknown* evils as well as known, have you been preserved ever since you have had a being! Why did you not perish from the womb? Why expired you not when you hung upon your mother's breast? Who was it that then carried you through the carelessness of childhood, the giddiness of youth, and the snares of manhood? Who has "kept your souls in life, and has not suffered your feet to be moved?"

Do any of you know how many dangers you have been through since you rose this morning? If you consult your pulse, it would tell you that the question is asked every moment whether you shall live or die?

"And yet how unconcerned we go  
Upon the brink of death."

*Fourth pair.*—You are to give thanks for *public and private* mercies, however, private you are in the stations

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you occupy, you are, in one sense, public, being all of you parts of a whole nation. You are embarked in a vessel, the safety of which is your safety too. And can you think of what God has done for your highly favoured country—can you think of its insular situation—of its trade and commerce—of its arts and sciences—of its laws—of its civil and religious liberty, and a thousand other blessings pertaining to it, without saying with thankfulness. “The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, yea, we have a goodly heritage!”

But there is a cause which should be dearer to you than even your own country. This, brethren, is the cause of Him who is the Prince of Peace—the cause of Him, “who loved you and gave himself for you.” A Christian should feel more for its affairs, than for his own outward, personal concerns; and should be able to say, amidst his own mortifications and disappointments. Well, it is of little importance that my schemes fail, if *His* succeed? if my King reigns and prospers, and if, in Judah, things go well.

You see this disposition in Nehemiah, and in Daniel, they were both in prosperity as to their own concerns, they were both courtiers. Each lived in a palace; but did this render them regardless of the afflicted state of Zion? You find each of them, notwithstanding outward prosperity, mourning over and praying to God for it.

*Fifth pair.*—You are to bless God for *personal and relative blessings*. In how many lives, is your whole life bound up! There is the wife of your choice—there are the children of your love. There is the friend of your bosom. Need I tell you how much you might have suffered in these connections, if you have not?

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If you have been favoured in them—if you have been indulged in them; oh, what gratitude should you feel on this behalf, as well as on every other account!

*Sixth pair.*—You are to bless God for *present and future mercies*. So David exclaims, “Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for those that trust in thee, before the sons of men.” Paul speaks of promises which relate not only “to the life, that now is,” but to “that which is to come;” and not to “that which is to come,” *only*, but “to the life that now is,” regarding *both*. “Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” But they have the *dawning* of the day *noiv*, they have the earnest of the inheritance now, they have the first fruits of the Spirit now.

“The men of grace have found,  
 Glory begun below;  
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground  
 From faith and hope may grow,  
 The hill of Zion yields;  
 A thousand sacred sweets;  
*Before* we reach the heavenly fields,  
 Or walk the golden streets.”

*The Seventh and last pair.*—You are to give thanks unto God for your *sweet and for your litter mercies*. I surely do not speak parables. You surely anticipate my meaning. You know that I refer to the dispensations of Providence. Some of these are prosperous; others of them are adverse—some of these are pleasing; others of them are painful.

Oh, you have had his sweet mercies—*sweet mercies!*

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Can you dwell upon these—and you ought to dwell upon these—and not adoringly acknowledge the Author and Giver of them?

But, you say, we have been reproached and persecuted, we have had a succession of losses, and bereavements. What, are we to bless God for these? Why not? If *all* the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth," why not *these*? If "*all* things work together for good, to them that love God," why should not *these*? "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" This was the case with Job, and "in all this, it is said, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Nor was this all; but he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken *away*, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Not that you are required to bless God for these things *themselves*. The things themselves are evil, and you are not to make any evil thing the object of your desire, or of your praise. But you may, and you ought to be thankful for the *principle* that sends these—the covenant love of God in Christ. "Whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." You may, and you ought to be thankful for the *love* which *attends* them; and for the *end* in which they shall issue; for, though now "No affliction, for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." And "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

If the vine was possessed of sense and reason, it would bless the vine-dresser for pruning it, that so it might bring forth more fruit. And if the gold were

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possessed of sense and reason, it would thank the refiner—if not for the furnace and the melting, yet for the refining and the purifying. When a child comes of age, he feels thankful for many restraints and corrections which he thought hardly of during his minority. So will it be with you, Christian—“When Messiah cometh, He will show you all things.”

“In his light we shall see light, and he able to discern what you now believe, that God does all things well—that “God is a Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment—a God of truth, and without iniquity—just and right is He.”

Yes, and before you reach Immanuel’s land, it may be that you will be able to bless God for your bitter, as well as for your sweet mercies. I believe that God rarely keeps his people long in ignorance and doubt, especially if they keep upon their watch tower, and pray with Job, “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?” They will see enough to produce acquiescence and submission—they will see what evil it has prevented, and what good it has been the means of procuring.

And sometimes it leads them much further; and they see enough not only to produce submission, but to call forth praise, and to say—

“’Tis my happiness below  
 Not to live without the cross;  
 But the Saviour’s power to know,  
 Sanctifying every loss.  
 Trials will and must befall,  
 But with humble faith to see  
 Love inscribed upon them all,  
 This is happiness to me.”

Yes—how many have I seen, who have, after a

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while, been able to thank God for their bitter, still more than for their sweet mercies, and who have said with our hymn triumphantly—

“Since all that I meet with shall work for my good.  
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food;  
Though painful at present, ’twill cease before long—  
And then, *O, how pleasant the conqueror’s song!*”

## SERMON XXII.\*

THE JOY OCCASIONED BY THE LOST SHEEP BEING  
FOUND.

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“And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”—LUKE xv. 6.

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THESE words were introduced in a way of explanation, under a charge which ignorance and malevolence wished to insinuate against the great “Teacher sent from God;” taking occasion, from the character of his audience, to speak evil of Him.

“Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him ”—drunkards, liars, swearers, and sensualists. And where are we now? The old adage is, “Like attracts like and, “Show me a man’s company, and I will show you his character.” Accordingly, “the Pharisees and Scribes”—*pious souls!*—“murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” But the problem, doubtless, is easily solved. His aim was *usefulness*; and He was found among them, not because He loved their sins, but because He loved their *souls*, and was desirous of saving them.

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Therefore, under the same censure, on another occasion, He referred to himself as a Physician, who is found not in the parlour of pleasure and dancing, but in the chamber of sickness: not that He loves the disease, but there lies the suffering patient, which He is desirous of healing. "For they that be whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick." Here He employs another figure; hear Him:—"And He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? and when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost."

He here refers to himself under an image taken from one of the most pleasing characters He ever sustains. As a Judge, my meditation of Him is awful; as a King, my meditation of Him is reverential;—but, as a Shepherd, my meditation of Him is sweet. And I am led to contemplate Him with Isaiah, who said, "He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

The title, therefore, is often given to Him in the Scripture, and seldom without some attribute of distinction and pre-eminence. Thus He is called "God's Shepherd,"—"Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd;" and He is called the "Shepherd and Bishop of souls." He is called "the *chief* Shepherd," and "that *great* Shepherd," and "the good Shepherd." A proof of which we have in the words of our text—"And when

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he cometh home he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost." Three things are here contained—

I. *A fact acknowledged.*

II. *A satisfaction implied.*

III. *A disposition enjoined.* "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

You will naturally suppose that these words are not to be taken literally, "My flock," says God, "are men." But they are called sheep, metaphorically, because of their resemblance to these creatures. And well would it be for us, as professors of religion, if we were more like them, in their innocence, in their harmlessness—their purity—their patience under sufferings, and in their usefulness.

But now let us attend

I. To *the fact here acknowledged*: "I have found my sheep which was lost." It reminds us of the sheep's relation to Him, of its former condition, and of its blessed restoration.

*First.* It reminds us of the sheep's relation to the Saviour. He has an interest in it. "My sheep," says He, "hear my voice."—"I have found *my* sheep which was lost."

And, my brethren, we know how He obtained his interest in them: not only or principally in his having made them, but in his having redeemed them. In his intercessory prayer, he says to his Father, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." And they are his, not only by *donation*, but by *ransom*. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that ye are bought with a price." A price of infinite value—

"A price all price beyond."

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even "the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot."

But what I wish you to observe, particularly, here is—that this sheep was his, before it was actually found. So, in another place, he says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold they were not as *yet* of this fold. But he had them in donation and in purchase; and, therefore, he adds, "them, also, I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

So the Saviour said to the Apostle, with regard to the Corinthians, when he was going into Corinth, "I have much people in this city." He mentions this, not only in reference to those already called, but to those who should believe in Him through his word. They were his in the designs of his goodness; for, if a sinner be saved, and "called with a holy calling," in time, it is "according to his purpose and grace in Christ Jesus, before the world began." Thus, said he, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Then, *secondly*, it reminds us of the sheep's former state. It *was lost*. "I have found my sheep which was *lost*." Lost as to God. He derived no service or honour from it. Lost, as to its fellow-creatures; they derived no benefit from its prayers, its example, its exertions, its influence.

Lost as to itself. "Being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them"—"aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise," destitute of all real peace, and hope, and joy.

Now this is the natural state of all mankind, according to the scriptures, and all history, all ob-

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serration and experience, corroborate the same. All are fallen, guilty, depraved, weak, perishing creatures. Men are not really in different states, but only in different degrees of the same state. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."—"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek;"—"All are gone astray:"—

"Each wand'ring in a different way.  
But all the *downward* road."

And this was the case with all God's people when he met with them. They are not backward to acknowledge this. They often "look to the rock from whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence they were digged;" and will confess with the Apostle, that they were "the children of wrath even as others."—"We ourselves, also, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." But *after* this, the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.

Now when Paul says to the proud Corinthians, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" the question implies previous likeness, as well as an after distinction—and here the poor sheep has been restored. "I have *found* my sheep which was lost." He does not say, It has found me.

The poor sheep can easily go astray of itself, but it never finds its way back again of itself. And the Saviour says, "I am found of them that sought me not; I am made manifest to them that asked not after me."—"I have *found* my sheep which was lost."

Our endeavours often prove successful. And if

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we are engaged in a course of usefulness, we ought, to prepare for disappointments. The reprover may rebuke his friend in vain. The father may shed unavailing tears over a rebellious child. The preacher may exclaim, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" And here, "I work," says the Lord, "and who shall let it."—"My purpose shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."—"My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it."

All means are under God's control, and He has power always to render them effectual. And various are the means which he employs to bring these wanderers home to Himself. The principal one, indeed, is the preaching of the Word. This has always been the case: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

But what is there, when you come to reflect, that He does not occasionally use in this blessed work? The example of the godly; the admonition of kind and faithful friends; the reading of a good book; a dispensation of Providence; an event breaking up his worldly substance, or visiting him with family bereavement. "Lo," says Elihu, "all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to enlighten him with the light of the living." And O, happy are they to whom we can address ourselves, and say, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."—"Ye were far off, but are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—"Ye were dead in trespasses and sins," but now "you hath he quickened;" or, to keep to the image before us, "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

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Let us, then pass on to observe,

II. The *Satisfaction* here implied. This is the Saviour's own joy on the occasion. We see this implied, and necessarily implied; for how could He call upon others to rejoice with him, unless He was rejoicing himself? How could you, unless you were walking, invite others to walk with you?

But this satisfaction of the Shepherd is not left at an uncertainty. It is here expressly affirmed. Let us read again: "What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it. And when he hath found it,"—he belabours it with his crook for going astray, and giving him so much trouble? *No!*—"he layeth it on his shoulders," complaining, surely, of the dangers incurred, of the many weary steps taken, and of the thorns and briars which pierced his feet in the search? *No,* "but he layeth it on his shoulders, *rejoicing.*" "And, when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."

Let us enter a little further into this, in order to take several views of this joy, and the satisfaction of the Shepherd; and,

*First,* the sheep was not conscious of the Shepherd's kindness. *No.* When he laid hold of it, it panted and trembled; and when he was laying it on his shoulder, it struggled, and endeavoured to free itself, and as he carried it off, it wondered what he was going to do with it.

It is the same with us, when, to use the words of the Apostle, we are "apprehended of Christ Jesus." When the sinner is laid hold of,—when he is convinced of sin,—when he is led to say with Job, "Behold I am vile,"

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—when led to exclaim with David, “My sins are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me,”—when the man is sensible of his desert, and danger, and when ignorant of the designs of the Saviour, who is now working with him, for him, and in him, he is full of fears and forebodings; but the Saviour soon says to him, “Fear not.”—“It is I, be not afraid.”—“Only believe, and be saved.”—“Only believe, and enter into rest.”—“Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no case cast out.”

*Secondly*, We may view this joy of the Saviour in contrast with the convert’s own connexions and friends. Some of these may be alarmed and distressed, and imagine the man is going into distraction, or into despair. They know nothing of “a wounded spirit;” they are ignorant of the methods of Divine grace—how God wounds in order to heal; how he humbles in order to exalt; how he impoverishes in order to enrich; how he empties in order to fill. Hence they often send for the physician when they ought to send for the divine. Tea, there are cases in which the relations or friends of the poor awakened sinner have even placed him under confinement, fearing he was deranged. I remember a remarkable instance of this, which came under my own observation, and of which I was the blessed means of releasing from confinement, and of pouring into her broken heart consolation and joy. And this was all she stood in need of.

