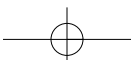
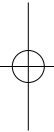
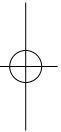


**REMAINS OF THE LATE REV.
ASAHEL NETTLETON, D.D.**



**Remains
of the late
Asahel Nettleton, D.D.**

COMPILED AND PREPARED FOR THE PRESS BY

Bennet Tyler

**Quinta Press
Weston Rhyn
2008**

Quinta Press

Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, England, SY10 7RN

Visit our web-site: <http://www.quintapress.com>

ISBN 1 897856 xx x

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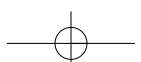
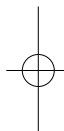
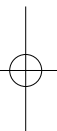
SERMONS, OUTLINES AND PLANS OF SERMONS, BRIEF
OBSERVATIONS ON TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE, AND
MISCELLANEOUS REMAINS.

COMPILED AND PREPARED FOR THE PRESS

BY BENNET TYLER, D.D.

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EDINBURGH:
OGLE & MURRAY, AND OLIVER & BOYD.
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS & CO.
MDCCCLXV.



PREFACE

The friends of Dr Nettleton, especially those of them who were favoured with the privilege of listening to those lucid and striking exhibitions of divine truth which fell from his lips in the pulpit, and in private conversation, have expressed deep regret that he did not commit more of his thoughts to writing. The fact that he did not, is to be attributed to the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed. In the early part of his ministry, while he enjoyed vigour of body and mind. he was almost constantly labouring in revivals of religion, and he was so much occupied in teaching publicly and from house to house, that he had but little time for the use of his pen. He was led to adopt the practice of preaching without writing, and this became his usual and habitual mode of preaching. The consequence was, that he never acquired the habit of writing with facility, and it eventually became rather an irksome employment. He wrote but few sermons, and scarcely any in full. There are very few, if any, of those which are contained in this volume, which were not considerably enlarged by extempore remarks at the time of delivery. And the skeletons of many of his discourses, if they were ever written, have not been preserved. but still, his manuscripts, few and imperfect as they are, contain many valuable thoughts which ought not to be lost to the world.

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A very strong desire has been manifested, in different quarters, that a volume should be compiled from Dr Nettleton's papers. In compliance with this desire, the present volume is given to the public.

In perusing these sketches, multitudes will be reminded of the solemn period in their history, when these very discourses were to them the power of God unto salvation. They will perceive, of course, that many of them are only outlines of the sermons as they were preached; but

they will find in them many things which they will doubtless recollect. Some of these outlines of sermons were found among the manuscripts of Dr Nettleton. Quite a number of them, however, were taken from his lips, and written at the time during his last sickness.

It is proper that the reader should be apprised, that what is here exhibited, will give but an imperfect view of the character of Dr Nettleton's preaching; for many of his most impressive sermons, and parts of sermons, were never committed to writing. And besides, there was much in his manner of delivery, that gave interest and efficacy to his preaching, of which nothing can be learned by reading his discourses.

But this volume, if the compiler does not mistake, will be found to be rich in thought, and will be read both by ministers and private Christians, with interest and profit.

That the same divine influence which accompanied the preaching of these discourses, may accompany the perusal of them, and bless them to the sanctification of christians, and the conviction and conversion of sinners, is the prayer of the compiler.

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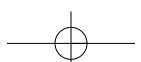
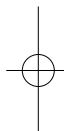
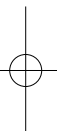
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SERMONS, ETC.

SERMON I.

CHRISTIANS URGED TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP.

“And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.”—Romans 13:11.

The text is addressed to Christians. The language is figurative. The image is borrowed from natural sleep, in which a person is in a great measure insensible to the objects around him, although life continues to exist. Thus, when there is much insensibility among Christians to divine things, they sleep; but life remains in the soul.

Language somewhat similar is often addressed to impenitent sinners; but then the image is borrowed from the sleep of death. Hence the exhortation, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

The wise and foolish virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom; and while he tarried *they all slumbered and slept*. But mark the difference between them. The wise had oil in their vessels, but the foolish had none. The wise had life, but the foolish were dead.

The text, then, is addressed to the Christian, who was dead, but is alive again—to the Christian who is asleep, and who again bears the image of death. *And now, it is high time to awake out of sleep.*

It is proposed

I. To inquire when the Christian may be said to be asleep.

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II. Offer some motives which ought to induce him to awake.

I. When is the Christian asleep?

1. He is asleep when he consults his own ease to the neglect of his duty.

Religion is the great business of his life. It imposes on him many duties which are painful and crossing to corrupt nature. Such, for example,

is fraternal admonition. "Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." These are commands of God. To neglect this and similar duties, through fear of incurring reproach, is indulging in spiritual sloth. You may sit down and rest quietly, if you will not disturb your fellow-sinners around you with a sight of their sin and danger. This requires no effort. And here thousands resign themselves to rest. Individuals or a church may close their eyes on the conduct of an offender, and not make one effort to *restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*; and this awful indifference to the welfare of the soul, may assume the name of charity. The slothful servant will ever consult his own ease by sinful contrivance to shun duty.

2. As one in sleep is insensible to what is passing around him, so, in a measure, it is sometimes with the Christian. Though not wholly lost to a sense of divine things, they make but a feeble or slight impression upon his soul. In this frame, he goes to the house of God, and no wonder that he soon forgets what he never felt. Once he saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but now he walks in darkness. Once he had a deep sense of the worth of souls, and could weep over perishing sinners around him. He could say, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved." But now he can behold the sight almost without emotion. Once, he seemed to be dead to the world, and his conversation was in heaven. But now his conversation is engrossed with the affairs of the world. He can converse with ease and cheerfulness on the trifles of time; but on the great things of eternity, he has little or nothing to say—or if he speaks on these high and heavenly themes, it is in a dull and

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lifeless manner. He appears not to take a deep interest in the subject. He feels not the impressive weight of eternal realities. Consequently he talks like a person in sleep—he knows not what he says.

3. Another mark of this unhappy state of mind is a reluctance to secret *prayer*. Prayer has been very properly styled the breath of the Christian. Has a person been any considerable time without the spirit of prayer, it is a sign that he is asleep; and if he is not soon waked from this breathless state, we shall be compelled to believe that he is dead.

How far these, and similar remarks apply to Christian professors present, is best known to themselves. One thing is certain. It is not my business to cry peace in the ears of any who are asleep.

I proceed

II. To offer motives to induce sleeping Christians to awake.

I. Consider the time. It is gospel time. The light of the gospel has risen upon us; and those who do not open their eyes on the glory of this light, must remain in eternal darkness and despair. *For "if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."* The light of heaven is shining upon you. And can you sleep? "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." The business of this day will not suffer you to sleep. It calls loudly upon you to awake. Think, my brethren, have you nothing to do? Have you nothing to do for *yourselves*? Have you no sins to rest of—no evil propensities to mortify? Are your evidences of grace, sufficiently bright? Are you willing to die as you now are? If you have anything to do for yourselves, it is high time to awake out of sleep. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

Have you nothing to do for *your brethren*? Is no brother or sister wandering from the path of duty? Go, and in a feeling, friendly manner, "tell him his fault between him and thee alone." Why hesitate? Delay not. Duty calls. God commands,

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and love to his soul demands that you go without delay. "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

Parents, where are your children? Are they all secure within the ark of safety? Doubtless you pray *with* and for them. But this is not all your duty. Have you ever taught them that they are sinners, and that they must be born again? And are you urging them to remember their Creator now in the days of their youth? Were you this day called to part with one of your children; should you feel satisfied that you had done your duty? Have you not one word more of instruction, of counsel, or of warning for your children before you meet them at the bar of God? If so, then it is high time that you who are parents should awake to a sense of your duty—that you should set your houses in order and prepare for death.

Again—It is high time to awake, because others are up and active about us. The men of this world shame us by their conduct. They rise up early and sit up late. They plan and execute. Labour, fatigue, and hardship are nothing to them, if they can but collect a little of this world

together before they die. They are laying up treasures on earth which moth and rust will soon corrupt. And shall not you be as earnest to lay up for yourselves a more enduring substance—a treasure in the heavens? They are labouring for the meat which perisheth, but you are called to labour for that which endureth unto everlasting life. Do you not feel reproved by their conduct? Is it not humiliating to think that the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light?