You remember, that when Christian left the city of destruction and was crossing the field, his neighbours and friends, supposing he was deranged or disordered, cried out, “Stop; return!” but he, putting his fingers in his ears, rushed forward, crying, “Life! Life! Eternal life!”

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Then, also, *secondly*, some of these connexions and neighbours oppose and persecute. "A man's foes are those of his own household." Now, morality never excites this. Mere outward reformation never genders persecution. There are cases in which ungodly masters are glad to find their servants have given up drunkenness, and are become sober. And worldly parents may rejoice and be glad, if their sons are reclaimed from profligacy and vice. But, when he begins to cry, "What must I do to be saved"—when he begins to "look at those things which are unseen and eternal"—when he gives evidences of becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus—of living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit—then, the carnal mind shows itself; then "they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit:"—according to our Saviour's words. "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."

But now, while some of his connexions lament and are alarmed; and others gaze, and wonder, and hate, and oppose the change—there is another Being;—what is *He* doing all the -while? How is He feeling? Hear Him: The Lord is mighty to save. He will save—"He will rejoice over them with joy; He will rest in his love; He will rejoice over them with singing." "And when He cometh home, He calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying, unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."

*Thirdly*, we may view this joy as the result of *success*.—Nothing is more distressing than to "labour in vain, and to spend one's strength for nought and in vain,"



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and nothing is more delightful than to see our efforts crowned with success. How delightful to the husbandman after months of ploughing and sowing, to go forth, and “see, first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear and then, to “reap with joy” and carry homo his “sheaves with him!” How pleasing to the builder, after furnishing the materials, to see the edifice rising in lovely proportion, till the topstone thereof is brought forth, with shoutings of “Grace, grace, unto it.”

What said our Saviour? “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come, but so soon as she is delivered of her child, she remembereth no more her sorrow; for joy that a man is bora into the world,” the very image which inspiration applies to the Saviour and his sufferings, when it is said, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” This was “the joy that was set before Him, for which He endured the Cross and despised the shame.”

And, oh, what joy did the Saviour experience when “He ascended to his Father and our Father; to his God and our God after saying, “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.”

Then this joy may be viewed, *Fourthly*, as indicative of his benevolence. There is no pleasure compared with the pleasure of benevolence. None so unselfish—none so pure—none so elevating—none that will bear reflection and review, like that. And such pleasures will always be in proportion to the degree of benevolence in the benefactor. If, therefore, the benevolence itself be very great, the joy will be very great also. But of Him, sings Watts:—

“His heart is made of tenderness,  
His bowels melt with love.”

“He loved us with an everlasting love.”—“Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.” What must his pleasure then be, if pleasure arises from benevolence? What was his pleasure, when in the days of his flesh, He opened the eyes of the blind, and saw the man following Him rejoicing? What must his pleasure have been, when He “restored the young man to life again, and delivered him to his mother?” Or, when He fed the hungry thousands upon the grass, when there were “twelve baskets left.” Well,—He carried the same heart which He had here with Him to heaven. “And when He cometh home, He calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”

*Fifth.* This joy of his should be the penitent’s encouragement. Oh! that we were as willing to receive his blessings, as He was to procure them for us; and confer them upon us; and there is not a distressed conscience here this morning, but would then depart, “and go on its way rejoicing!”

You sometimes say, may I apply to Him, unworthy and guilty as I am? May I venture to hope and trust in Him? And will He not be *offended* if I do? OFFENDED!—Why you will give Him the greatest pleasure in so doing—in this, “He will see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied,” and will rejoice, “And when He cometh home, He calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”

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Then, *Lastly*. If this joy be the sinner's hope, it should be the saints' example. He was infinitely more than an example, but nothing less. And "he who says he abideth in him, ought himself, also, so to walk even as he walked."

If you depend upon Him, you must resemble Him. If you glory in his cross, you must tread in his steps, and be willing to take up your cross and follow Him in the regeneration. You must weep with Him when He weeps, and rejoice with Him when he rejoices, and by this sympathy you must show that you are "joined to the Lord, and have one spirit with Him." And "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."

Proceed we, in the last place, to notice,

III. The disposition here enjoined, "He calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." He was not willing to enjoy the pleasure alone.

But now, who are these friends and neighbours he addresses, and calls upon to partake with Him? They consist of two parties, the angels and the saints.

*First*, the *angels*. To these he immediately refers, and thus assuring us that they complied with his admonition, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth."

We know but very little of these glorious beings; we know that they are proverbial for their knowledge, that they "excel in strength;" that they are called mighty angels, "the least of which could wield these elements." We, also, know something of their condescension and their kindness. Mothers, they take care of your babes, therefore, said he, "Take heed

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that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that, in heaven, their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven.”

*Christians*—they attend his followers in whatever condition and circumstances they may be found. “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation?”

The angels, therefore, are perfectly free from envy. They are not like that individual called “the elder brother;” who, when he found the family in ecstasy, was angry, and would not go in to partake or to contribute to the joy, even though his father, with his hoary locks, came out and besought him. Oh, not he—*he* would not go in. But, now, as to the angels; when they see their younger brethren, who have all been prodigals, raised up above them and placed in a state even nearer the throne, and dressed in finer garments, even in the garments of salvation, and in the ornaments of righteousness—what do they? They only rejoice; and because He has redeemed us, and not them, therefore they exclaim with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Then, *Secondly*. They are the *saints*. And if the former rejoice with Him, these *ought*, these *can*, and these *do* rejoice with him, or they are not Christians. Even if the convert were their bitterest enemy, they would rejoice in his salvation, and bless God on his account. But, should the convert be among his own connexions and relations, then it is natural that his social and relative feelings should swell the tide of praise and pleasure the more. And in proportion to the anguish of their spirits, when they saw their con-

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nexions going astray,—for “how can they bear the destruction of their kindred?”—will be their pleasure, when they see them “blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.”

“What must be the joy of the wife to see the husband now “taking sweet counsel” with her, and “walking to the house of God in company?” What must be the pleasure of the father, to see his son brought back to God? while we hear him say, “My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart will rejoice, even mine;” and what will be the joy of the mother, who can now say, “What my son, and what the son of my womb, and what the son of my vows?”

What results from all this? Why, *First*, we see the importance of salvation. Many of you neglect salvation; you sacrifice it to a momentary and vain delight, and, by your conduct, you seem to deem it a thing of nought. But the Saviour does not think so. The Judge of all sees and knows no greater want in this world in which to rejoice, and for which to call upon others to rejoice with Him, than the salvation of one soul. And, my hearers, the salvation of one soul is an infinitely greater exploit, than the deliverance of a whole country from civil bondage.

How mistaken, then, are those who think of the Church of God as a place of gloom, and where the voice of gladness and joy is never heard. Why, this is the home of the believer, where the trophies of Divine grace are perpetually displayed; and where the Saviour, and holy angels, and Christians, “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

And, what are we to think of those who not only neglect the great salvation, but who rejoice to see others walk in the paths of error and sin, and who

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even entice them on: who, instead of rejoicing with the Saviour, rather rejoice with the enemy of souls, when he takes men captive at his pleasure? What a proof is this, that you will have your "portion with the devil and his angels hereafter." You "rejoice in iniquity, and not in the truth."

Well, then, how should this incite us to inquire what is giving us pleasure or pain? Whether we are "sorrowful for the solemn assembly?" Whether the reproach of it is a burden? Whether we can mourn over the falls of professors, and whether we can rejoice when we see "the word of the Lord has free course and is glorified." When we see many "added to the church of such as shall be saved;" when we see professors "walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost and if, when we find things going on well in Zion, we feel a degree of satisfaction, whatever be our outward trials or circumstances?

Then we should endeavour to advance the Saviour's joy by seeking to bring in some wandering sheep, or wandering lamb; and, if it be but one, it is worthy of all our exertion; for, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

We know that God only can do this efficiently, but you can do it by his grace instrumentally. The most powerful means are nothing without his agency; and the weakest means are mighty, when He condescends to bless them. Let, therefore, the prayer of David be ours, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit; then will I teach

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transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

Then, *finally*. What will it be "when He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day when He will gather together his people who were scattered abroad, or, to keep to the image in our text, when all his sheep will be brought together into the heavenly fold, not one failing. Even then, this Shepherd will not have finished his office, though then all his recovering work will be over, but the Shepherd will retain his relation to them. He who made them "to lie down in green pastures, and led them beside the still waters."—"The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Into this blessedness some are continually entering. Last Lord's-day I committed to "the house appointed for all living," Abraham Reed, a man in humble circumstances of life, but who was "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile." He walked worthy of the vocation wherewith he was called, and died in the faith and hope of the Gospel, and in the "comforts of the Holy Ghost." He had many trials, but they are all over—

"All his sorrows left below,  
And earth exchanged for heaven."

Since then I have heard of the death of our dear young friend, Mr. — Stanley. He was a member of our church, and lately entered our college at Plymouth, to prepare for the work of the ministry. But he has been cut off in the prospect of usefulness, and in the beginning of his days, a warning to those of

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you young persons who are calculating upon maturer years, or advanced age. Oh, that you would—

——“devote your youth to God,  
'Tis pleasing in his eyes;  
A flower when offered in the bud  
Is no vain sacrifice.”

You have, also, heard of the death of Mr. Yockney, an eminent minister of the Gospel in London, many of whose relations have belonged, and do belong, to this Christian church. The Lord bless them all, and comfort the mourners.

These all died in faith. And we must die. And the question is, “How shall we die?” May we be followers of those who are gone before, so far as they were followers of Christ. While we live, may we live unto the Lord, and, when we die, may we die unto the Lord; so that living and dying we may be the Lord's! And may the Lord graciously command his blessing for the Redeemers' sake.—Amen.



## SERMON XXIII.\*

THE PRAYER OF THE CHRISTIAN FOR DIVINE  
UPHOLDING AND PRESERVATION.

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“Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”—PSAL. cxix. 117.

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THERE is a difference between the reality and the *degree* of a thing. A man may be engaged in a business, and yet not succeed in it. A tree may be alive, and yet not thrifty in its growth. A man may be a disciple of Christ, and yet not “bring forth much fruit.”

But with regard to a Christian, he should be concerned “not only to have life, but to have it *more abundantly* not only to be found in the way everlasting, but “holding on in that way, and waxing stronger and stronger,” and to be “renewed day by day not only to have hope, but to be “filled with all joy and peace in believing, that he may *abound in hope*, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

It may be asked, Wherein does soul prosperity, then, consist? and what are the real evidences of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?” And now hear me—

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\* Preached June 20th, 1852.

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I should think well—yea, I should think very highly—of the state of that man, in whose experience five things are combined and harmonize.

I. A lively concern for his spiritual preservation.

II. A solemn apprehension of his continual moral danger.

III. A consciousness of his entire weakness and inability to uphold himself.

IV. A firm confidence in the all-sufficiency of Divine grace. And,

V. A prayerful frame of mind, or a spirit of supplication.

Now, all this is implied in our text; and such was obviously the state of David's mind, when he uttered the words before us; and such is the state of every one who can pray, "not in word only, but in deed and in truth "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

'Now, let us review all this; but it must be with a brevity more becoming the shortness of the exercise, than the importance and magnitude of the concern itself. The first is—

A lively concern for his *spiritual preservation*, I say *spiritual* preservation, because this is the blessing here intended.

If a natural man ever prays sincerely, it is for some temporal favour: for a good crop, or a safe voyage, &c. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

And where is a spiritual man thrown into a state of earnestness? Where, but here? "God be merciful to me a sinner!"—"Lord, save, or I perish."—"Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee."—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit

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within me.”—“Uphold my goings in thy ways, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”—“*Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.*”

Now, this preservation includes not only eventual security as to eternity, but stability and constancy as to time; or “being steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord—adding to our 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 be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Not that there is any such thing as perfection here; but there is such a thing as “being harmless and blameless the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.” There is such a thing as “being sincere and without offence until the day of Christ.”

“Who, indeed, can say, “I have made my heart clean—I am pure from my sin?” But there is such a thing as keeping our garments unspotted from the world—there is such a thing as, if we are reproached, it be for *righteousness* sake only, and not for immoral and impure conduct; or, if we are condemned, we are condemned as Daniel, only in matters relating to the law of our God.

But, you say, Has not God engaged to keep his people from falling? and do not Christians believe in the doctrine of final perseverance? They may, and they ought; but this does not keep them from crying, “Hold thou me up and I shall be safe.” They know there is no perseverance without persevering; they know the certainty of the end includes the cer-

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tainty of the means. The angel assured Paul that all on board should be saved, yet, when the mariners attempted to escape, he made no scruple to say—“Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.” And what is it we are required to believe with regard to the doctrine of final perseverance? Is it, if we continue *not* to the end, we shall be saved? Is it, if we cease to serve and glorify God, we shall be accepted at last? *No*; but that God puts his fear in our hearts *that* we should not depart from him.

Again: a Christian *hates* sin, and believes it to be, as the Apostle says, “exceeding sinful for he could not call it by a worse name than its own. The Christian hates sin from holy motives, and desires to depart from it. Like a child returning from school, he chooses a clean path rather than a miry one, from his hatred to filth; and if he should contract a stain, he would stand and cry, “What shall I do?”

Christians love heart purity, and they love *life* purity too. A believer loves God, and, knowing that sin is his abhorrence, he will not—he *cannot*—hear his heavenly Father plead in vain—“O, do not that abominable thing which I hate.” Therefore, when he meets with opportunities and enticements, he will be sure to say with Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.”

But, alas, there is enough not only in the nature of sin, but in the accusations of conscience, to induce a Christian to cry, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” Tea, God has said, “Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding 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, the Lord God of Hosts.”

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Nothing can be more false, as well as vile, than the Antinomian doctrine, that sin cannot hurt a believer. Ask Moses and Aaron whether it did not hurt them. "Because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel," thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel: and no importunity would induce God to reverse the sentence.

Look at David, though he was assured by Nathan that his sin was put away as to its eternal consequences, he was assured, at the same time, that the sword should never depart from his house. We find him, therefore, speaking of "broken bones," and of his "going on sighing,"—"I am ready to halt, says he, and my sin is ever before me." This is the law of God's house—"If his children forsake his law, and walk not in his commandments, He will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes: nevertheless, his loving kindness will He not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail."

And these stripes include not only afflictive dispensations of Providence, but internal distresses. Does he withdraw from man the light of his countenance, he is in darkness and doubt as to his state. Does He let go his hold of him, he loses his usefulness—"causes the worthy name by which he is called to be blasphemed, and the way of truth to be evil spoken of;" he proves a stumbling-block to the weak, a distress to the strong; he weakens the hands and discourages the hearts of God's ministers; for, as the Apostle says, we only live while ye stand fast in the Lord. No wonder, therefore, the Christian should take up this prayer, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

II. The second evidence is *a solemn apprehension of constant moral danger*. This is equally implied in the

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words, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." A man who utters this must know that he is liable to fall into temptation and sin: he may neglect, or he may "restrain prayer before God:" this is sin. He may trust in man, or "make flesh his arm," and this is sin. He may fall into vice; indeed, there is nothing too vile for him to fall into if left to himself, and if God says, "He is joined to idols let him alone."

Where is the believer most sensible of his danger? He feels it peculiarly when he thinks of Satan, the adversary of his soul, "Who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." This implies not only power, but also device. And we read of "the depths of Satan," and of "the wiles of the devil." And what skill must he have in seducing, when he has been improving his experience in the art for nearly six thousand years.

He is peculiarly sensible of it, when he thinks of the world in which he lives; which is as full of sin as it can hold. What errors are in it to deceive—what smiles to seduce—what frowns to menace—what examples to pervert. The whole world lieth in wickedness. There the devil has everything his own way.

He is peculiarly sensible of it, when he thinks of himself; for though there is a difference between him and others, and between himself formerly and now; and though there is a work begun in him, yet he is only "sanctified in part." He knows there are internal traitors holding correspondence with his external enemies. He knows he has the remains of unmortified corruptions—that he has some of his old atheism, of his pharisaism and of his devilism, still in him. For what was he once, and which he is ready to acknowledge he was? Therefore, having so much

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gunpowder about him, and living in the neighbourhood of sparks, he must be in jeopardy every hour.

And there is nothing in which we may have any concern through the course of the day, which may not prove the occasion of our falling into sin. Tea, "our table may become a snare," and the things ordained for our welfare may become "a trap knowledge may puff up; liveliness and enlargement in duty may engender spiritual pride. Even Paul, with all his progress, was in danger of being elated by his manifestations, and, therefore, he says, "Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me."

The third evidence is, an entire consciousness of his weakness and inability to keep himself. This is equally implied in the text. But this conviction is not natural.

Though the fall has left us as much without strength as without righteousness, you find men naturally full of self-righteousness. And though they may be induced to acknowledge that they have left undone the things which they ought to have done, they never question whether it is in their *power* to do them; whether it is in their power to repent, to believe and to obey. Therefore they resolve, when circumstances will allow them, to be religious, and when they have "a more convenient season," they resolve that they will attend to these things in earnest. Mere professors of religion may admit the doctrine in theory; but, alas! do they carry it out into practice? With all their professed belief, do you not find them off their guard? Do you not find them venturing to

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the very verge of perdition, and see them walking on in forbidden ground?

There is in early ecclesiastical history a story of this kind:—A damsel was possessed of the devil; the bishops were summoned together in order to cast him out; and so, after fasting and prayer, they said to the unclean spirit, “Come out of her!”—“I will not,” answered the spirit, “for I found her upon my own ground: I did not find her in the sanctuary, but I found her in the theatre.”

I have not much faith in this as matter-of-fact; but the moral of the fiction is useful enough. There are some who tempt the devil to tempt them, by placing themselves in certain situations and circumstances. If I were to see the devil running away with some of you, I could not run after him and say “Stop thief! *Stop thief!*” for he was only taking what was really his own. You have given up yourselves to him: “You are of your father, the devil; and the lusts of your father you will do.”

There are some who, instead of resisting temptation, tamper with it. They suppose themselves to be safe, while they allow that others may be in danger. They allow that “evil communications corrupt good manners,” but not *ours*, which is the meaning of their conduct. They will allow that others cannot carry fire in their bosom, and their clothes not be burnt,—but *they* can. That others cannot walk on live coals, and their feet not be burnt,—but that *they* can. They see the bones lie all around the mouth of the den, yet *they will* venture in. They hear James saying, “They that *will* be rich fall into temptation and a snare;” but not they, and therefore they “make haste to be rich.”



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But real Christians are conscious of their own weakness and inability to keep themselves. They do and must feel this in a measure, but not sufficiently; and it is of the utmost importance for them to have a fresh, and lively, and growing impression of this; for, as the Apostle Paul says, "When we are weak, then are we strong."

And for this purpose, a Christian will do well often to appeal to the Scriptures; for here we learn what is in man. Let him go, therefore, to the inspired word, and hear what it tells him of human nature. There he will read, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" That "from the crown of the head,"—the highest intellectual faculty,—"to the sole of the foot,"—the lowest sensual appetite,—"there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." This Book will tell you, that without the Saviour "you can do nothing that you are "not sufficient of yourselves to think anything, as of yourselves, but that your sufficiency is of God."

And, dear brethren, you will do well to appeal frequently to your own experience. Have you not often been a wonder, as well as a grief, to yourselves, at what you experience? Have you not found, that the clearest convictions have not been able to preserve you from temptation and evil? Have you not formed the firmest resolutions, and yet have not your "iniquities, like the wind, carried you away?" What a difference have you found between your present feelings and impressions, and your after conduct? You have said, with Dr. "Watts, when you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have had a relish of his blessed service, you have supposed you could never lose the savour again,—

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“But ere one fleeting hour is gone,  
The flattering world employs  
Some sensual bait to seize my taste,  
Or to pollute my joys.”

Thus it was with our Lord's own immediate disciples, when he manifested himself unto them, as he does not unto the world, in a clear and satisfactory manner. “Oh, then,” they exclaimed, “now our doubts are gone:” —“Now we are sure” —“now we believe.” Said the Saviour to them, “Do you now believe?” Are you aware of what you are saying? Do you now believe? You think you do. But thoughts are not realities. Do you now believe? You think you do: but I know you better than you know yourselves. You seem now to be firmly adhering to me. But, I tell you, “Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

Then you will do well to appeal to the experience of others. Look to the most eminent of the saints of God, as recorded in the Scriptures of Truth; and here you will find they failed in the very things in which consisted their chief excellencies. Abraham was the father of the faithful; but he distrusted God with regard to his wife; and how did it debase him here? Moses was the meekest of all the men upon earth; and yet, at the waters of Meribah, he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Job was the most patient man; and yet Job cursed the day of his birth. Peter was warmly attached to his Lord and Saviour; and when Jesus said, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night,” Peter replied, “Though all should be offended, yet will *I* never be offended.” And when

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our Saviour came Dearer home, and said, "Peter, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice," he even then said, "Though I should die with thee, yet voll I not deny thee." Did this support him? A few hours after, he denied *with oaths and curses*, saying, "I know not the man!" Therefore, beware! as Cowper says—

"Beware of Peter's words,  
Nor confidently say,  
I never will deny thee, Lord;  
But grant I never may."

And, while you review these scenes, and exclaim, "Lord, what is man?" utter the words of our text—"Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

IV. A firm confidence in the all-sufficiency of Divine grace is equally implied in the text: "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." And this is as necessary as the former; and a Christian is as much encouraged to exercise confidence in God as he is commanded to be cautious. Some of you may think these things are very incompatible with each other, but they are not. Though they differ in some respects, they are substantially the same. Let us endeavour to make this plain.

Though I would wish real Christians to avoid all error, and would rather they erred on the side of privilege than on the side of legality, I am sure that legality is not the most friendly to practical Christianity.

Despondency freezes up our affections; it unnerves our powers: whereas hope is the mainspring of action: it is the world in motion. The plougher ploughs in hope—the sower sows in hope—the scholar studies in hope—the soldier wars in hope—and, my brethren, religion is no exception here: "We are saved by

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hope." Hope is a most operative principle, and nothing can be done without it. Possibility may excite some movement, probability will produce more; but how much more still will actual certainty accomplish; especially when the blessing to be enjoyed is nothing less than an eternal state of happiness! Nehemiah, therefore, says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." This animates every passion; this enlivens every grace. David, therefore, says, "Then will I *run* in the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Again, he says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit; *then* will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

And is there not a foundation laid for this enlarged confidence? Surely there is. Hot in ourselves, but in Divine grace: so that we may say with the Psalmist, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." He can hold me up. He can make me stand—"to stand in the evil day; and having done all to stand." His all-sufficiency is ever engaged on my behalf. He hath promised, He hath sworn, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his evil way and live."—"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." And it is this that makes the Christian thankful, not boastful, as to the last. How often has he said, in his passage through life, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." And why have I not? Those who have had far superior under-

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standings to mine have fallen into error and heresy—those who have promised much fairer than ever I did have “turned again to folly and why is not this the case with me? Why have I not turned back, and my steps declined from his way? “Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to thy name be all the glory.”—“By the grace of God I am what I am.”—“Not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

And it is this that animates a Christian without his becoming presumptuous. It is this that, while he walks humbly before God, keeps him from walking mournfully before Him. It is this that enables him while he looks forward and thinks of his dangers and enemies, to say, “Behold God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” I am weakness itself, but I am called upon to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” I relinquish all self-confidence, but I trust in the Lord; “for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” Safe from the enemy of souls, who seeketh my halting—safe from the world which lieth in the wicked one—safe in all the trials of life—safe in all the terrors of death and the grave. “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 unto God that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—“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.”

But, my brethren, this confidence, if it be true and

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scriptural, must always be found in connexion with the use of means. And—

V. The fifth evidence, therefore, is *a prayerful frame of mind, or & spirit of supplication*. It is a kneeling much at the throne of grace. This is equally implied in the text; yea, this is the text alive. And you may seek to gain, and to cherish, and confirm this confidence, by giving yourselves up to prayer; saying unto God, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

This is the way, and it is a most reasonable way. For, if I believe that I am too weak to support myself, and if I am desirous of my safety, I shall naturally go to the strong for strength. If I behold a number of enemies for which I am no adequate match, I shall never engage with them alone, but rather inform the Captain of my salvation, who will come to my escape, who will go with me, and “teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight,” and make me “more than a conqueror.” And

“Satan trembles when he sees,  
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

Because he there sees him availing himself of Almightyness.

This is the way, and a right way: “For all these things,” says God, “will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.”—“Seek the Lord, and his strength; seek his face evermore.”—“Pray without ceasing.”—“Pray and not faint.”—“Be instant in prayer.”

This is the way, a sure way, as sure as the word of Eternal Truth can render it: for you know who hath said, “Their hearts shall live who seek God.”

You have, therefore, nothing to do with the question, “How can these things be?” You have nothing

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to do with cavils and perplexities. You have never to ask, "How can prayer be necessary to inform a Being of infinite understanding? How can prayer move one who is of one mind, who knows "no variableness, nor shadow of turning?" How can prayer be necessary to induce Him, who is merciful and gracious—who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works? Why all these objections are crushed to nothing, by the Divine authority, which says, You must ask of me: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you."

This is the way, and it is a *tried* way. Jabez tried it. He called on the God of Israel, and said, "Oh, that thou wouldest bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coast; and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me. And God granted unto him that which he requested." So was it with Asaph: "In the day that I cried, Thou answeredst me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul." And have you not made the trial also? Is there a Christian here this morning but can say, "It is good for me to draw near to God?"