Again—Remember, my brethren, you are on the field of battle. It is high time to awake, because the enemy is up and active about you. The prince of darkness, and all the ranks of evil angels, are your enemies. The malice of their legions is directed against the Redeemer's kingdom. War is declared with all saints. And the legions of hell have gone up upon the breadth of the earth. The great adversary is already in possession of the hearts of all wicked men. They are his servants. The devil is styled the “prince of this world”—“the ruler of the darkness of this world.” This is “the spirit that now worketh

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in the children of disobedience.” Remember, it is not a feeble foe with whom you have to contend. You are called to wrestle not merely with flesh and blood; but before the victory is won, you will have to grapple with angelic powers—with *principalities* and *powers*. Your enemy is crafty. Snares and temptations are laid thick around you, and unless you are wakeful, you will certainly be ignorant of his devices. That moment when you let down your watch, the enemy began to come in upon you like a flood. And I would blow the trumpet and sound an alarm. *Awake thou that sleepest*. Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Think not to find a bed of sloth on the field of battle. Awake and “put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” “Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Awake, then, for your enemies are many, powerful, and crafty.

Another reason why you should awake, is, that sinners are perishing around you. While you sleep, your example will contribute much to their destruction. Yes, while you sleep, the world may be stumbling over you into perdition. Little does that ungodly professor of religion think

what a train of immortal souls may be following him down to hell. It is a fact not to be concealed, that one ungodly professor of religion may do more to prevent the conversion of sinners, than many infidels. I know that it is most unreasonable that mankind should suffer themselves to be thus for ever ruined. It can surely be no consolation to the sinner in hell, that he was led there by a hypocrite.

Brethren are heaven and hell fables? If so, let us treat them as such. Or are they eternal realities? Whence, then, this seeming indifference to the interests of the soul? Do you verily believe that within a few days, you shall be in heaven, singing the song of redeeming love, or in hell with the devil and his

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angels? Have you seen your own danger, and fled for refuge from the wrath to come, and do you feel no concern for the souls of others? Or are there no sinners in this place? Have they all become righteous? Do all profess to know the Lord from the least to the greatest? Is there no prayerless family in this place, on which God has said, he *will pour out his fury*?—No prayerless youth to whom God has said, I will cast thee off forever! My brethren, if there is one impenitent sinner here who is in danger of going into that place of eternal torment, *can you sleep*? One sinner in this house!—one inhabitant of hell! Solemn thought! One soul in this house that will be forever lost! Who can it be? Could you bear to hear the name? “Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Have you not reason to believe that many are now living without hope, and without God in this world? “Wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth unto death, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Wherever God pours out his Spirit, and calls up the attention of sinners to divine things, he will be inquired of by his children to do it for them. This he has taught us in his word, and often in the language of his providence. This he has taught you in days that are past. It is high time for you to awake out of sleep, for others are awake. Sinners at a distance are alarmed, and hundreds are flocking to Christ. And can you sleep? Are there not souls here, to be saved or lost forever. And are not these souls as precious as others? And is not God a prayer hearing God? Hath

he forgotten to be gracious? Is his mercy clean gone forever, and will he be favourable no more? No, my brethren, "the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear." Come, then, "ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." For Zion's sake, hold not your peace; and for Jerusalem's sake do not rest. It is time to seek the Lord till he come and reign righteousness upon

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you. And to your prayers, my brethren, fail not to add a friendly warning to the sinner.

You who know by experience the awful condition of a sinner out of Christ—who know that he must be lost, unless excited to inquire, "what must I do to be saved?" Have you not sorrow enough in your hearts for your brethren, your kindred according to the flesh, to take them by the hand, and say, friends? I fear that all is not well with your souls—ye must be born again. Prepare to meet your God. Have you not courage? Dare not you act a part so friendly to the souls of men? How many, think ye, may be lost through your neglect? If we do not warn sinners, my brethren, God has warned us. He will make inquisition for blood. To every watchman on the walls of Zion, God saith, "If thou speak not to warn the wicked;—the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." What is your zeal, brethren, for the salvation of souls, compared with that of the Son of God? "He beheld the city and wept over it." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem."

"Did Christ o'er sinners weep
And shall our tears be dry?"

What is your zeal, when compared with that of Paul? "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kindred according to the flesh." "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping" that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." There is a dreadful storm of divine wrath coming upon the world of the ungodly. It is high time, then, to awake out of sleep; for "their damnation slumbereth not."

Again—Consider how long you have slept, and you will see that it is high time to awake.

How many months—and of some, may we not ask, how many years have you slept in God's vineyard? And still you continue to sleep away

the day of salvation. Let me tell you that your sleep is awfully dangerous. If not shortly awaked, God in anger will say, "Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see."

Again—Consider what time of day it is with you, and you will see that it is high time to awake.

How long has your sun been up? Your best season is

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already gone. With some, I perceive, the sun has already passed the meridian. Yes, it is now hastening its rapid descent. Aged fathers, your sun is now casting its last beams upon the mountains. "Yet a little while is the light with you." "Work while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." If, then, you have any work to do—if you have any word to leave for your brethren, or for your children, they are now waiting to hear it. Delay not, for while I am speaking, the night is coming on. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave whither thou goest."

The believer ought to awake and take a view of the glorious prospect, which lies just before him.

Come, then, ye mourning pilgrims, you who have long traversed the wilderness, asking the way to Zion, you who have long laboured, and prayed, and groaned to be delivered from the bondage of sin; your struggles for eternal life shall have an end. Look up—and lift up your heads, for behold your redemption draweth nigh. "It is high time to awake out of sleep, *for now is your salvation nearer than when he believed*"—nearer than it was last year—nearer than it was the last Sabbath—nearer than ever before. This night you may wake up amid the songs of angels, and a crown of glory may be placed upon your heads.

"Short is the passage, short the space,
Between my home and me;
There, there behold the radiant place,
How near the mansions be!"

Awake, then, and behold the glorious dawn of that bright day, when "the sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Finally—It is high time to awake, for all who do not awake in time, will suddenly awake in hell. There is great danger of being deceived,

and thus only dreaming of heaven. The Christian can never sleep soundly, but is always disturbed. "I sleep, but my heart waketh." He cannot sleep long. He will soon be affrighted, and wake up awfully alarmed. But there are those who sleep soundly. They are at ease in Zion. They

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neither weep for their sins, nor "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Their hope of heaven is a pleasant dream which cannot be broken. And here they sink down into a deep sleep. The Christian church is a net which gathers of every kind; Ten virgins professed to be followers of Christ. Of this number, five only were real Christians. "Many are called but few chosen." Many will go to the bar of God with hopes no better than a spider's web. Many who now commune together on earth, will never meet in heaven. Many who now appear to be real Christians, will, no doubt, to our surprise, be found on the left hand of Christ. The person who has professed religion with a false hope, is rarely induced to give it up. It is like the giving up of the ghost. What meanest thou, O sleeper? If you will not now awake, I entreat you, throw away your hope of heaven. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and you, yourselves thrust out." "And behold, there are last, that shall be first, and there are first that shall be last." Better abandon your hope, and conclude that you are lost, than sleep any longer; for then you will awake in earnest to inquire what must we do to be saved? "Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." At midnight, the cry will be made, "Behold the bridegroom cometh." Then there will be great confusion; for thousands will be deceived. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed."

"These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

And now it is time—it is high time to awake, because many will be forced to awake, when suddenly they shall lift up their eyes in hell, being in torments.

SERMON II.

SINNERS AFFECTIONATELY ENTREATED TO ENTER ON THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE.

"We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."—Numbers 10:29.

The Israelites, having been rescued, by the mighty hand of God, from Egyptian bondage, and conducted through the Red Sea, had received the law at Mount Sinai; and being organized by a divine constitution were about to commence their journey to the promised land. Their tents were taken up,—their tribes marshalled in the prescribed order—and the silver trumpets prepared to give the signal for them to commence their march. The tidings of the departure of Moses out of Egypt, and his intended journey through the wilderness, had reached the ears of Hobab, his father-in-law, who had come from the land of Midian to make a parting visit. At this interesting crisis, Moses affectionately addresses him in the language of the text; "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Hobab's first answer was, "I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, and to my kindred." Yet Moses could not give up the suit; but with more urgent entreaty, he rejoined;—"Leave us not, I pray thee, forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will he do unto thee."

These affectionate entreaties doubtless prevailed, and Hobab, afterward repented, and went; for we read of his posterity among the children of Israel, and of his sharing in the land of promise.

II

In all this, my brethren, we have an illustration of several things which distinguish the church of God. The whole multitude of believers have been rescued from spiritual bondage. Every Christian has been ransomed from the power of a tyrant far more cruel than Pharaoh. He has been delivered from “the prince of the power of the air”—“the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”—from “the God of this world, who hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.” He has been “turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God”—has been “recovered out of the snare of the devil,” by whom he was “taken captive at his will.” He has been delivered from a servitude to masters far more cruel than the task-masters of Egypt; and a bondage far worse than theirs—the bondage of sin, Satan, and the world. And in the moment of his greatest extremity, when he gave up all for lost—mountains on the one hand, and a howling wilderness on the other—destruction before, and the fell destroyer in the rear, the God of salvation appeared, and showed him a safe and easy passage out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. “Not by works of righteousness which we had done; but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Thus redeemed from the hand of his enemies, and a new song put into his mouth, in common with the people of God, he can now show forth the praises of him who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light.