"And who that knows the worth of prayer  
But wishes to be often there?"

And is this all you can say in honour of it? Cannot you also say, that we can, also, witness—that

—"The Lord is still the same.  
Though we feared he would not hear:  
Suddenly, deliverance came."

Therefore, you bless Him, and say with David, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and

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my supplications,—because He hath inclined his ear to me; therefore, will I call upon Him, as long as I live.”

Thus I have endeavoured to show the contents of the text. You have seen what is a state of soul prosperity: a lively concern for your spiritual preservation—a solemn apprehension of your constant moral danger—a consciousness of your entire weakness and inadequacy to keep yourselves—a firm confidence in the all-sufficiency of Divine grace, and a prayerful state of mind, pleading much with God for grace to help in time of need. But what remains?

A woman one day coming out of a church, was asked by a person passing by, “Is the sermon done?” “No,” said she, “it is not *practised* yet.” And this, my brethren, is the grand thing. “Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” And said Whitfield, “Application is the life of preaching, and *self-application* is the *soul of hearing*.”

Let us, therefore,—let all of us—make this prayer our own, and some more particularly.

Let the *young* make this prayer *their* own. You are beginning life; you are advancing into the world. The way you have to take is full of enemies and snares, and you are ignorant and inexperienced. Your *first steps* will be the *most important*, and may give a complexion to the whole of your future character and condition, and perhaps will quarter upon you repentance for life. Will not you, therefore, pray unto God, saying, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe?”

Again, you who are in easy and prosperous circumstances, may you make this prayer your own; otherwise you will find yourselves among Solomon’s fools, whose “prosperity destroys them.” You will “stand,” according to David, “in slippery places take care



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lest you slide down into the gulf of perdition. Alas, this has been the case with thousands! Oh, what wisdom and grace does a state of indulgence and prosperity require! But He can keep you humble in the midst of it all;—He can give you the heart of a stranger, even in the midst of plenty and indulgence.

Again, you who are in affliction and adversity make this prayer your own. A state of suffering is a state of trial and temptation, as well as a state of indulgence and success. And without Him you will sink in the day of adversity, because your strength is small;—without Him, like Ahab, you may: “sin yet more and more against the Lord”—like Job, you may be led to “curse the day of your birth or, like old Eli, you may throw yourselves backward and break your neck. But He can enable you, “in patience to possess your souls”—He can enable you to say, “I mourn, but I do not murmur He can enable you to “glorify God in the fires,” and be an edifying example to all around. May *you*, therefore, make this prayer your own—“Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

Again, let the *aged* make this prayer their own. Alas! we are never out of the gun-shot of the devil as long as we remain in this world. What a fool did Solomon become, who in his old age suffered “outlandish women to draw away his heart,” and who became the patron of idolatry. Let grey hairs, therefore, not be backward to take up this prayer, and say, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

Let *ministers* make this prayer their own. The Apostle even addressed his beloved Timothy, and said, “Elee youthful lusts; but follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

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Ministers are singularly exposed. The enemy of souls sees them going into battle, and he says to his emissaries—"Tight not with small or great, but only with the leader." And oh, if he succeed there;—oh! when a minister is overcome, "It is as if a standard-bearer fainteth."

There is yet one other character I shall name, and who stands yet even more in need of offering up this prayer than any other; and who, you inquire, is this? Why the man who thinks he does not stand in need of help. "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."—"Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."—"Blessed is the man that feareth always."

"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.

## SERMON XXIV.\*

WHAT THE CHRISTIAN HATES, AND WHAT HE  
LOVES.

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“I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.”—

PSALM cxix. 113.

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THOUGH the Jews lived under a dispensation abounding with carnal ordinances, some of them were far from being carnal men.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews holds forth some of them as examples of Christian imitation, and admonishes us, “not to be slothful, but followers of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.”

Some seem to imagine that the religion of the Jew’s consisted in their paternity to Abraham, in the rite of circumcision, in numerous sacrifices and ceremonial rites. But it consisted in none of these. It was essentially the same with the Christian. The difference was not in the reality, but in the degree. “God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect.” They worshipped the same God. *Their* theology is *our*

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\* Preached July 4, 1852.

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theology, and the book of Psalms is a magazine of Christian experience, and especially the Psalm before us, a portion of which I have chosen for our improvement this morning, in which David says, "I hate vain thoughts but thy law do I love."

David speaks of his hatred, and of his love. These are two very powerful passions, and we are all the subjects of them. And if a man does but know what to do with his hatred and his love; that is, where to place them and how to exercise them, he may be called a *wise* man.

You remember the language of Solomon, "A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a foolish man's is at his left." Now this could not be, physically considered. Every man's heart is at his left hand. But Solomon used the word heart *metaphorically*. He means by it the affections. And when he says, "A wise man's heart is at his right hand," he means that he *rightly exercises it*, or *dexterously*; the word dexterous, being derived from *dextra*, the latin word for right hand. The object loved should always be something worthy of our love. And this would be the case in a *perfect being*. This was the case with man before the fall; but the fall perverted everything; and, in consequence of it, men have become lovers of evil and haters of good.

The design of the Gospel is to rectify all this, and to put things in proper order. In the Acts, the Apostles are called "men who turned the world upside down." And the testimony is very true; not in the factious and specious sense of their accusers; but in their *own sense*, and in their own language: their aim was "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." To make men "new crea-

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tures, old things passing away, and behold all things becoming new." But now let us consider and improve two things.

I. What David says of his aversion: "I hate vain thoughts." And,

II. What he says of his affection: "but thy law do I love." We have

I. To consider what David says of his *aversion*, "I hate vain thoughts," vain thoughts are foolish thoughts, they are wandering thoughts, unbelieving thoughts, worldly thoughts, self-righteous thoughts, and sinful thoughts. Do you must observe that vain thoughts here do not only mean *empty* ones, but *evil* ones. Thus when our Saviour says, "For every *idle* word that man shall speak he shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," by idle words he does not mean merely frivolous ones, silly ones, and trifling ones; but words of immoral tendency, and which will accuse and condemn you in the last day.

By these vain thoughts David means his *own* thoughts, and not the thoughts of others. Mind this. He could not be conscious of the thoughts of others; but he knew his own. He was forbidden to judge of the thoughts of others; but he was bound to examine his own. He was not fond of keeping the vineyards of others, while he neglected his own. And it would be much better for us all to live more morally at home, and less abroad with others. It is a fine and striking remark of one, whose "Private Thoughts" have been long before the religious public:\* "I have long had nothing to do with the failings and faults of others; I have had enough of my own to engage my time and attention."

Now with regard to these vain thoughts, we are

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\* Beveridge.

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here led to observe two things. David *had* them, and he *hated* them.

I *have* them, says he, that is bad; but I *hate* them, that is good. And here he much resembles the experience of Paul, who lived so many years after. "For that which I do, "says he," I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." He felt that he had "vain thoughts,"—and who has not?

There are, indeed, some persons who have not had an evil thought for many a year: but they are to be found in heaven; where we read are "the spirits of just men made perfect." But are there not some on earth who are free from these vain thoughts? We have heard of some who have said they have not had a vain thought for so many weeks, for so many months, yea, for so many years. Now we do not like to charge such persons with falsehood; but, really, if they speak according to their convictions, these convictions must be founded in ignorance. Por, "who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am free from my sin?" Why, says Solomon, "There is not a just man upon earth who doeth good and sinneth not." Why, says James, "In many things we offend all." And says the Saviour, You are to pray for your daily pardon, as well as for your daily bread.

I once observed in my sermon, that, if our hearts were hung where our foreheads are, we should all be ashamed to go out of doors. A lady who then heard me, afterwards said, "I am sure I should not but she does not seem to have credited the language of inspiration, which says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and "He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool." A vessel may appear clean in foul water; but put it into clean, and

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it may be seen to be very dirty. And the more we have God in our thoughts, “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” and “in whose sight the very heavens are not clean,” the more “in his light we see light;” the more shall we be led to exclaim, with Job, “Behold I am vile! ”

How was it with Paul? Paul says, “I have *not* attained, I am not already perfect.” Had Paul, then, “vain thoughts?” Hear him: “I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Well, now; take a Christian; not a novice, but one who has been for years in the school of experience; hear him. Oh! says he, I have good objects enough to command and engross my attention, especially my God and Saviour, who is “all my salvation and all my desire,” my glory and my joy: who is “the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.”

“Why should I cleave to things below,  
And let my God, my Saviour, go?”

Yet, alas! says he, so it is,—

“When my forgetful heart renews,  
The savour of his grace,  
My heart presumes I shall not lose  
The relish all my days;  
But ere one fleeting hour is gone,  
The flattering world employs,  
Some sensual bait to seize my taste;  
Or to pollute my joys.”

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“I love the Lord,” said David, “I call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable.” I know that I am commanded not to walk in my own ways, or to think my own thoughts. But, alas! how many of these intruders invade my golden hours.

I enter the closet; I wish to exclude the world; but, before I can shut the door, *in rush the rabble* along with me, and often fill the best part of the room.

I love the habitation of *God's house*, and repair to “the place where his honour dwelleth but there often find it what he called his temple in the days of his flesh,—“a house of merchandise,” and even “a den of thieves.”

I then repair to his *table*, and if anything can fix my roving heart, surely it must be this, where, in the memorials and emblems, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth as crucified among us; yet, even there, I cannot “serve the Lord without distraction,” even there, I am apt to mistake “the outward and visible sign” for “the inward and spiritual grace.”

But here is something felt. “I *have* vain thoughts,” says David, “but I HATE them.” Here is the difference between the natural man and the spiritually-minded. For, my brethren, vain thoughts are common to both of them; but mark the distinction. The natural man loves vain thoughts and he, therefore, encourages them. “When they come to his door, he welcomes them; he begs them to walk, in; he wishes them to sit down; he places chairs for them; he spreads before them entertainment; he begs them to make free; he takes with them a pleasant walk; when they come back, he presses them to stay as long as they can, and assures them they



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shall be extremely welcome as often as they can come.

But now it is otherwise with the spiritually-minded. They enter his thoughts as thieves enter a room. He often cannot tell how they got in. But what is the consequence? Why, he does not invite them—he does not want them. Instead of furnishing them with seats and viands, he is miserable till they are gone: and, when they are gone, he informs the police as soon as possible, and hopes they will be captured and punished.

Yes; I have “vain thoughts but I do not love them—I “hate them.” Why does he hate them? Why does a Christian hate vain thoughts? Because they are uncongenial with his new nature—because they are injurious to his soul—because they are dishonourable to his God—because they are so detrimental to his religion, which is so spiritual as to reach the very state of the heart, as well as the actions of the life—because so much depends upon them: for thoughts are the first-born of the mind; and, as we think, we feel; and, as we feel, we desire; and, as we desire, we act; and by our actions our character is formed and our condition is determined.

But what will be the experience of a man who, though he has vain thoughts, hates them? Why, he will be sure to be humbled before God; and, even when he knows that he stands fair in the eyes of the people of the world, yet, in dealing with God, he presents to Him “a sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit, which He will not despise.” He will often long to enter heaven, knowing that there

“He shall see his face, and never never sin

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And he will often feel that it is even worth dying for, to get rid of “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

And then he will be sure to pray against them, that the Spirit may “help his infirmities,” and that he may be “strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man that he may “live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit.”

And, if he be sincere and importunate, then he will, also, strive against them; he will avoid the occasions of them; the incitements to them, and the encouragement of them.

He will, also, employ the best means to preserve his mind from them. And, by the way, a principal means of sanctification is this: to have the mind always filled with other and better things. For, as Newton says, “If the bushel be filled with wheat, there is no room for husks.”

Then, also, these better things dwelling in you, impress the mind, and leave a tincture behind; so that the mind, dwelling much on Divine thoughts, will elevate you; if on base thoughts, it will degrade you; and if on filthy ones, they will be sure to defile you.

We have seen what David says of his aversion; we now proceed to consider—

II. What he says of his affection: “But thy law do I love.” We may here notice the object of his attachment, and the attachment itself.

As to the object of his attachment, here called God’s “law,” you must remember that the term must not be taken in its common sense, as meaning the moral law, or the law which God gave to Moses, containing the ten commandments. Though even, indeed, in this usual acceptance of the word, a real

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Christian is attached to it—a real Christian, even in this view, can say with Paul, “I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward roan.” And while he is thankful for his deliverance from it as a covenant of works, whose dreadful language is, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” Yet, viewing the law in the hands of the Mediator, and receiving it from Him “who died for him and rose again,” as the expression of his own mind and will, he delights in it as the rule of his life, and prays, “Oh, that my feet were directed to keep thy precepts!”

“Make me to walk in thy commands,  
'Tis a delightful road;  
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,  
Offend against my God.”

There are some who say, “They have nothing to do with the law;” but let them take heed, for the law will have something to do with them by-and-by. And, what do they mean by expressing themselves in this Antinomian sense? What is the law, as they view the freedom from it as being so very desirable a privilege? Why, according to our Lord, the law consists entirely of love—in loving God supremely, and in loving our neighbour as ourselves. And can we ever be free, or desire to be free, from an obligation like this? Can any man in a right temper of mind deem it a privilege to have nothing to do with this? How is it with the real Christian? It is true he is often complaining; but then he complains not of the Master, but of himself; not of the strictness of the law, but of the slackness of the observer. He does not wish to bring down the law to his imper-

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fections, but wishes to be raised up and brought into a state of conformity to its highest requirements; and he knows he can never be entirely happy till he is completely holy, and till God re-establishes this blessed law in all his powers. But the word "law," means the Scriptures, or the Word of God at large.

You must have observed, in reading this Psalm, how many terms David employs to express it, as "commandments," "precepts," "statutes," "judgments," "testimonies," and "law." And the term law is not unusual in other places. Isaiah says, "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Where, you see, "the law and testimony," clearly means his word, and is explanatory of it.

So, in the beautiful Psalm you have heard read, David says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." It is not the moral law which converts, but the Gospel which converts the soul. The Apostle Paul speaks of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which, says he "hath made me free from the law of sin and death." And you will observe that the Apostle James calls it "the perfect law of liberty."

The difference between the moral law and the Gospel is, not that the one commands and the other does not, but in the difference of the things commanded. The command of the one is, "Do this and live the command of the other is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."—"Therefore," says John, "This is his commandment,"—his grand, his peculiar commandment—"this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his

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Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.”

How, you would do well to take this view of the thing; you would thereby often be encouraged amidst your trials, and relieved in your distresses. You may question your title to a promise, but you cannot question your right to obey a Divine command. And this is his commandment, “That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.” You never ask, “May I love another?” You know He has commanded it. Why then do you ask, “May I trust in Christ? May I believe in Christ?” when, in the very same passage, and in the very same words, He equally commands it.

Now as to his attachment. He says, “Thy law do I love.” You see he addresses himself to God. He makes God the witness of it; he knew he could say this in sincerity. And nothing can exceed the strength of his language in expressing this attachment in various places—“Oh! how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day.” Of his statutes, he says, “More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter, also, than honey and the honeycomb.”—“Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.” But it is needless, and we shall not have time to go through many of the various declarations in which He so strongly expresses his attachment.

But what David means by the law of God, is this—the Scriptures at large. These included much less than what we possess. The Word David had contained only the five books of Moses, a few narratives, and a few of the prophets. But, in addition to this, we have all the Prophets, the four Evangelists, the

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Acts of the Apostles, all the Epistles, and the Revelation of St. John. Now, therefore, as our coast is enlarged, if David could say, "I rejoice at thy Word as one that findeth great spoil,—if he could say, "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever," narrow and bounded as it was; what ought we to say of our heritage, extended and enlarged as it is?

'Tis a broad land of wealth unknown,  
Where springs of life arise,  
Seeds of immortal bliss are sown,  
And hidden glory lies."

Then you will observe, also, that there is enough to excite and to justify the believer's greatest attachment to the Scriptures; especially, because of the grand object of the whole, the grand aim of the whole, from the beginning to the end. And what is this? It is the testimony given of the Saviour. It is this that makes him prize the Book so much. "There," says the Christian—

"There my Redeemer's face I see,  
And read his love who died for me."

There he can contemplate Him in his person, and character, and offices, and blessings,—“Search the Scriptures,” therefore, said Christ; “for they are they that testify of me.”

Then, how dear, how delightful also, are the histories of this book; and whatsoever things of this kind were written, were “written for our learning” and, admonition upon whom “the ends of the earth are come.”

How dear and delightful, also, are the doctrines of

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the Scriptures—the doctrine of God's everlasting and infinite love—the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ, of justification by faith—the doctrine of regeneration, not by baptism, but by the renewing of the Holy Spirit,—of acceptance in the Beloved—the doctrine of final perseverance and the doctrine of the resurrection to life everlasting.

Then, look again, and see how much there is to draw forth and justify your attachment to the promises of the word, and these promises are “exceeding great and precious.” The promises are numerous to suit all our circumstances and exigencies. And then they are “all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us.”

So then, when a Christian looks within—ah, what evils does he feel! But then, he looks into the book and finds something provided for the removal of all these evils. And if he looks forward, he knows not what a day may bring forth; then he looks into the book, and sees it there recorded, that “all things shall work together for good to them that love God and that He hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Then, there is another thing that exceedingly attaches Christians to their Bible, and that is the relief it has given them under trials.

Oh! in what various ways does this endear the Scriptures! “Oh!” says the Christian, “how often have I quenched my thirst on a warm day, and in a weary land, from these springs of living water! Oh! what viands have I there found!” “I found thy word, and I did eat it, and thy words were to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart.”

I have had my perplexities, but this blessed Book

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showed me the way wherein I should walk, and turned my darkness into day.

I have had many benumbings, but thy word hath quickened me. I have had many moral perils, but “by the words of thy mouth I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.”

Many a trial have I had, personal and relative, and my heart has been nearly overwhelmed, and “unless thy law had been my delight, my soul had perished in my affliction.”

“Had not thy law been my delight,  
When earthly joys were fled,  
My soul, oppressed with sorrow’s weight,  
Had dwelt amongst the dead.”

We have now done with the exposition of our text. “I hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love.” Is this your language? Can you make it your own? Can you say unto God, with David, “I hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love then we hail you as highly favoured of the Lord. Then we call upon you to “rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice.” Then you need not be afraid of the trials of life, or to look forward to a dying hour.

And then, surely, you need not be afraid to come to the table of the Lord. You may feel your unworthiness, and that unworthiness is very great; but it is not half so great as your welcome will be, while God, as you draw near Him will say,—“Eat, O friends, drink abundantly, O beloved.” May God command his blessing for Christ’s sake. AMEN.



## SERMON XXV\*

THE CHARGE OF THE SAVIOUR TO THE FATHER WHOSE  
SON HAD "A DUMB SPIRIT."

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"Bring him unto me."—MARK ix. 19.

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AND who was this that Christ commanded to be brought unto Him? A son,—an only child, according to Matthew; a lunatic, according to Luke; a possessor of a dumb spirit, or one speechless, according to Mark. How here was a very difficult case, however the representations concerning it may be explained. That is, whether we may consider the patient the subject of a disorder the nature of which is known, or the subject of a real possession, of which we know nothing. Here annotators differ. Much may be said in favour of the common notion of diabolic possessions. But a difficulty arises here; our inability to decide accurately, when the language of the sacred historian accords with the incidental verity of the facts themselves, or when it is considered as an expression of the apprehension of the vulgar, or common people. For instance, our Lord says, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and

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\* Preached on behalf of Bath City Mission, July 18, 1852.

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findeth none; then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the-last state of that man is worse than the first." Now every one considers this metaphorically, and not literally.

In reading the Gospel history one is sometimes amazed to find God allowing evil spirits and devils to possess the bodies of the wicked, while we never find good ones, or angels, allowed to possess the bodies of the pious.

But we have no time or disposition for speculation this morning. Our discourse will not depend upon the decision of such inquiries as these. Therefore we read the narrative in the words which the Holy Ghost useth. Our Lord came down from the mountain with Peter and James and John, and then He immediately joined the nine other disciples He had left below. But when He was approaching them, He saw a great multitude about Him, and the scribes questioning with them; "And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him, saluted Him. And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, w'hich hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him he teareth him, and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away; and I spake to thy disciples, that they should cast him out, and they could not. He answereth him and saith, O, faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? *Bring him to me,*" and

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see what *I can do*. Do not judge of the Master by the servants. Though these disciples have failed, witness my superior skill and power.

We read of our Saviour, that "He went about doing good and doing good to the souls as well as to the bodies of men. And it is commonly, and I think very righteously, supposed, that his miraculous wonders were designed and adapted to be emblems of his spiritual and saving operations on the children of men.

We, therefore, are going to speak this morning of another kind of patient, whose case is, indeed, a difficult, an extremely difficult one, but not *desperate*. And though many have failed in their attempts to relieve him, there is One—

"Blessings for ever on the Lamb!"

there is One "who can cure him of whatever disease he has."

Let us, then, *first*, inquire, *To* whom he is to be brought. *Secondly*, *By* whom he is to be brought. *Thirdly*, *How* he is to be brought. These are very easy questions; and if you cannot carry them away with you, it will not be the fault of the preacher, but your own.

Proceed we, therefore, to answer these inquiries.

I. The first inquiry is, *To* whom is he to be brought? "Bring him," says the Saviour; "Bring him unto *me*." And here it will be necessary to premise, as we proceed to remark, that the patient of whom we speak is *the sinner*. He is in a far worse condition than this poor, afflicted, wretched youth. He was, indeed, sorely diseased; but his disorder was corporeal, while the disease of the sinner is spiritual, invading all the powers of the soul. And "the soul is the man." Sin

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is the same to the soul as disease is to the body, robbing it of health, of strength, of usefulness, of freedom, of ease and of enjoyment. His disorder exposed him to danger and death; but that death was only temporal, while the disease of the sinner exposes him to death eternal—"the second death." "What was the water or the fire into which the one could be thrown, compared to "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone into which "the wicked shall be turned, with all the nations that forget God,"—"where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched?"

See, then, this patient, not as he is spoken of frequently by those who talk of the purity and the dignity of human nature; but as he appears in the sight of God, the Judge of all, as a poor, polluted, guilty, depraved, helpless creature. There he lies. A mere moral and spiritual wreck; his understanding darkened; his judgment perverted; his will rebellious; his very conscience itself defiled; his affections, "earthly, sensual, and devilish." There he lies; and the Scripture tells us that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" that "From *within*, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man."—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint."—"From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores." There he lies; and all history, all observation, all experience, unite with the scripture to testify the reality and wretchedness of his natural state.

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There he lies, weltering in his own soul's blood, and ready to perish. *And must he perish?* There is no need of this: is there no hope? There is hope in Israel concerning this thing. "Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there!" There *is* "balm in Gilead there is a Physician there, and he cries, "*Bring him unto me.*"

Many have endeavoured to deliver this patient; but all these have proved "physicians of no value," and the patient has grown worse rather than better under their treatment. He has been turned over to the *world*; but what can the world do for him? All its resources are "vanity and vexation of spirit." It has never been able, by any of its expedients, to *reduce* the disease, but only to increase it. "I said of laughter it is mad, and of mirth," "What doeth it?"

The same may be said of its honours, of its power, of its riches, and of its friendships. The world only attracts to deceive, and only elevates to depress. It brings forth its "butter in a lordly dish," it spreads its sofa, it lulls its Siseras to sleep, and then employs its hammer and its nails. "I have never," said Mrs. Savage, "I have never heard a single individual who spake well of the world *parting.*"

Well, and this patient has been turned over to civil government. The worst government is better than anarchy, which is hell let loose; but laws cannot go far enough; they can only restrain, and restrain only partially.

He has been turned over into the hands of heathen philosophers. They have had long and fine opportunities to try their experiments upon human nature, and what has been the result. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory

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of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds and four footed beasts, and creeping things.”

The Greeks and Romans excelled in the arts and sciences; and if you would see a fine painting, or a piece of statuary, you must go and fetch it from the ruins of the world. But take them in regard to spiritual things—in regard to man’s recovery: here their nostrums are all vain. Plato complains, with all his fine fancy, that he could not bring over one single village to walk according to his rules.

These heathens could not heal *themselves*. They lived, therefore, in the acknowledged practice of vices, the indulgence of which would here banish men even from the dregs of society.

Then he has been turned over into the hands of Moses; and what could Moses do? “The law made nothing perfect.”—“The law was weak through the flesh.” It could neither justify nor sanctify. According to the Apostle: “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law worketh wrath:—

“To convince, and to condemn,  
Is all the law can do.”

And the patient has often been in the hands of disciples, of moralists, or of Christian divines. He has been in the hands of those who regard the Gospel not as a remedial system—as a system of mercy and grace—not as a scheme of redemption and renovation, but as a re-publication of the laws of nature, accompanied by clearer motives and more awful sanctions.

For a length of time trial was made of this in our own country, and even after the time of the glorious Reformation morality and justification by works was

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generally preached. "The Whole Duty of Man;" "The Week's Preparation" "Nelson's Pastors and Festivals" "Baptismal Regeneration;" Essays against Atheism, Deism, and especially Enthusiasm: these were the staple gospel of the day; till "a hand of men, whose hearts God had touched," sprung up, "valiant for the truth," and "flew," like angels, "to preach the everlasting Gospel to them that dwell on the earth." And lo, "the word came with power, and with the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." And Kingswood, and numberless other places, witnessed the Gospel to be "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

God gives testimony only to the word of his grace. We may challenge our opponents to produce a real change in the character and nature—what the Apostle calls "a new creature,"—where these doctrines of the Gospel are either denied or concealed. I knew Dr. Priestly's brother. He was a man of sound religious principles. He one day said to his brother—"You know I have not your learning, or your talents, or your fame. I am a plain preacher of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and for years I have endeavoured to know nothing else. Yet, by my plain endeavours, God has been pleased to produce a number of conversions to Himself. And what conversions, my brother, can *you* boast of?"—"Oh," said he, "I think I was the means of the conversion of one when I was at Leeds."—"And did the fruit *remain*?" said he. "No," he replied. "I am sorry to say, that, after awhile, he fell back into his habits of intemperance." "So, brother," said he, for he was a man of humour, "you see, you are a hen with only one chick, and that's dead."