By the voice of God, believers are called to go out from “a world that lieth in wickedness”—to “seek a better country, even a heavenly.” Enlisted under the captain of their salvation, they are marshalled as an army with banners, to take possession of the promised rest. And this day, throughout all their hosts, has the silver trumpet of the gospel been sounded, as the appointed signal for them to go forward. And the thousands of Israel are now on their march. “We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you,” is the declaration of the whole church of God on earth. They anxiously desire, and endeavour to persuade others to leave all and accompany

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them. If they cannot succeed, they must bid them a painful and solemn farewell. Such are the leading thoughts suggested by the text, which are now to be illustrated and applied to this assembly.

1. Christians are journeying. They are styled "strangers and pilgrims on the earth"—having here "no continuing city." Long after God's ancient people were settled in the land of promise, the psalmist used this language in prayer to God: "We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers." Of all the ancient worthies it is said: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country." Peter, in his epistle to Christians in general, addresses them all under this tender appellation, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshy lusts, which war against the soul." A life of faith, in the sacred Scriptures, is often compared to the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness; and every Christian now on earth may adopt the language of David, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears, for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." And—"Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage." In heart and affections he forsakes all. "Whosoever he be of you" says our Saviour, "that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." The place which he leaves is the city of destruction. "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is polluted; it will destroy you with a sore destruction." By faith the Christian sojourns in the land of promise, as in a strange country—he looketh for a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heaven is his home. His conversation, his heart, and his treasure are there. With the eye and the heart of a stranger, he prosecutes his journey through the wilderness of this world—"Seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Whatever may be cumbersome, or

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useless, or suited to retard his progress, he will leave, or drop by the way. He will "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset him." To the attainment of this one great end, all his plans are subservient—seeking first the kingdom of God. "By patient continuance in well doing,"

he seeks “for glory, and honour, and immortality.” Though, like the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert, his course at times seems retrograde, yet, on the whole, he advances toward “the inheritance of the saints in light.”

“Cheerful they walk with growing strength,
Till all shall meet in heaven at length,
Till all before thy face appear,
And join in nobler worship there.”

2. Christians desire others, and especially their kindred, to journey with them. “Come thou with us” is the language of their hearts. The common sympathies of our natures alone would awaken such desires, and much more the love of God shed abroad in the heart.

But more particularly—they desire

In the first place, that God may be glorified. In this the true Christian chiefly delights. He rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. In the conviction and conversion of sinners God is glorified, both actively and passively. When the news of his conversion reached the ears of the disciples, Paul says, “They glorified God in me.” When Peter related the story of the conversion of Cornelius and his household in the ears of the church, “they glorified God, saying” then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” The Psalmist said, “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.” His heart was also deeply affected in view of the dishonour cast upon God by thoughtless sinners around him. “I beheld the transgressors and was grieved.”

Again—Christians have a tender regard for the welfare of their unconverted friends.

They see them eager in the pursuit of happiness in paths of

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disappointment. The pleasures of sense and of sin are but for a season,—unsatisfying, and often attended, and always followed by regret, and the goadings of a guilty conscience. “Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.” The Christian knows from experience the vanity of the world. We have often heard his testimony in language like the following:

“I try’d each earthly charm,
 In pleasure’s haunts I stray’d,
 I sought its soothing balm
 I asked the world its aid;
 But ah! no balm it had
 To heal a wounded breast;
 And I, forlorn and sad.
 Must seek another rest.”

Sorrow and disappointment, pain and death are the common lot of all; and the hope of the Christian is needful to bear up our spirits under the evils that await us. Poor, indeed, must he be, who has no better portion than this world. With what mingled emotions of pity and grief does the good man behold his fellow mortal, eagerly pursuing the phantom of pleasure, heedless of the crown of life suspended within his reach. What a pity that so few should follow the example of Moses, who, “when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”

Again—Christians foresee the misery that is coming upon their unconverted friends.

If they cannot be persuaded to leave all their sins, and journey with them, they must linger and be lost. The language of queen Esther expresses their feelings. “How can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred.” The language of Paul is also in point. “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for my brethren, my kindred according to the flesh.” Notice, also, the feelings expressed by the compassionate Saviour, when he beheld the devoted city and wept over it. And

“Did Christ o’er sinners weep
 And shall our tears be dry?”

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Again—Christians desire the company of their friends in their pilgrimage.

The Israelites had to encounter the dangers of the wilderness, and Moses pleaded for friendly aid. He said, “Leave us not, I pray thee, forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.” The difficulties and dangers which beset the Christian pilgrim in his pathway to heaven, are many,

and often unseen and unexpected. The company and counsel of fellow travellers is mutually beneficial, and always desirable. Travellers to the same country, will inquire for each other—will lay their plans to walk in company, and agree mutually to assist each other on the way. “Two are better than one; for they have a good reward for their labour; for if they fall, the one shall help up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.” For this reason, pious children will desire the company of their parents—parents, the company of their children—husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, the company of each other. Friends who have long been companions in sin might be mutually helpful in returning to

I observe,

3. That to those whom they cannot persuade to accompany them, they must give the parting hand.

Having tried every method which love and friendship dictate, if they do not succeed, they must not tarry—they must go and leave them.

My dear hearers, is there nothing in this congregation which resembles the scene which has been described? If there is in reality a revival of religion in this place, and if there are those who are not subjects of divine grace, it is even so. How solemn the separation? How affecting, as it respects this world! How unutterably momentous as it respects the world to come ‘When one and another has been led to inquire, “What must I do to be saved?” and begun to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” intimate friends, observing the change, have sometimes felt a mournful sadness stealing over their minds. “I have lost

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my friend. We have long been intimate—have visited and sported together often in days that are past;—but these scenes are over and gone forever. My friend has now left me to wander alone—gone to seek a better country. Well, my sober judgement and conscience tells me that he is wise—that he will never lament his choice. “Let me die the death of the righteous.” “But what shall I do? A solemn sadness fills my mind, and scarcely can I repress the falling tear at such a parting.”

When our friends leave us, and remove only to a distant country, never more expecting to return how solemn is the hour of separation. It awakens the tenderest feelings of the heart. But, my hearers, such a parting is but a faint emblem of what, in reality, is transpiring amongst us. Did you never look forward with deep concern to the separations

of the last great day? Have you ever thought of different members of the same family, standing one on the right hand, and the other on the left of the judge? And did you not feel a solemn dread, lest perhaps, you should be found on the left hand? That awful separation, which determined the eternal destiny of every soul, takes place first in our world. It is now taking place in this revival—in this assembly. That change of heart which is necessary to fit the sinner for heaven, must take place on earth, in this life, or never. And a change of heart among sinners now, will, of course, produce a change of views, and feelings and pursuits, which will end in a separation of intimate friends. At such a season, many who feel little or no concern for their own souls, are wont to complain of being neglected by their former friends, who have become the subjects of divine grace. They imagine that those who have embraced the gospel have ceased to love them.

Let me tell you, they do not love you less, but they love the Saviour more. They cannot accommodate themselves to your feelings and wishes consistently with their attachment to him. They cannot make you their intimate associates as formerly; unless they change their character or you change yours. With them “old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” They have lost their relish for the pleasures of sin—the

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amusements and vanities of this world. They have set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth. In this sense they “are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God.” They are no longer “conformed to this world,” but “transformed by the renewing of [their] mind.” If you will not follow them,—take up the subject of religion, and become Christians in solemn earnest, they must, in this sense, forsake you. In such a case Christ requires them to forsake father, and mother, and wife, and children, and all that a man hath, or he cannot be his disciple. A separation of views and feelings, of interests and pursuits, must take place, if you will not accompany them; or they must die with you in the wilderness, and never enter heaven. If you will not go with them to heaven, do you wish them to drop the subject of religion—to awaken again the terrors of a guilty conscience—to plant thorns on a dying pillow—to barter away the joys of heaven, and go to hell merely to keep you company? Will you urge the wonted affection of a brother, or a sister, or the ties of former friendship? *Will you* put them on trial of

their friendship, their humanity, or their politeness, as some unfeeling wretches have done? That they love you still, their bursting hearts and streaming eyes, when they speak of you, tell. In their name, and while, as I doubt not, their prayers are solemnly offered for the success of the invitation, I now renew to every one of you the invitation—"Come thou with us and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." "Leave us not, we pray thee—And it shall be if thou go with 119, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same he will do unto thee." He will wash you in the same atoning blood—sanctify you by the same Spirit—He will grant you the same grace—the same peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost. He will meet you at the same throne of grace—will guide you by the same counsel—and at last receive you to the same glory.

"And thou, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever." Ye children, for whom I travail

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in birth again—did you know the feelings of a parent's heart—"Come thou with us"—"and my heart shall rejoice, even mine." And ye parents too—did you know the heart of a child that has left all for Christ—"He *calls*, and I must go. Though I love you none the less, yet I love him more than father or mother. Leave me not, I pray you. I need your help, your counsels, and your prayers. My father, my mother, come thou with us."

And thou, too, my bosom companion—the partner of my sorrows and my joys, "Come thou with us." Let us adopt the resolution together, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." Though I love you no less than ever, yet I love my Saviour more than all. *Leave me not.*

And ye too, the companions of my youthful days, and companions too in sin; I have seen my folly, and my sport is ended. Often have I invited, and you would never refuse—You too have invited, and I a thousand times have cheerfully complied. One more invitation, and I am done. "Come thou with us." The church on earth invites; and the spirits of just men made perfect; and all the hosts of heaven invite you. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him ; take the water of life freely." If you leave us, the fault will be your own. We desire

your company, and pray for your conversion—and all heaven stoops to invite you. If at last you have no part in that kingdom to which we are bound, it will be because you loved the world, and preferred the pleasures of sin for a season.

Thus, in the name of all the subjects of this revival, have I given the invitation to their friends and companions to journey with them; and I must add, in the name of this church, and in the name of my Lord and Master. And must I leave you here? If it must be so, my hearers, then duty requires me to call even upon your nearest and dearest companions who have commenced their heavenly journey, to stay not a moment for you.

“Cease, ye pilgrims, cease to mourn,
Press onward to the prize.”

Dry your tears,—and let nothing hinder you from following the steps of your leader. Obey implicitly every command of

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his. Thwart all the wishes—resist all the entreaties endure all the frowns—and renounce entirely the society of your dearest earthly companions, rather *than neglect the least command of Christ*. To him you are bound by obligations infinitely greater, and ties of affection infinitely dearer, than you can be to them. They never died to save your souls from hell. And his unalterable decision is, “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.” “He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Again I repeat it,

“Cease, ye pilgrims, cease to mourn,
Press onward to the prize;
Soon the Saviour will return,
Triumphant in the skies.
There we'll join the heavenly train,
Welcome to partake the bliss;
Fly from sorrow and from pain,
To realms of endless peace.”

But O, my impenitent hearers, I cannot bear to leave you thus. If you cannot be persuaded to accompany your friends I must remind you that

you too are journeying, as fast as the Christian—as fast as the wheels of time can carry you. But whither, ah, whither are you bound?

“See the short course of vain delight,
Closing in everlasting night.”

Pursue your present course a little longer, and you will soon be at a returnless distance from happiness and hope.

“To-day, if ye will hear his voice,
Now is the time to make your choice;
Say, will you to Mount Zion go?
Say, will you have this Christ, or no?
Ye wandering souls who find no rest,
Say, will you be forever blest?
Will you be saved from sin and hell?
Will you with Christ in glory dwell?
Come, now dear youth, for ruin bound,
Obey the gospel's joyful sound;
Come, go with us, and you shall prove
The joy of Christ's redeeming love.
Once more, we ask you in his name;
For yet his love is still the same;
Say, will you to Mount Zion go?
Say, will you have this Christ or no?
Leave all your sports and glittering toys
Come, share with us eternal joys;
Or must we leave you bound to hell?
Then, dear young friends, a long farewell.”

SERMON III.

**THE SIN AND CONSEQUENCES
OF BEING ASHAMED OF
CHRIST.**

“For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the Holy angels.”—Luke 9:26

Shame is a very powerful passion. Its influence over mankind is universal. It entered the world by sin, and it ought to be exercised towards nothing else. But strange to tell, that very weapon which ought to be turned against sin, is now turned against religion itself.

That some should be frightened into a denial of Christ, is not so incredible. But that any should be *ashamed of him*, whom angels adore, is what we could not have believed without the clearest evidence. But proof is not wanting to establish the fact, that many are now ashamed of Christ. Our Saviour, who delivered the warning in the text, was perfectly acquainted with :-II the secret feelings of the human heart; and sad experience has too often proved the propriety of this solemn warning.

The truth is, the sin is of such a nature, that the sinner is ashamed to confess it. Nor is it incredible that a heart deceitful above all things, should deceive itself. Some may be ashamed of Christ, and yet be ignorant of the fact. Circumstances often reveal the secrets of the heart. Many who flattered themselves that they should be pleased with the advent

of Christ, found themselves disappointed when he came. The prediction put into the mouths of sinners by the prophet, was fulfilled. "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him."

And thus is it now. Many who have imagined that they should be pleased with the revival of true religion, have found

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themselves sadly disappointed in the event. It appears so different from what they had expected, that they not unfrequently that the religion of Christ, as the Jews treated Christ himself. To be deceived in this matter, my hearers, must be fatal; for the Saviour says, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words; of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

I propose

I. To inquire who are ashamed of Christ.

II. Consider the greatness of the sin.

III. Contemplate the consequences of it.

I. Who are ashamed of Christ?

To be ashamed of Christ, it is not necessary that he should appear among us—that he should walk in our streets, enter our dwellings, and converse with us on the concerns of our souls. It is not necessary that we should point at him the finger of scorn, flee at his approach, or sneer at his warnings. What is done to his disciples, Christ considers as done to himself. It is a remarkable fact, that few, if any will dare to condemn the religion of Christ as such. Their method is, to give to piety some other name, and then to load it and its professors with contempt. All, therefore, who despise and ridicule Christians on account of the strictness of their religion, and their conscientious regard to the duties which it enjoins—who call them precise, superstitious, and the like, are ashamed of Christ. By whatever name it may be called, the mask will ere long be taken off, and Christ will say to them, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Many think, that had they lived in the days of our Saviour, they should have treated him with the utmost respect. All, however, may have a fair

opportunity to manifest their feelings towards Christ, by their treatment to his members.

Another criterion, by which we may test our feelings on this subject is, to inquire how we treat the commands, invitations, warnings, and threatenings of Christ. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and *of my words,*" says Christ. Those, then, are ashamed of

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Christ, and of his words, who are ashamed to be seen reading the Bible. Many who would not be ashamed to be seen reading a romance, would blush to be found searching the Scriptures. No one would blush to be seen perusing a communication from a friend, unless he were ashamed to own an acquaintance with its author. That feeling which leads an individual to neglect, or conceal the Bible, is a sure indication that that individual is ashamed of Christ. Those who despise and reproach others for searching the Scriptures, are, of course, ashamed of Christ, and of his words. And to regard the good or ill will of such, is to join in heart with the enemies of Christ. It cannot be done without paying greater respect to the enemies of Christ, than to Christ himself. All, therefore, who refuse daily to search the Scriptures, simply through fear of what others will think, or say, are ashamed of Christ, and of his words. The same may be said of all who, from similar motives, violate any of the commands of God—such as the duties of religion in the sanctuary, in the family, or the closet. Those who neglect to offer the morning and evening sacrifice, lest the voice of prayer should be heard in their families; and those who refuse to enter their closets, lest their absence should be noticed; are doubtless guilty of this sin.

Again—Those are ashamed of Christ, who are ashamed to have it known that they are anxious for their souls. Other motives may sometimes operate to lead sinners to wish to conceal their anxiety; but that which is the most common, is the one named in the text. How reluctant are they to converse even with Christian friends—still more reluctant are they to be regarded as anxious by the world. "*What will they think. And what will they say?*" "Should I become a Christian, I should hardly know what to do with myself. I should not dare profess religion. I am resolved never to let it be known." Such thoughts as these, often pass through the minds of sinners anxious for their souls; and they are sure indications that in heart, they are ashamed of Christ. When questioned respecting

their spiritual trouble, they are ashamed to own it. What other reason can be assigned for their unwillingness to disclose

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the state of their minds 7 Do they think it wrong for a sinner to feel the strivings of the Spirit—to see and feel that he is lost? No, my hearers, the reason that they do not disclose their feelings is not because they think it wrong, or because they think God would be angry with them if they should tell the truth. The fact is, that though they dread to tell a lie, and dread exposure to the flames of hell, they dread the reproach of wicked companions more than either.

Those who make light of religious anxiety, and labour to divert the attention of others from the concerns of their souls, and drive serious impressions from their minds, are, of course, ashamed of Christ. “Why all this ado about religion?” “I wonder they will be so foolish.” Such thoughts are often in the minds of sinners when their companions become anxious for their souls, and are sometimes expressed; and they prove that those who indulge them, are ashamed of Christ.

Again—Those are ashamed of Christ, who are ashamed to confess him before men. Persons may be willing, and even desirous to profess religion, without possessing it. But those who think they are Christians, and yet neglect to make a public profession, merely to escape the reproach of the world, are ashamed of Christ. Mankind are not ashamed to speak and act in defence of their friends—especially of those whom they highly esteem.