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My brethren—

“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
Can do helpless sinners good.”

“Bring him unto me,” says the Saviour. “I am anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Bring him unto me that he may have life, and that he may have it more abundantly. Bring him unto me, and “he shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life.” Bring him unto me; and in me he shall find “wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption,” yea, “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.”

But are you, O Saviour, as *willing* as you are able? “My name is Compassion!

“My heart is made of tenderness;  
My bowels melt with love.”

I loved the world, and gave myself for it. “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends; but I laid down my life for mine *enemies*. While they were *ungodly*, I died for them.” “Bring him unto me!”—Lord, he is *too bad* to be brought. “No: I came into the world to save sinners, and the chief of sinners. My blood can cleanse from all sin. My righteousness alone can justify the ungodly, and give a title to heaven: my Spirit can make all things new.”

But, Lord, thou hast enough already upon thine hands. No: bring more—bring all! “Say to the



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south, Give up, and to the north, Keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth."

Ah! my brethren, this is the grand thing:—man is lost, he is unable to save himself; creatures are unable to deliver him: his only resource is Christ. "No man cometh unto the Bather but by Him"—and "there is salvation in no other."—"For there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." But "in Ilim there is plenteous redemption."

The sinner and the Saviour are perfectly suited to each other: the sinner by his sin and misery; the Saviour by his mercy and grace. Bring them unto me. This is the grand concern. Therefore, said He, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."—"Behold me!—behold me!" In the days of his flesh, He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Nothing can be done previously. Holiness is not the way to Christ, but Christ is the way to holiness. Good works are not the way to grace, but grace is the way to good works. Health is not the way to the physician, but the physician is the way to health. Let, therefore, the grand concern be to bring about this union.

The devil cares not what people do, if he can keep them from Christ. He does not care where they go. He will allow them to go where the Gospel is preached—he will allow them to attend even prayer meetings—he will allow them to come to the table of the Lord, or to make what profession of religion they please, if he can keep them from the Saviour's cross, if he can keep them from his footstool, crying, "Lord

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save, or I perish!"—"God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

We have thus considered the first question. We pass on

II. To inquire By *whom* the patient is to be brought. "Bring him unto me." Who are to bring him? Of course we first mention ministers. Why it is their office to bring sinners unto Christ: and it should be their aim. Our Saviour says, to every one—I send thee, master of arts, and doctor of divinity, to go and civilize and moralize?—No. But, I send thee "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me."

What is a minister? How often we associate things which have no necessary connexion. A minister is not a gentleman, but a gentleman may be a minister. A minister is not a scholar, but a scholar may be a minister. A minister is not a rector, but a rector may be a minister. What is a minister then? "He is Aaron, with his censor in his hand, standing between the living and the dead!"—he is one whose grand and sole business it is to bring sinners to Christ.

"He that winneth souls is wise." But this work of bringing sinners to Christ is not confined to ministers. The obligation extends to all men; and only a Cain will ever ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" To be sure you are. You are "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh."—"Have we not all one Bather? hath not one God created us?"—"Did not he that made thee in the womb make him? and did not One fashion us in the womb?" All, therefore, are com-

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manded, as they "have opportunity, to do good unto all men." But, alas! they are not very likely to have compassion for the souls of others who have no regard for their own.

We must, therefore, turn to those who estimate and who feel their obligation—and who are they? Why, those who have been brought to this blessed Saviour themselves: they are the persons. They know the wretchedness of being without Christ: they know the blessedness of being found in a state of union and communion with him.

Now, with regard to this, I have always been ready to think that the subjects of Divine grace are instruments in doing good to others: as they not only feel it to be their duty and their privilege, to be useful to the souls of others, so God honours and blesses them in this respect.

The work, therefore, is not confined to the priesthood. Indeed, there is no such thing as priesthood under the Gospel. But there are ministers who "preach not themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and who are themselves our servants, for Jesus' sake." David was a prince, yet David condescended to be a teacher—"Then," says he, "will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Boyle was a philosopher; but Boyle rendered his science subsidiary to the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Leigh was a merchant; but Leigh published an excellent body of divinity.\* Polhill was a magistrate; but he wrote that noble book called "Union with Christ." Yes, brethren; and the bringers of souls to Christ have been amongst all ranks and degrees of men.

Some are unlikely instruments to bring sinners to

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\* Treatise of Divinity, 1647.

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Christ: such was the woman of Samaria, considering her condition and connexions in life. Yet, after the conversation of the Saviour, we find she leaves her water-pot, and runs into the city, and saith to the men—"Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? "And many followed her, and came to him and said, "Now we believe, not for thy saying alone, but we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Dr. Chalmers says, "We generally over-estimate our talents, and under-estimate our influence." And where is the man who has no influence to employ?—where is the person who has no connexions? What was the little captive girl—what influence had a little slave attending upon her mistress? But she was the means of the recovery of Naaman, and of spreading the knowledge of the God of Israel through Syria.

But, though all are to be engaged in efforts to bring souls to the Saviour as they have opportunity, there is one class of persons I would particularly mention, who should be thus engaged, namely, those who have excelled in iniquity—those who have been "led captive by the devil at his will"—those who have diffused error, poisoning the souls of men, and leading them to destruction by their errors and their vices. Such as these, and who are now become the partakers of Divine grace, are under a twofold obligation to bring souls to Christ. *First*, they are under an obligation of *gratitude*: they have had "much forgiven," and therefore they should love and serve much. Then, *secondly*, they are under an obligation of justice: they have done much mischief and evil in their day, and so much more concerned should they be to do some good: they have led enough astray, and they should be con-

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cerned to bring some, at least, into the way of truth. Some of these are *beyond your reach*: they are now in perdition. It is an awful thought! yes, it is an awful thought *that there are now in perdition some whose destruction you occasioned: you led them astray—you encouraged them; the thought is enough to make you weep tears of blood, that they are beyond your reach.* —[The preacher here made a solemn pause.]

But there are others who are not, as yet, in this condition; there are those around you who are in the region of hope. They are within your reach; repair to them; say to them, You know that I was once in the same state with you; oh, that you were now in the same state with me!—oh, that you had my views and feelings!—oh, that you were acquainted with that dear Redeemer, who is "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely!" I have never sought Him in vain: I have found Him to be the Friend of the friendless, and the "Hope of the hopeless, and a Befuge in the time of trouble."—"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

III. We proceed to the *third* consideration. You have heard *to whom* the patient is to come; you have heard tell of those *who* are to *bring* him: but now *how* is he to be brought? I say nothing here of the time when you are to endeavour to bring him.

"While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."

"*Now* is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Men are to "seek the Lord while He is to be found, and to call upon Him while He is near." You know there is only one opportunity for you to

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obtain the salvation of your own soul, and there is but one opportunity for you to obtain the souls of others.

And herein you have a privilege *even above the glorified* themselves. They cannot call sinners to repentance; they cannot say to their perishing fellow-creatures, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." *This privilege is only yours.* I am persuaded, if it were the pleasure of the Almighty, those who have departed would be willing to come down, for a while, in order to seize and improve those opportunities of usefulness which you can despise or neglect. Oh! remember the brevity and uncertainty of the opportunities you enjoy in bringing sinners to Christ, and hasten their flight to the city of refuge; for the avenger of blood is at their heels. Oh! urge them immediately into the ark, before they are overwhelmed in the deluge, and lost for ever.

But the question here is, not when you are to bring them, but *how*. And, surely, here we must begin with *prayer*: prayer has power with God, and can prevail.

You need not ask, as some sceptical persons have asked, how prayer can be necessary to inform a Being of infinite understanding; or to prevail with Him who is of "one mind," and none can turn; or to persuade a Being to be kind and gracious, who is already infinite in mercy? This would not be a proper representation of the matter: God may see reasons for his performing a thing in one way, when He would not perform it, for the want of these reasons, in another. And, whether we can discern these reasons or not, He has them, and is swayed by them; and what He does, He does, because it seemeth good in his sight; and He hath said, "I will be enquired of by the house of Israel, and by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to do it for

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them." Why, a thousand objections and cavilling questions would be all crushed by a reference to the authority, command and promise of Him, who hath said, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you;" and "Their souls shall live that seek God."

And it should be very encouraging to you, that this efficiency of prayer is not confined to rank, or talent, or influence—"He despiseth not the prayer of the destitute, but will hear their prayer and "The prayer of the upright is his delight." And this prayer you can use in whatever circumstances you are: you can use it if you are in the shop, or if you are in the field, or upon the road, or in the chamber of sickness, or on the bed of languor, or even while passing through "the valley of the shadow of death and, whenever we can pray, God has always an ear to hear, a heart to pity, and a hand to save.

But unless you *labour* for the salvation of others, your prayers will be of very little use. If your prayers are importunate and sincere, they will be accompanied by corresponding means. And here a large field opens before us; but I can only let you in:—marking two things—

*First*, that you may be the means of bringing sinners to Christ by your *example*. Example does more than precept. Example has more influence than inculcation.

Men are more influenced by what they *see*, than by what they *hear*. When is it that persons "take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus," and have learned of Him, but when you "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour;" but when you "walk worthy of the vocation by which you are called, and

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your conversation is such as becometh the Gospel of Christ."

Now take a Christian who is holy in his carriage and conduct; Why, then he is like the moral law to man, by the which is the knowledge of sin, and which convinces and alarms. Or is the Christian happy? He ought to be so: then he is like the Gospel, which declares that, "Blessed are 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." And then will people see, that, while all are seeking for happiness, you only have found it; while they see others running up and down, asking, "'Who will show me any good?" and then see Christians are "learning in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content,"—that they have enough to support them, while the props of others give way—that, Tunder their heaviest trials, they have beneath them "the everlasting arms," that in the midst of their troubles are their consolations—this will be likely to strike others and induce them to say, "We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you."

Once more: you must seek to bring souls to Christ, not only by your example, but by your *exertions*. These will, of course, vary according to places, conditions, and circumstances, "Of some have *compassion*, making a difference, and others save with *fear*, *pulling* them out of the fire."

You have a tongue, and this can be occasionally employed. "A word spoken in season, how good is it!—it is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." You are the person to speak; you can speak with firmness, because you can speak from *conviction*; you



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can speak earnestly, because you have had *experience* of these things; you can say, with the first Christians, "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." You can say with Eliphaz, "Lo this we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

And you may exert yourself not only individually but, also *collectively and socially*. What one cannot do, many may; yes, they may by exciting, by encouraging, by aiding each other in their united efforts.

We live in a day, by the providence of God, remarkable beyond all former ages, for numerous combinations and co-operation; and I am glad that the Church of God is beginning to avail itself largely of this opportunity. Hence many societies have been formed of a benevolent and beneficent character. And a temporal and spiritual kind of benevolence and beneficence has been exercised; and among these is the one for which I plead this morning, namely, the Bath City Mission. This was formed in the year 1837, and it has not only continued to this day, but has been increasing ever since.

How, I hardly know how far my audience are acquainted with this institution; otherwise I could inform them of the object of this society, which is, to extend the knowledge of the Gospel, irrespective of sect, among the inhabitants of Bath, especially the poor, by domiciliary visits, religious conversation, by reading the word, holding meetings for prayer, by the circulation of religious tracts, by stimulating to a regular attendance upon the means of grace, by increasing scriptural education, by the formation of loan

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libraries on divinity, and such other means as the managers may judge important to meet the state of the society.

For carrying into effect the important objects the mission has in view, agents are employed, of suitable character and ability, who are to give themselves wholly to the work of the mission; and no person is recognized as a missionary of the society, who is not of evangelical principles, and who does not afford evidence of personal piety.

To facilitate the proceedings, the city and environs are divided into districts, each of which is under the eye of a superintendent, who makes it his business to direct the agent.

I could, also, give you a general summary of the labours of the agents during the past year, which is as follows:—Hours occupied 12,893; number of visits 3892; meetings held 663; sick visited 7935; tracts distributed 8681; books exchanged 794; attendance at schools 1471.

I cannot now stay to read the communications from the missionaries, and would only observe they will well repay your perusal. But I cannot conclude without observing, that I consider such an institution as this as next to the ministry of the “Word itself. And though it has not a public ministry, like the preaching of the Gospel, it has one advantage above it, namely, that of individual instruction, and personal application, and repeated effort.

And you will observe such institutions as this are not altogether new, and therefore, they require not to be explained. They have been instrumental in effecting great good, and are spreading in all directions; so that there is now, I believe, hardly a city or large town

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in our favoured country, in which something of the kind is not to be found.

I think one thing is still wanting—I mean an addition of *female* branch agents. I have long been persuaded that we shall not go on well in such things as these, and some more, till *females* are *employed*, and *officially* employed too. I do not mean by calling them away from their domestic duties, and provinces of their destination. *No*. But there are many valuable females, who are possessed of piety and talent, and who have some leisure time, who could be very usefully employed. They were so originally, as says the Apostle,—“Help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement, also, and with other, my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.” And again, “I commend unto you Phebe, our sister, which is a servant or (*deacon*) of the Church which is at Cenchrea, that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many and of myself also. Greet Priscilla, and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.”

Now, when our Lord sent forth his Apostles, commanding them to preach the Gospel to every creature, He told them to begin at Jerusalem, and so to work forward. While we would not overlook foreign claims, we are not to disregard those who are destitute before our eyes. Surely persons have not the

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less claim upon us, because they are our friends and neighbours! And if you are afraid that what you contribute may not be wisely and properly used abroad, you here have opportunity to know how such contributions are applied.

As there was a deficiency in last year's income, as calls are continually multiplying, and as much more might be done, if we had greater resources, what we recommend to you, *first*, is, additional subscribers; *secondly*, augmentation of subscriptions themselves; and, *thirdly*, a good handsome collection this morning.

I know not whether this is the first public appeal that has been made from the pulpit on behalf of this excellent institution; but I know it is the first time I have had the honour and pleasure of pleading for it; but I believe it will not be the last time,\* if the Lord should be pleased to allow me a little longer of life and ability.

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\* It was, however, the first and the last time that the venerable preacher advocated the claims of the Bath City Mission—and a more striking and eloquent appeal could scarcely be made. The Discourse is one of the finest in the volume.—Ed.

## SERMON XXVI.\*

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Rev. W. Jay's Last Sermon at Argyle Chapel.

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THE POWER AND GLORY OF GOD, THE BELIEVER'S  
ATTRACTION TO THE SANCTUARY.

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“O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.”—PSALM lxiii. 1, 2.

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“As the man is,” says the proverb, “so is his strength and we may add, “as the man is, so is his desire.”—“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, and

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\* Preached Sunday Morning, July 25, 1852.—At the time of the delivery of the following discourse, the venerable Preacher was in his usual health,—suffering only the infirmities of advanced age. None, therefore, who were privileged to hear him on that occasion supposed they were listening to his final address from the pulpit; yet, although, from the circumstances under which the sermon was delivered, the style of address was not valedictory, it contains, as the *last* sermon, some remarkable and significant allusions; and was characterized in its delivery by much tenderness, earnestness, and unction: and now that it has proved to be his last (preached in Argyle Chapel), it possesses a value and an interest peculiarly its own. To the church and congregation to whom this sermon was addressed, it must be a matter of thankfulness that it

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they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." Desires are, in some respects, better evidences of real religion than actions themselves. You may be compelled to act,—you cannot be compelled to desire. Desires are free-born; they spring forth, spontaneously, from conviction and disposition. Good desires are proofs of something good, pledges of something better, and parts of something the best of all: and if you can make the language of Nehemiah and his companions your own, and say, "Thy servants who *desire* to fear thy name or, with the Psalmist, "Lord, all my desire is before thee or, with some in the days of Isaiah, "Our desire is to thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee or, with Dr. Watts—

"Grant me thy counsels for my guide,  
And then receive me to thy bliss:  
All my desires and hopes beside,  
Are faint and few compared to this:"

then, you may rejoice in the assurance that you are the heirs of the precious promise—"Their hearts shall live that seek God for He hath never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." But let us hear how David speaks of his desires:—"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

Of these desires, let us consider three things:—

- I. THEIR CHARACTER.
- II. THEIR ENHANCEMENT.
- III. THEIR AIM.

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was so accurately reported—and that they have thus preserved to them a faithful and permanent record of the closing service of their valued and lamented Pastor.

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What is brief in the division, for the sake of remembrance, will, I hope, be plain in the development. "Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

I. As to the character of these desires, we find them here distinguished by two things. The *first* is their object:—"O God, thou art *my* God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

Here we see what a difference there is between a man in his natural, and a man in his renewed state—between one who is regenerated, and one who is unregenerated. As to the latter, he lives without God in the world; he would there were no God. He lies down, and rises up; goes forth and returns; sows and reaps; commences and completes every enterprize, and "God is not in all his thoughts." And if God approaches him to enter into his alienated mind, he repulses Him as an intruder, and says unto God, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways —"Cause the Holy One of Israel to depart from us." But as to the former, he draws near to God as his "exceeding joy." He is concerned to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long; he delighteth himself in the Lord; he drops the sons of vanity and vice, and runs to "take hold of the skirt of him who is a Jew, saying, I will go with you, for I perceive that God is with you."—"There be many that say, Who will show us *any* good?" But *any* good will no longer answer the purpose. I must have the *Lord*—"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me." I must have *Thee*. I desire to wear thy image, to

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enjoy thy presence, to be engaged in thy service. Thus he passeth by creatures, and says, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"—"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore, will I hope in Him and, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee."

Then, *secondly*, they are, also, known by their *intensity*. Observe the terms by which they are expressed—"O God, thou art my God; *early* will I seek thee: my soul *thirsteth* for thee, my flesh *longeth* for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Now surely all this expresses no ordinary desires. Herod wished to see our Lord perform miracles, but would not step abroad for the purpose. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" but did not wait for an answer. Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;" while he showed no concern to live their life, or to walk in their ways; for, as an old writer remarks, "There are certain trees which produce double blossoms, but which, nevertheless, bring forth no fruit."

But as religion is the one thing needful, absolutely needful—needful on all occasions and in all circumstances, so its exercise and the feelings pertaining to it are all peculiar and supreme: hence the Christian's self-abasement is nothing less than self-loathing and self-abhorrence. Therefore, he says, "Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Therefore, godly sorrow is mourning "as one that mourneth for an only son, and a being in bitterness, as one who is in bitterness for the loss of a first-born." And if



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the Christian has a hope, it is a "lively hope if he has a peace, it is a peace "passing all understanding if he has a joy, it is "a joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and if he has desires, they are nothing less than "hungerings and thirstings after righteousness." "I opened my mouth," said David, "and panted, for I longed for thy commandments."—"My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times."—"O God, thou art my God, *early* will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

How, then, can religion be considered as having little or nothing to do with the affections and the feelings? How is it that it should be reduced to a mere subject of speculation; to a creed of notions; to a series of ceremonies and formalities, and cheap religious services, in which the heart has no concern? Is it thus the Scripture speaks of religion? Does it not tell us that it is not a name to live, but life itself?—that it is not the form of godliness, but the *power* thereof? Would the sacred writers urge so many motives to excite you, if they only intended to inform? Can we "fear" without feeling—or "love" without feeling—or "grieve" without feeling? The religion of the Bible is that of the *heart*. This God demands—"My son give me thy *heart*."

"Let us ask the important question—

Brethren, be not too secure—

What it is to be a Christian?

True religion's more than notion;

Something must be *known* and *felt*.

Yet, how frequently do persons declaim against

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being "righteous overmuch." As Mr. Cecil observes, "As soon as a man shows himself to be alive and in earnest in religion, he passes under the name of Methodist." When Christians feel and display that fervency of mind which becomes genuine religion, this is run down as enthusiasm; yet the Apostle says, "Be *fervent* in spirit, serving the Lord." It is strange how often the same term is differently applied. The word enthusiast is frequently applied in a *commendable* sense. When it means the energy of genius, then it is considered to be a righteous thing. It is supposed that men will make no figure in the arts and sciences without feeling a portion of intellectual energy; yet when zeal and fervour are exercised in *religious* matters, then, forsooth, it is the mark of a weak or of an insane mind. But wherefore? If religion be anything, it is everything; if it be important at all, it is all-important. What can equal the grandeur of the soul and eternity?—

"On such a theme 'twere impious to be calm;  
Passion is reason, transport temper, *here*."

II. Having noticed the character of his desires, as to their object, and as to their intensity, let us now observe, *secondly*, their ENHANCEMENT. This arises from the destitute condition in which he was; for he was now in a wilderness, exiled from his home, driven from his inheritance, constrained to live amongst strangers, aliens, and frequently amongst idolaters; away from all the assemblies, and services, and songs, of Zion. This is the meaning of the expression, "In a dry and thirsty land where no water is." In this condition, you see, he mourns not so much his absence

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from his palace as from the sanctuary,—his absence from his own house, as from the house of God; and bewails not so much the loss of his civil, as of his sacred enjoyments. “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.”

In this state, how did he envy the Priests and Levites whose duty it was to attend in the temple!—“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.” How he envied those who journeyed to Jerusalem, at the three grand festivals, however wearisome the weather, tiresome the way, or lengthened the road!—“Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, (or from company to company) every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” Oh, how he envied the little birds who could build and feed, and chirp, near the sacred edifice!—“Yea, the sparrow hath found a house and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God.”

Absence sharpens affection; and want, desires. Indeed, we seldom know the worth of a thing till we are made to feel the want of it. Then, we say with our poet,

“How blessings brighten when they take their flight.”

We find that though the Jews had so often murmured against Moses, yet when he died, it is said, “they mourned for him many days.” And this

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mourning, I am persuaded, was real and deep, and deeper from the remembrance of their behaviour towards him. "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Rachel must always love her own offspring; but it is when they are laid in the grave,—it is when she is folding up, and laying by in the drawers, their little dresses, in which they were so beloved,—that she weeps for her children, and "refuses to be comforted because they are not." The poet says,

"A mother is a mother still.  
The holiest thing that lives."

And children may not be chargeable with the neglect of her; but when is it that they feel and acknowledge her to be most dear and valuable, but when they can no longer find her dear bosom to be the asylum of their fears, and the sanctuary of their cares? So David, when he would express the greatest of all griefs, speaks of "one who mourneth for his mother."

Hearers may not undervalue their minister while he is yet with them; but it is when they can look upon his form no longer, and listen to his voice no more—it is then, that they begin to inquire, What benefit have we derived from all his ministrations? what preparation have we made for our next interview with Him in another world, and at the bar of God? Then, they will remember his discourses; then, they will prize, or perhaps, borrow and copy the notes taken of his sermons; then, when he is dead, they read with interest his writings, into which they never looked, perhaps, while he was alive!

My brethren, *God* acts upon this principle: and if

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you will not learn to value your means and mercies; if you are not thankful for them, and do not use them properly; be assured He will either suspend them, or mar them, or remove them from you. And this He can easily do without having recourse to a miracle; He can easily, in the ordinary course of his Providence, bring you into circumstances which will lead you to *long after* those things which you never esteemed while you possessed them. How easily could He deprive you of eyesight, so that you might no longer be able to read the blessed volume. How easily could He cause you to be deaf, and prevent you from hearing “the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.” By the death of a friend, you may be deprived of one who is as dear as your own soul, with whom you “took sweet counsel” and “walked to the house of God in company.” By a change of business, or the removal of a residence, you may be plunged into a situation of spiritual barrenness, where you will say with David, “My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.”

III. Having considered the CHARACTER of these desires, and their ENHANCEMENT, let us proceed to observe, *thirdly* their AIM:—“To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.”

Here observe *four things*. And *first*, we may observe, what it is that David wishes to see—God’s *power* and *glory*. It will not be necessary to establish in your mind the truth of God’s power:—“Once have I heard this,” says the Psalmist, “yea, twice, that power belongeth unto God.” You know that it was by his powerful voice He called forth the universe from nothing, and He upholdeth all things by the word of

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his power. Once there was no sun, and God spake and said, "Let there be light, and there was light." "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." You may go forth with a microscope in one hand, and with a telescope in the other, and, if you employ them, you will soon be constrained to say, "Marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!" He has sometimes suspended the fixed laws of nature; iron has been caused to swim; the flames of fire have refused to burn; waters have made a wall on the right hand and on the left, when the Lord has interposed on the behalf of his people. Papists are very fond of miracles, but theirs are all "lying wonders;" but the miracles of the Scriptures are *real* miracles,—miracles in deed and in truth; and we see how easily God could accomplish them. But you will observe, that there is ascribed to this "power" a certain quality. It is called "*glory*" and this glory is every way worthy of your attention. It consists in the purposes of this power; it consists in the connexions and in the attributes of this power; it tells us that this power is wise, holy, righteous, kind, merciful and gracious. You know when power is exercised *alone*, there is something awful; and the idea of infinite power is tremendous and overwhelming, when it is viewed alone. But here is a glory which keeps it from being terrific, yea, which even renders it delightful and desirable; that makes it the ability of a benefactor, in which we always rejoice; and the arm of a friend, on which we can always lean; and the source of relief in danger, indigence and distress!