Christianity admits of no neutrality. “He that is not with me,” says Christ, “is against me.” All who are ashamed to speak for Christ—to appear in defence of his cause, and to confess him before men, are ashamed of him...

Again—All who are ashamed to celebrate the dying love of Christ, in obedience to his plain command, “This do in remembrance of me,” are ashamed of Christ...

Let us consider

II. The greatness of this sin.

And here I would first inquire, how much are sinners ashamed of Christ? The power of this passion, it is true, may be stronger in some than in others. This, however, is true of all sinners:—they are more ashamed of Christ than they are of their sins.

I need not say that some who are ashamed of Christ are not at all ashamed of their ignorance of the Bible, or of their sin in neglecting it. Some, who have only been *suspected* of being under serious concern for their souls, have been offended, and have pretended that they considered themselves slandered. They would sport and jest, and adopt the most silly methods to do away the suspicion, and to show to others how little they cared about God, or Christ, or heaven, or hell. Although ashamed of Christ, they are not at all ashamed of these heaven-daring sins; but even glory *in their shame*.

Would you estimate the strength of this passion, set the greatness of the blessing lost on the one hand, and the littleness of the object gained on the other. Some whose judgement and conscience are well informed, who acknowledge the overwhelming importance of the subject, and who are anxious for their souls, are yet so ashamed of Christ, that they had rather stifle conviction, grieve the Holy Spirit, tell a lie to conceal their feelings, offend God, and expose themselves to the damnation of hell, than—than what?—what mighty object is to be gained?—than to endure the reproach of a wicked companion. Yes, the sinner is so ashamed of Christ, that he will do all this, rather than be pointed at by an enemy of God—a child of the devil—a worm of the dust. Some are so ashamed of Christ, that though God hath commanded, “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord ;” yet they dare not obey the command. Though forbidden to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or to stand in the way of sinners, or to sit in the seat of the scornful; yet they dare do no other than walk in their counsel, stand in their way, and sit in their seat. They dread the reproach of sinners far more than they do the displeasure of God. When Christ in his gospel invites them one way, and sinful companions another, they immediately begin to inquire, if we listen to Christ and refuse to listen to them, what will they think? What will they say? Will they not be offended? But how seldom do they inquire, what will angels—what will the Saviour—what will the omniscient God think?

Why is it, my hearers, that so many are ready to listen to

the enticements of wicked companions, and yet profess a respect for religion. It is a fact, as clear as the noon-day sun, that they are far more afraid of offending the devil, or one of his children, than they are of

offending the Saviour himself. Though other sinful causes may operate; yet with those whose consciences are at times alarmed, the principal difficulty in renouncing the world is this; they, are ashamed of Christ. And though the motives be ever so strong—though God has declared, that “a companion of fools shall be destroyed?” yet it makes no difference. Though the mercies of God, and the terrors of his wrath be set in array before them; yet the passion of shame bears them away with the thoughtless multitude, down the broad road to ruin.

Again—Sinners are more ashamed of Christ than they are of the vilest of characters. How many are ready cheerfully to celebrate the declaration of civil independence in concert with the thoughtless, and even the intemperate and openly profane; who would be ashamed to unite with Christians around the table of their Lord, who died to emancipate the soul from the bondage of sin and Satan, and to purchase freedom from the pains of hell? With what cheerfulness do thousands celebrate the birth-day of the hero and the statesman, who utterly disregard the dying injunction of the Saviour, “This do in remembrance of me?” Hence it appears that sinners are more ashamed of Christ than they are of sin, or of sinners. So deeply rooted is this passion in the hearts of the young, that although they might march with courage up to the mouth of a cannon; yet they tremble and are afraid when pointed at by the finger of scorn.

Many are so ashamed of Christ, that they will never attend in earnest to the concerns of their souls, though urged by all the motives which can be drawn from heaven, earth, and hell. More youth will, in all probability, lose their souls through the influence of this passion, than from any other cause whatever. They will continue to yield, and yield to its influence, until, at last, it may be said, that this and that youth, were fairly -shamed out of heaven.

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And now, my hearers, would you see the sin as it is, think of the character of which the sinner is ashamed. Were it of a good man, merely, it would not be so criminal. Were it of his parents only, kind, tender, and affectionate as they are, the crime would be small. Were it of the wisest and best man on earth, invested with all the honours of royalty, still the crime would be comparatively small. But it is of the Lord of glory—the Creator of the Universe, whom all the angels of God worship—of him “who is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image

of his person"—It is of *him* that the sinner is ashamed. Measure the crime by the dignity of his character. Sinner, you are ashamed of the God who made you!

But this is not all. Think of his love—his boundless compassion for sinners. Think of your vileness—the number and aggravation of your sins; and yet the Saviour has laid down his life for you. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."—And what returns have you made for this unspeakable gift; you have been ashamed of him. Were you justly condemned to die by the laws of the state; and at the awful crisis, should some kind friend step forward and offer to die in your stead; and with his dying breath, request an affectionate remembrance; would not the bare mention of his name bring tears into your eyes? But what has the Saviour done? Groaned and died under the weight of *all* your sins, to deliver you not from the momentary pangs of death; but from the fire that shall never be quenched. And what returns have you made? You have been ashamed of him. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die." "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How ungrateful to be ashamed of Christ!

Nor is this all. As though it were not enough to lay down his life, he comes and knocks at your door. "Behold I stand at the door and knock."—And thus he has stood, pleading for admission, until his head is filled with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. And all the answer you have made is, "go thy way for this time." "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." You have shut the

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door against him, while wicked companions and sinful thoughts have ever met with a welcome reception.

Let us consider

III. The consequences of this sin.

Those who are ashamed of Christ, are often led into the greatest inconsistencies of conduct, To avoid reproach, they often act against the convictions of conscience. Being ashamed of Christ, and yet ashamed to own it, they are led to act the part of a hypocrite. They wish to treat religion with respect, and at the same time hold friendship with the world. But this is impossible. "No man can serve two masters." Such duplicity is often detected, and even now, brings with it double disgrace.

But this sin is threatened with a dreadful punishment hereafter. Consider the nature of the punishment. It will be retributive—the nature of the punishment answering to the nature of the crime—Shame rendered for shame. “Of him shall the Son of man be ashamed.”

By neglecting duty, and violating conscience the sinner may, for the present, escape the reproaches of a sinful world. But all that disgrace which he now so much dreads, and thinks to avoid by shunning duty, will soon meet him with vengeance from another quarter. Every duty thus neglected, will, ere long, bring with it double disgrace. Whatever expedient he may now adopt to avoid shame in the path of duty, he cannot escape long. It will certainly overtake him. “The things which shall come upon him, make haste.”

Bring this subject, my hearers, home to your hearts. How do you feel when you know that others are ashamed of *you*?

Suppose one of your companions should be ashamed to own an acquaintance with you—should blush and hide his face at the bare mention of your name—should flee at your approach—and should bolt and bar his door lest he should be disgraced by your society. To be treated thus by your equal would be trying. To be treated thus by your best friend would be heartrending. But this is nothing. Christ, the friend of sinners, who groaned and died on the cross to save you, will be ashamed

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of you. O, to have Christ ashamed of you! Let all your friends—Let all the world be ashamed of you—Let them cast out your name as evil—Let them point and hoot at you as you pass along the streets; still it is nothing to the punishment that is coming upon you, if you are now ashamed of Christ. If Christ were your friend this might be easily borne. It would be nothing. You might even esteem “the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of” this world. But to have Christ ashamed of you—who can bear it?

Think too of the time when. “When he shall come in his glory.” This despised Saviour whom we preach—who stood condemned before the bar of Pilate—whose religion is now despised and trampled under foot by proud supercilious mortals, will ere long come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. The trump of God shall sound; and the sleeping dead shall all awake; “some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” “When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne

of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." when you, a poor helpless criminal, shall stand trembling with horror at his bar—when every duty you have neglected, and every word you have spoken against religion and its professors—when all your secret sins shall be laid open to view—when these, together with all your other crimes shall be brought to light; then the Judge of the world will be ashamed of you.

Think too of the company that will be present. You greatly dread now to be exposed to shame in the presence of your companions. But your whole conduct will be disclosed, and Christ will be ashamed of you in the presence of all your companions—in the presence of this assembly—in presence of the whole assembled Universe. The Saviour has given you fair warning. "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven." Again—"He that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God." And yet again, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also

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shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." He will then treat you, in the presence of that vast assembly, as you now treat him before the world. Because "I have called and ye refused"—"I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." Then Christ will be ashamed of you.

I shall close with a short application.