The Apostle, therefore, you remember, speaks of the "excellency" of this power. "We have this treasure," says he, "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the

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power may be of God, and not of us." He saw it in exercise in his day. And we read, more than once, where the word "glory" is used to express this "power" itself. Thus the Apostle prays for the Ephesians, that "according to the riches of his *glory*, God would grant unto them to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man meaning, by "glory" there, obviously the Divine power. You know our Saviour, when at the grave of Lazarus, exclaimed, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldst see the *glory* of God?" The glory of God, there, unquestionably means the display of his omnipotence in the resurrection of Lazarus. We cannot have a better exhibition of the glory referred to, than from the example of our Lord and Saviour. We know that even in the days of his flesh He claimed possession of all power in heaven and in earth; but He did not use it destructively, except in two instances. The one was not upon a man, but upon a tree; a tree growing by the way-side—no one's property,—and that a *barren* tree; furnishing an emblem and reproof for the Jews for their non-improvement of the means they enjoyed. The other was inflicted upon the Gadarenes, not upon their persons, but upon their swine, by which they were carrying on a forbidden traffic.

But now follow Him, going about doing good; here, healing one of a wretched malady; there, opening the eyes of the blind; here, making "the lame man to leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing and there, raising Lazarus, the only brother of Martha and Mary; here, restoring to life the ruler's daughter, an only child; and there, raising a young man from the dead, the only son of his mother, "and she was a widow." Here, brethren, we see the glory and power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Is our Saviour to be viewed as a warrior? He is. But with what does He make war? Why, only with ignorance, and error, and vice, and wretchedness of every kind. How is it with other conquerors? Is this power glorious? What! a glory in making wives widows, and children fatherless—in drawing forth tears, and causing execrations? Is this glory? “Before them,” as the Prophet says, “there is the garden of the Lord; behind them a wilderness.” But look at *Him!* Before Him is a wilderness, barrenness, and desolation; and behind Him a paradise. “He comes down as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth.” He moves, and at his steps “the wilderness and the solitary places are made glad, and the desert rejoices, and blossoms as the rose.” *He* conquers, and all mankind call Him blessed. “Blessed be his name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen.”

“Blessings abound where'er He reigns,  
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains;  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the sons of want are bless'd.”

*Secondly*, we perceive here, *the place of its display*—“To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” It is seen in “the sanctuary.” Not that it is seen there only. God is everywhere, and everywhere God. Hear what He has said in a way of promise, “In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee.” He was found visibly and sensibly in the temple of old; but He is now *really* in our Christian assemblies. Though He is not obviously there to the natural eye, faith can realize Him there; faith can reckon upon the undeniable fact; we perceive His agency there.



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Let us trace the operation of this glorious power, as displayed in awakening and convincing the unconverted. A man comes carelessly into the house of God, or lounges at the bottom of the aisle; he casts a kind of undefined look at the preacher; as the preacher proceeds, he feels conscious that he is made known and exposed before the assembly. He goes home complaining: he says, a minister should tell a man his faults *alone*, and not expose him before others; and resolves never to hear him again as long as he lives. But the next Sabbath, there he is, hearing him again; he cannot keep away. Something has touched his conscience; he feels a conviction of the truth of what he hears, and reminds you of the condition of the Corinthians, described by the Apostle, when he represents a man going through the street, and he espies a light, and hears a noise, and enters into the assembly as an unbeliever, but he soon finds himself "convinced of all, and judged of all," and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and "so falling down on his face," he will "worship God," and report that "God is in you of a truth."

There are also displays of this glorious power, not only in conviction, but in *conversion*; "Of Zion it shall be said, that this and that man was born in her." The sanctuary is the birth-place of souls, and where many have first breathed the vital air of heaven. There may be persons here this morning who are ready to say, "You cannot imagine what a poor wretch I was; I never thought about my soul till I heard such a sermon, which, like a clap of thunder, alarmed me, and led me to say, "What must I do to be saved?" Another, perhaps, will say, "I was a self-righteous Pharisee, boasting of my own performances, till such

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a discourse from the preacher, as with a scythe, cut down all my self-righteous hopes, and laid me bare at the foot of the cross." Another will say, "The word has produced in me a belief of the Scriptures."

There are those who suppose it an easy thing to believe, but everything seems against it; the pride of the human heart is against it: this induces the man to go about to establish his own righteousness. Then the Being he is to trust in is *invisible*. To trust in a being out of sight,—and with all that is eternally dear and precious,—is no easy thing. I do not wonder at the Apostle to the Ephesians speaking of the "mighty power" of God, as displayed in the resurrection of his own Son from the dead; and the man under the influence of this "mighty power" believes, and *enters into rest*. Yes, he finds enough in a dying, risen Saviour, to enable him to say, "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have now received the atonement:" Dear brethren, "A wounded spirit who can bear?" and a wounded spirit who can heal? I will tell you: He, of whom it is said, "He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds." There are those present who can bear witness to this. What wonders have been accomplished by this glorious power in the sanctuary! "Instead of the thorn has come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar the myrtle tree, and it has been to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off —

"Lions and beasts of savage name,  
Put on the nature of the lamb;  
While the wide world esteem it strange,  
Gaze and admire, and hate the change."

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Those who have been “living in envy and malice, hateful and hating one another,” are seen now living in love, and peace, and unity. They were tyrannized over by sin, but are now delivered from the tyranny of their evil lusts and passions. Freed from the stings of an accusing conscience, their souls are now calm and tranquil. Having received mercy, they feel it to be their business and blessedness to exercise mercy. There, those who were covetous find bowels of compassion, and are concerned to “serve their generation according to the will of God.” There, the most illiterate,—those who, perhaps, never heard the name of philosophy,—have been known to possess a sublimity of mind, and to display a taste, above philosophers, and have been enabled to say,

“I’d part with all the joys of sense,  
To gaze upon thy throne;  
Pleasure springs fresh for ever thence,  
Unspeakable, unknown.”

And those who were once cowards, can now “go forth without the camp bearing” the “reproach “of the cross.

Nor is this all; for as this glorious power is displayed in the conviction and in the conversion of sinners, so also is it displayed in the consolation of believers; in relieving them in their distresses, in supporting them under trials, and exemplifying the words of David, “God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” And thus beautifully does Isaiah speak of it:—“Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a comer any more; but thine eyes shall see thy teachers, and thine ears shall

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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." Thus, as Mr. Newton expresses it,

“Though pinched with poverty at home,  
With sharp afflictions daily fed,  
It makes amends if they can come  
To God’s own house for heavenly bread.

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

There, the widow and the fatherless hear the promise—“Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy children trust in me.”—“A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation.” There, also, hope springs up in the very bosom of despair; there, the weary hear a word, in season, to refresh their souls, and, in consequence of all this, they resolve, in the language of the sweet Psalmist of our British Israel:—

“In every new distress  
We’ll to his courts repair,  
We’ll think upon his wondrous grace,  
And seek deliverance there.”

We have a remarkable instance of this in the case of Asaph. Asaph said, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped, for I was envious at the foolish”—pity, too, to envy *a fool!*—“I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm.” Comparing this with his own condition, he said, “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long

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have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” “When I thought to know this,” said he, “it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end,—(and my own too, before this,)—so foolish was I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee.” Then he saw the clue which unravelled the mysteries of Providence; then he saw that God was doing all things, and doing all things well, and exclaimed, “Nevertheless, I am continually with thee, thou hast holden me by my right hand; thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” Such was the advantage he derived from the sanctuary of God.

But then, *thirdly*, we have *David's actual experience* of these displays,—“*I have seen thee,*” says he, “in the sanctuary.” He was certain of the reality of the thing. It was not, says he, a vision, or a dream, or a delusion; I am fully persuaded of the truth of it. I have found it good to be in the sanctuary, for I have found the Lord there, and have had communion with Him there. I have enjoyed “fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” Oh! I have had sweet enjoyment there, and have said, “This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven,” And, brethren, a believer can come to this conclusion: a believer is not to be ridiculed or reasoned out of this conclusion: there has he found God to be a refuge for him, and has, from heart-felt experience, been enabled to say, “I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste;” there have I *seen* his glory. The experience assures me that I am not under a mistake; it has reduced a vain world in my

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estimation; it has drawn me heavenward; it has turned the shadow of death into the morning; it has brought down my proud looks; it has abased me at his feet; it has taught me to "rejoice in Christ Jesus it has destroyed all confidence in myself; and my soul has been as a weaned child.

Here is one thing more; and that is, *fourthly*, the *usefulness* of this experience. You see how it stimulated him to seek after more of what he had already enjoyed; "To SEE thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

But if he had seen Him there, he was not satisfied; and the sight of Him increased his desires. So they who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious" will be sure to pray for more grace. They who have seen his glory will be sure to say with Moses, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." Moses was a man who had been indulged already beyond any of his fellow-creatures! Yet, after communications the most deep and extensive; after being inspired to write Scripture; after beholding God in the burning bush; after "talking with him as a man talketh with his friend,"—so far is he from being satisfied, that his soul is drawn forth after more acquaintance with him; and he, even *he* cries—"I beseech thee, show me thy glory." And those who can say with the Apostle Paul, "I know whom I have believed," will be sure to say, "That I *may* know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." But,

Whoever says he wants no more,  
Confesses he has none."

Then, not only has this experience a tendency to stimulate, but also to *preserve*. While we are fed in

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green pastures, and beside living waters, what temptation can we feel to break the bounds, or to rove abroad?

“Why should my foolish passions rove?  
Where can such sweetness be,  
As I have tasted in Thy love,  
As I have found in Thee?”

And not only so, not only has this experience a tendency to excite and preserve, but also to *recover*, when we have been led astray; for we may be allured and led away for a time by other lovers; but we can never lose the relish we have had of our God and Saviour; and the remembrance will excite and reproach us—and again urge us to “follow hard after God.” Now, if you take a natural man, he *never did* really “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ;” he never “entered into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus; he never had, really, “fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.” He has, therefore, nothing of this to call to remembrance, and to stimulate him, and to induce him to pray again; nothing of that experience which induces the backslider to say, “Oh! that it were with me as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness;”—

“Where is the blessedness I knew,  
When first I saw, the Lord?  
Where is that soul refreshing view,  
Of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still;  
But they have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill—

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“I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.”

Then it will be found a stimulant for fresh and renewed experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Though the Christian does not want more *than* Christ, he wants more *of* Him. We see what is the object of a Christian’s attachment—it is to behold the power and glory of God in the sanctuary. The ordinances and services there have a glory and vitality attached to them; and this is seen in the effects produced by the word which comes “in power and in the Holy Ghost.” It is therefore called “the ministration of the Spirit.”

A Christian, my brethren, never wants attractions in the means of grace: he will mourn when anything prevents his attendance; and he will so endeavour to redeem his time, and arrange his worldly affairs, that he may be enabled to attend the house of God whenever the doors are open; while he will say, with David; “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up to the house of the Lord.”

But I dare say you think it is time for me to conclude; and my age and weakness tell me the same. I therefore hasten to a close, by observing one thing only, that is, experience is both alarming and encouraging. It is very alarming to those of you who are strangers to it. And this is the case with many who are very familiar with the means of grace. “You come as God’s people come that is, if you do come to God’s house, but no further. You come from curiosity or custom, or to comply with the desires of your connexions, or to appease conscience; not to please God, and to hold communion with Him. You never came—you know you have not—to see his



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power and his glory! You never prayed for it before you came; you never examine yourselves, when you go there, whether you have enjoyed Him. Oh! it is awful to think what a length of time this has been the case with some of you. Five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years, without one effectual religious movement! Dear hearers, what will these means of grace do for you? You will never hear to purpose till you so hear that your souls may live. You singers! if you do not sing with melody "in your hearts to the Lord" here, you will not be found among the blissful number of those who shall celebrate his praises in the courts above. And you, hearers of the Gospel, if you are hearers only, you are deceiving your own souls; and this word of life will only be to you "a savour of death unto death." You worshippers, if you "draw nigh to God with your lips, and honour Him with your mouth, while your heart is far from Him," and you do not "worship Him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth," you will pass on from possessing a name and a place among the people of God here, to that place reserved for hypocrites and unbelievers. May you "seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near!"

But some of you can say with the Psalmist—

"I've seen thy glory and thy power,  
Through all Thy temple shine;  
My God repeat that heavenly hour,  
That vision so divine!"

Let the pleasure of former experience increase your expectation. May you ever repair to his temple, humbly believing that you shall be "satisfied with the goodness of God's house," and made to "drink of the

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waters of life.” And then you shall soon see God in the sanctuary above! And, oh! what a sight will that be! How satisfying!—how beautifying!—how eternal!

“If such the sweetness of the streams,  
What will the fountain be—  
Where saints and angels draw their bliss  
Immediately from Thee! ”

Then, with all the redeemed, you shall be before the throne of God, and “serve Him day and night in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, nor 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 into living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” “Ah!” said Philip Henry, “if this be heaven, oh! that I were there! ”

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