Who among us, my hearers, is ashamed of Christ? Although many may be guilty, perhaps not one in this assembly is willing to acknowledge it. But beware of deceiving yourselves. You may deceive others, and you may deceive yourselves, but you cannot deceive the Saviour. He knows perfectly every feeling of your hearts. As was intimated, you may be ashamed of Christ, and yet be ignorant of the fact. One reason of this ignorance may be, that you are so indifferent to the concerns of your souls—that you think, and speak, and care so little about Christ, that you hardly know whether you are ashamed of him or not. It is not until the conscience is aroused, and the sinner sees and feels that he is on the broad road to ruin, and that he must quit his companions, and turn and flee from the wrath to come—It is not until he is convinced of his

bondage to sin, and Satan, and the world, and begins to think of making his escape, that he sees his heart as he never saw it before. Were you to begin a life of religion now—were you put on trial *this day* t-, obey the command of God, to come out from the world and be separate, to commence a life of devotion and of self-denial, and to profess Christ before men; and at the same time, were your kindred and friends to reproach and forsake you, and cast out your name as evil—And were this the only alternative, *begin to-day, or be lost forever*, then you might see your hearts.

We hence see, why so many have hearts ashamed of Christ, and yet know it not. Their awful indifference to the concerns of their souls is such—they think and care so little about the subject—that they know not the wickedness of their hearts.

And now passing by these thoughtless, stupid immortals, I

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would speak to those whose consciences are at times alarmed—who feel the strivings of the Spirit, and yet are ashamed to acknowledge it—who are ashamed to renounce the world, forsake their vain companions, and openly espouse the cause of Christ. My fellow immortals, if you have any regard for your souls, no longer be ashamed of Christ. ashamed to have it known that you feel concern for your souls! I now warn you to beware. In this way, thousands have lost their concern, and lost their souls. You cannot be persuaded to forsake your companions, lest you should be accounted serious. While this is the case, I despair of your conversion. The “companion of fools shall be destroyed.” You must either renounce the world, or the Spirit of God will renounce you. “No man can serve two masters.” “The friendship of the world is enmity with God. If any man will be the friend of the world, he is the enemy of God.” If you cannot bear the reproach of the world, all that you do in religion with such hearts, is mere hypocrisy. You show greater respect for the world than for Christ. With such hearts you could not be happy if admitted to heaven. You are ashamed of the company and employments of the heavenly world. Remaining with the thoughtless world, you are continually violating the dictates of your own consciences. Though you wish Christ to acknowledge you, and perhaps spend sleepless nights, fearing lest you should be found on the left hand at the last day, yet by your conduct, you are continually denying him before men.

Pause and reflect on your folly. Think of whom you are ashamed. Of him whom angels adore. Of him who died for sinners, and who alone can save you from hell. You are continually denying him—and for what? What do you gain? The good opinion of sinners—the good opinion of those who are soon to awake to shame and everlasting contempt. But nay, you do not gain even that. Let the youth come out from the world—Let him forsake the broad road—Let him return and ask the way to Zion, and face a frowning world; and the conscience of every sinner whom he meets will be constrained to bow and do him homage as he passes. He cannot but

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approve and admire the choice which he has made. And the scoffer cannot but despise himself for his own cowardice, that he has not courage enough to follow the dictates of his judgement and conscience in a matter of everlasting importance.

Among all who may reproach you, remember there is not even one good man. But become the friends of Christ, and you secure the friendship of all good men, of angels, and of the Saviour himself. It is true, you may meet with some ill-natured taunts, and be exposed to bitter reproaches; but what then? Remember these come only from the enemies of God. And will you follow them to destruction lest you should incur their displeasure. If the fallen angels should ascend out of the bottomless pit, and attempt by every hellish art, to shame you out of religion, must you listen to them? Must you go and join them? Must you fear their displeasure more than the displeasure of Almighty God?

But if you are still ashamed of Christ, remember a most righteous retribution awaits you. Christ will treat you as you have treated him; and he will be as much ashamed of you as you are now ashamed of him. "If we deny him he will also deny us." In this punishment there is a fitness which cannot fail to commend itself to every conscience. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." By your conduct you are now deciding the point how the Saviour will treat you when he shall come to judgement.

Finally—Let those who have confessed Christ before men, be careful never to betray his cause. If you are real Christians, you are no longer ashamed of Christ, but you are ashamed of yourselves, and of your conduct in having rejected him so long. Brethren, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy Are ye." Choose "rather to suffer affliction

with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”
 “Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name & S evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”

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And now let every one adopt from the heart the sentiment contained in the following lines:—

“Jesus, and shall it ever be,
 A mortal man ashamed of thee?
 Ashamed of thee, whom angels praise—
 Whose glory shines through endless days!
 Ashamed of Jesus, that dear friend,
 On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
 No: when I blush, be this my shame,
 That I no more revere his name.
 Ashamed of Jesus!—Yes I may,
 When I’ve no sins to wash away;
 No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
 No fear to quell, no soul to save.
 Till then—nor is my boasting vain,
 Till then, I boast a Saviour slain;
 And O. may this my glory be,
 That Christ is not ashamed of me.”

SERMON IV.

TRUE REPENTANCE NOT ANTECEDENT TO REGENERATION.

"Surely after that I was turned, I repented."—Jeremiah 31:19.

The people of Israel had departed from God. In this chapter, their restoration is predicted, and the happy events which would follow, are described. "They shall come and sing on the height of Zion, and shall flow together for the goodness of the Lord, and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

But this happy season was to be preceded by deep repentance. In the description of the prophet, we behold a vast company assembled, and commencing their journey to Zion. "Thus saith the Lord, they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." The repentance of Ephraim, a name which here stands for the people at large, is thus further described: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus. Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."

In the first part of this description, we have an account of what is commonly called a state of conviction. God had taken him in hand. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised." But he would not yield. His heart was too proud, and too stubborn to bow. He was, he tells us, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke wild, unmanageable, and

determined not to yield to the hand of its master. Such was the opposition of his heart, that he was convinced that he should never of himself overcome it. He was convinced, that the conversion of a sinner, like

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himself, could not be effected by the power of moral suasion—that none but the God who made him, could subdue the obduracy of his heart. Under the conviction of this truth, he prayed, “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.” Then follows the account of his conversion. “Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea even confounded.” The language which is here put into the mouth of Ephraim, expresses the feelings of every real penitent. He may, therefore, derive from the text, this doctrine.

True repentance does not precede regeneration.

It may be proper here to observe, that there are two kinds of repentance. One kind arises from a view of the consequences of sin, or the fear of punishment; and implies no love to God or hatred of sin. Such was the repentance of Saul, of Judas, and of others. Such is the repentance of awakened sinners; and at times, of all sinners, in a greater or less degree. This kind of repentance, implies no change of heart, and of course, may precede regeneration. This is not the repentance to which the promise of salvation is made. That the repentance which God requires as the condition of pardon, does not precede regeneration, is evident from the following considerations:

1. From the nature of true repentance. This repentance implies love to God. As sin is committed *against* God, the sinner must exercise repentance *towards* God. But this cannot be done without love; and previous to regeneration, there is no love to God in the sinner's heart; for “every one that loveth, is born of God.” No one can feel *heartily* sorry that he has offended a being whom he does not love. Much less can he feel sorry that he has offended a being whom he hates. But all the unregenerate possess carnal minds; and “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” If then, repentance does precede regeneration, it must be the repentance of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. But this surely is not evangelical repentance.

True repentance implies also love to God's law. No one feels unfeigned sorrow that he has violated a law which he does not love—much less a law which he hates. But the carnal, or

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unrenewed mind is "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." If then, evangelical repentance implies love to God and his law, it cannot be an exercise of the unrenewed heart.

2. To all who truly repent, salvation is promised. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit." But the unregenerate have no promise of salvation, For "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "Thus saith the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy. I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." This cannot be said of any unrenewed man; for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." But repentance is pleasing to God. If the sinner, therefore, does truly repent previous to regeneration; then they that are in the flesh, *can* please God. They can do that to which salvation is promised. What then, is there to hinder them from being actually saved without regeneration?

3. If true repentance is antecedent to regeneration, then, every other Christian grace may exist in the unrenewed heart. The sinner can as well love God, and believe in Christ, as he can repent without a new heart. Regeneration is no more necessary to cause the sinner to love God, than it is to cause him to repent; for as we have seen, true repentance implies love to God. The sinner can no more repent aright previous to regeneration, than he can exercise evangelical faith. For that repentance which is without faith, is not acceptable to God. "Without faith it is impossible to please him." It is plain, therefore, that if true repentance may exist in the unrenewed heart, regeneration is unnecessary, which is contrary to the positive declaration of Christ.

4. That repentance does not precede regeneration, is evident from the nature of regeneration. The change in regeneration is thus described. "I will take away the stony heart out of your

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flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Now the stony heart which God takes away in regeneration, is not a penitent heart. A penitent heart, is a broken and contrite heart. Such a heart God never takes away. On the contrary, it is the very heart of flesh, which he gives in regeneration.

The new heart, therefore, which is the effect of the Spirit's agency in regeneration, is a penitent heart. Hence it is plain that true repentance does not precede regeneration.

Permit me here to remark, I have not asserted, that the sinner is not under obligation to repent, previous to regeneration. It is unquestionably the duty of every sinner immediately to repent. We are not considering now what is duty, but what is fact. It is the duty of sinner to do many things which they never have done, and which some of them never will do. It is their duty to stop sinning, and to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. So it is their duty to repent without delay. But they have not done it, and some of them never will.

By this time, some of my hearers will perceive a great difficulty in this subject. It is this. If sinners do not repent previous to regeneration, then you call on them to do what it requires almighty power to influence them to do. This difficulty is not peculiar to this subject. It runs through the whole system of evangelical truth.

There are many who think they see a great inconsistency in the preaching of ministers. "Ministers" they say, "contradict themselves—They say, and unsay—They tell us to do, and then tell us we cannot do—They call upon sinners to believe and repent, and then tell them that faith and repentance are the gift of God—They call on them to come to Christ, and then tell them that they cannot come."

That some do preach in this manner cannot be denied. I well recollect an instance. A celebrated preacher in one of his discourses used this language: "*Come unto me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In another discourse this same preacher said, "No man *can come unto me*, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Now what think you my hearers of such preaching, and of such

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a preacher? What would you have said had you been present and heard him? Would you have charged him with contradicting himself? This preacher, you will remember, was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And I have no doubt that many ministers have followed his example, and been guilty of the same self-contradiction, if you call it such.

Now, my hearers, what will you say? Will you say that the difficulty, so far as it relates to Christ's preaching, can be easily explained? If it can, it can also be explained in reference to the preaching of others; and there is no cause of complaint. Or will you boldly assert that Christ

contradicted himself? If you take this ground, you turn infidels at once. Or will you say that you believe Christ to be consistent with himself, whether you can explain the difficulty or not? If so, why not say the same in regard to the preaching of his ministers who preach in the same manner?

I wish you to remember that the difficulty complained of existed in our Saviour's preaching. Nor is it confined to a few passages; but runs through the Bible. This I will now state more at large.

I. The Bible calls upon sinners to repent; and yet teaches that repentance is the gift of God. John, the harbinger of Christ, came preaching and saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And the Apostles "went out and preached that men should -repent." Paul, preaching at Athens, said, "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." And yet the Bible teaches us that repentance is the gift of God. "Him hath God exalted at his own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to *give repentance* to Israel, and remission of sins." "In meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will *give them repentance*, to the acknowledging of the truth." "When hath God also to the Gentiles *granted repentance unto life*." Again—The Bible calls on sinners to believe in Christ, and yet teaches that faith is the gift of God.

"This is his commandment. that we should believe on the

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name of his Son Jesus Christ." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth not is condemned already." And yet it is written, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and *that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*." "Looking unto Jesus, *the Author and Finisher of our faith*." Again—Sinners are called upon in the Bible to arise from the dead. "Awake thou that sleepest, and *arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*." And yet we are taught that it is the work of God to raise sinners from spiritual death to spiritual life "You hath *he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Again—It is written, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, and *make you a new heart* and a new spirit." And yet it is also written, "A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you."

Thus you see that the Bible does call upon sinners to do, what it requires the Almighty power of God to influence them to do. Now, whether I can explain this difficulty to your satisfaction or not, I wish you to remember that it is in the Bible. You have seen that God does command sinners to repent, to believe, and to make a new heart. And those ministers who do not call upon sinners to do the same, do not preach as God has commanded them. You have seen also, that repentance and faith, and a new heart, are represented as the gifts of God. And whoever does not attribute them wholly to the agency of the Holy Spirit, robs God of his glory, and does not preach the gospel. Whether I can explain this difficulty to your satisfaction or not, I wish you to bear in mind that every minister, who would declare all the counsel of God, is bound to preach in this manner. I take it for granted that you all will admit that ministers are under obligation to preach according to the teaching of the Bible.

But let us now see whether the difficulty can be explained. The question, it will be remembered, is, How is it consistent for God to command sinners to do, what it requires Almighty power to cause them to do? Many methods have been adopted to obviate this difficulty.

One says, "You must do as well as you can without a new

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heart. I know you cannot make you a new heart, but you must *try* to repent, and *try* to love God." To this I reply, The Bible says no such thing. God does not command sinners to *try* to repent, and *try* to love him. But God "now commandeth all men everywhere to *repent*." It is nowhere said thou shalt *try* to love the Lord thy God. The command is, "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart" If the sinner only *tries* to repent and love God, he does not obey the command. However hard he may *try*, unless he *actually repents*, he is still threatened with eternal death as the consequence of his neglect.

It is sometimes said, "Faith is the gift of God"—And you must do as well as you can without faith. But what says the Bible to the sinner who does not ask in faith? Does it encourage him to ask without it? Or does it not say, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord?" Does the Bible encourage the sinner to expect that anything done by him without faith, will be acceptable to God? On the contrary, does it not declare that "Without faith it is impossible to please him?"

Faith and repentance and love to God, are duties which the Bible enjoins on all men, and which every minister is bound to urge upon his hearers. But how can he inculcate these duties, and at the same time direct sinners to do as well as they can without doing them "Shall he direct sinners to repent without repenting, to believe without believing, and to love God without loving him?"

In order to explain the difficulty, it will be important to inquire, why it is necessary that God should change the heart of the sinner? To this question there can be but two answers: It must be either because the sinner has not the *power*, or because he has not the inclination to do what God commands.

Is it because he has not the power? I use the word power here in the sense in which the sinner uses it, when he says he has no power to repent—that he would if he could, but cannot. If the sinner really believes this to be true, what means his awful stupidity? If God is such a being as to command the sinner to do, what he is, in every sense, unable to do, is there any ground for that security which thousands feel when they

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plead this excuse? If this is the character of God, the sinner who is in his hands is in an awful condition indeed. Do you, my impenitent hearers, believe this to be your condition, why are you not filled with terror and alarm?

Do you say, "if we cannot help ourselves, we are not to blame?" Be this as it may, God has declared that except ye repent ye shall perish—and that those who believe not, shall be damned. Just or unjust, these threatenings will be executed. And how can you slumber and sleep, while the wrath of God abideth on you?

But even if you could not help yourselves, it is easy to see that you might be to blame. Suppose no atonement had been made for sin, and no way of salvation had been provided, would you not have perished justly? No atonement has been made for fallen angels—God has made it impossible for them to be saved—He has reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day; and still they have no right to complain. Suppose he had done the same by all, or any part of the human race, not one would have had any reason to complain. I dare not object even to a limited atonement on the ground of justice. Suppose Christ had made an atonement only for one soul,

and had consigned all the rest of the human race to endless perdition, no injustice would have been done.

The sinner often pleads his inability as an excuse, and a complete justification of his conduct. When urged to repent and believe, he says, "What can I do? I cannot repent." Now suppose it be true that he cannot repent, and believe, and be saved. What then? Is he exonerated from blame? Suppose a man has been guilty of murder, and is under sentence of death. He is confined in a prison which is bolted and barred. He walks around his dungeon and complains, "I cannot escape from this prison: I would if I could, but I cannot." What then? What if he cannot escape? Why, he must suffer the penalty of a good law. The fact that he cannot escape does not render him innocent. Now, suppose the sinner cannot repent, believe, and be saved. What then? Why, he must be lost. Awful indeed! But no injustice will be done. He will only suffer the penalty of a good law. He has broken

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the law and fallen under the curse; and his condemnation is just. And if it were now impossible for him to obtain salvation, he would have no reason to complain.

But although I do not admit that the sinner is under any natural inability to repent, and to obtain salvation, yet I confess that if it were so, I cannot see that there would be any injustice in his punishment. And here permit me to remind my impenitent hearers, that what they now complain of, may soon be a reality. Unless you soon repent and believe, it will be utterly beyond your power to obtain salvation. God will make it impossible for you to come out of your prison. This is the condition of all who are now in the prison of hell. There they are confined, and they cannot escape. And it is a wonder of mercy that you are not now there. When you get there, you will have no reason to murmur and complain that you cannot get out of the prison of hell. This will be the condition of all the finally impenitent for ever.

But I do not admit that the case of a criminal, confined in prison by bolts and bars, and massy walls, is a correct representation of the present state of the sinner. Although a criminal may be justly confined in prison, yet if he were invited and commanded to come out of his prison, while the doors were shut, and bolted, and barred, I confess I could see no propriety in such invitations and commands. The fact, therefore, that God does invite, and command sinners to come to Christ, is to me

convincing proof, that the difficulty lies in the sinner's disposition. If he were inclined to do all in his power, there would seem to be no reason why he should be invited or commanded to do more. This single command, "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope," is to me convincing proof that the bolts and bars of the sinner's prison, are now removed. Christ has opened the prison doors, and proclaimed liberty to the captives. God does not command sinners to break through massy walls. This seems to be supposed, however, by those who deny the distinction between natural and moral inability. They call on sinners to do, what they admit to be absolutely impossible. The propriety of this, I confess, I am unable to see.

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Again—If the prisoner were to be confined and punished without reprieve, for his crimes, it would be just. But if he were commanded to escape when confined by bolts and bars, and massy walls, and then were made to suffer a tenfold punishment for not doing it, I confess that I could not see the justice of this. But it is acknowledged on all hands, that the finally impenitent will be punished, not only for breaking the law, but for rejecting the gospel. This, indeed, we are given to understand, exposes them to God's hottest displeasure. "Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." And do sinners contract such aggravated guilt, by refusing to do what they have absolutely *no power* to do?

I will now state what I conceive to be the real difficulty in the case. The sinner is not disposed to do what he can. This is denied by many. They seem to suppose that because repentance and faith are the gift of God, therefore the sinner has not power to repent and believe. It is said that if the sinner could repent, it would not be necessary for God to renew the heart.

But this reasoning will not hold. Because the sinner has power to do what God commands. it does not follow, of course, that he will exert that power. Those who adopt this mode of reasoning seem to take it for granted, that the sinner will certainly do the utmost in his power to obey God. But if the sinner will not do what he can, there is the same necessity of Almighty power to *make him willing* to do what he can, as there would be to *enable him* to do what he could not.

The point may be illustrated by the following example. A father calls after a child who is departing from home. He has power to run in every direction, but will not obey the call of his father. His father invites, commands, promises, and threatens, but all in vain. He utterly disregards his father's authority, and is not influenced by the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment. No inducements will persuade him to desist from his present course. Now, what is the duty of that child? You will say at once, it is his duty to obey the command of his

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father. But this he will not do. Now does this obstinacy of the child make it improper for the parent to command the child to do what he can? If the child were *disposed* to obey, but was *unable*, I could see no propriety in the father's conduct. But if he has power to obey, but no disposition, his stubbornness is no excuse. It is the very thing which makes it proper to command, and to threaten. It is the very thing for which he deserves punishment.

But says the parent, "I will reveal one secret. You know not how dreadfully stubborn that child is. Although my commands are reasonable, and although he is capable of obeying them, yet he is so opposed to me, that he will not obey. He never will come, unless I go and bring him by the strength of this arm." Here the child replies, "How absurdly you talk. You call on me to do what you say I never shall do, unless you make me do it. Now I cannot come. How can I? If it requires the strength of your arm to bring me, then I have not power to come myself, and how can I be to blame?" This, in my view, is the exact state of the sinner. The commands of God are reasonable. The sinner is capable of obeying them; but he has a proud, stubborn, rebellious heart, that will not submit to God's authority. Hence it is necessary that he should be born again, in order to see the kingdom of God. While, therefore, those who perish, will be without excuse, and will have none to blame but themselves; those who are saved, will be saved by grace, and will have none to praise but God.

"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."

In the light of this subject we see

1. The reasonableness of God's command to sinners that they should make them a new heart.

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2. Salvation is wholly by grace.

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3. We see a reason why Christians should pray for the conversion of sinners.

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SERMON V.

**PERSEVERANCE OF THE
SAINTS.**

*“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”—
Philippians 1:6.*

These are the words of Paul. The inspired Apostle speaks with confidence. His language is plain and definite. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

With respect to this good work, two things claim our attention.

I. The work itself

II. The certainty that it will be finished.

I. Respecting the work itself, it may be observed, that it is not the work of conviction of which the apostle speaks. This commonly precedes it, and is the effect of divine influence. Hence, some have concluded that it must be a good work, it being the effect of the Spirit's agency. But this reasoning is not conclusive. For as every effect is distinct from its cause, the one may be good, and the other not. That the devils continue to exist is owing to divine agency. And God will cause the wicked to feel forever the weight of his wrath, and yet this holy and righteous act in God will produce no virtue, or good worked in the damned. Felix may tremble, and Judas despair; but in all this, there is no virtue. God may cause the terrors of hell to seize upon the most hardened sinner, and he may die in despair; but this bears no resemblance to the good

work mentioned in the text. It is certainly desirable to see sinners alarmed and convinced of sin; but in itself considered, there is no moral goodness in the fear of hell.

That this is not the good work mentioned in the text, is further evident from the fact, that it does not always continue.

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Taking the truth of the text for granted, the good work there mentioned will go on. But conviction is often of short duration. Nor is it any thing which can be found in the natural man. For the natural man is wholly depraved and “unto every good work reprobate.” Hence, good works are declared to be the effect of a new creation. “We are his workmanship,” says the apostle, “*created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*” The beginning of this good work, therefore, is regeneration.

Respecting it we may observe—

1. It is God’s work. “We are his workmanship.” “Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

2. In this work, God displays his sovereignty. “Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth.”

3. God not only begins, but carries on this work. Many seem to suppose, that God begins the work, and then leaves it in the hand of the creature. But if it were so, it would never be completed. Every Christian grace, in its beginning and progress, is the effect of divine influence. Is the love of God shed abroad in the heart—*it is by the Holy Ghost*. Does the Christian continue in the exercise of faith—it is because he is *kept by the power of God*. Does he exercise any of the Christian graces—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—these are all *the fruit of the Spirit*. “The branch cannot bear fruit of itself.” Does the good man walk in the path of duty—it is because *his steps are ordered by the Lord*. Of all the children of God on earth, not one can be found who walk alone. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” The same power which begun the good work, is necessary to carry it on.

Let us consider—

II. The certainty that this work will be finished—in other words, the certainty that all true saints will persevere.

This may be argued—

1. From the covenant of redemption. As the covenant of works was made with the first Adam and all his posterity: so the covenant of redemption was made with Christ, the second

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Adam, and all his chosen seed This covenant includes all that will ever be saved. Though salvation is freely offered to every sinner who hears the gospel, yet such is the depravity of the human heart, that not a single son or daughter of Adam will accept. Left to themselves, all will go to destruction, notwithstanding the atonement and the free offer of salvation. What then shall be done? Shall the Saviour's death be in vain? Here the covenant of redemption comes in as the only ground of hope. It is through this covenant, that any one ever was, or ever will be saved. The apostle says, "We are saved and called with an holy calling, not according to our works"—how then?—"but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." Again. The apostle traces all spiritual blessings to the same source. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." And Christ says: "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me ;" and to complete the argument, it is added, "and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." All that are given to Christ shall come; those that come shall in no wise be cast out. This covenant is "ordered in all things and *sure*." It is true, God promises salvation to the sinner, on condition of faith and repentance; but he does not promise him faith and repentance on any condition whatever. The conditions on which salvation is offered, are most reasonable; but none will ever comply with them, but those to whom they are secured by the covenant. To those whom it includes, the covenant secures the conditions themselves. In this covenant, God has engaged to cause his people to persevere. It runs thus: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever. And 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*." Here God, who cannot lie, declares, in the most explicit manner, that those who are included

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in this covenant, *shall not depart from him*, and he will never *cease to do them good*.

2. The love of God is engaged for their security. The unmerited, eternal love of God moved him to begin this work. Hence, he declares, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Again. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him." And we hear the apostle exulting in God's immutable love; affirming that nothing in the heights above, nor in the depths beneath; nothing present, nor anything future, nor life nor death itself, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. The power of God is engaged on the behalf of those who are begotten again unto a lively hope. They are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Christ says: "My sheep, hear my voice"—and then affirms: "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." He who has all power, and whose kingdom ruleth over all, has declared, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God; to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here is a chain, which all the powers of darkness cannot break. "They that trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever."

4. The intercession of Christ for his people, secures their perseverance. He is a glorious Advocate. He ever liveth to make intercession for them, and he will successfully plead their cause. Our ascended Redeemer is not a mere petitioner who may or may not succeed. He is always heard, for he has fully performed the conditions of the everlasting covenant, and to all its blessings he has a perfect right. In his intercession, every believer is interested. "Who, then, shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that condemneth?"

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5. The faithfulness of Christ is pledged for the security of his people. He cannot forget the great errand on which he came into our world.

He says: "I came down from heaven"—for what?—"Not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will, which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." Now, if Christ, to whom his people are given, became responsible for them to the Father, that they should be kept in safety till the last day, he will doubtless lose nothing,

6. The same truth is evident from the union of believers to Christ. He is the living head. They are *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*, Christ is the believer's life. Says the apostle; "your life is hid with Christ in God, and when he who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." The life of one is bound up in the life of the other. For "he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit." By reason of this union, the life of Christ, and the eternal life of the Christian, are equally certain. No other meaning can I affix to that heart-cheering declaration of Christ to his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also." If he meant simply to affirm that they would live, because he should live to uphold them in being; then he affirmed no more of his disciples than is true of wicked men and devils.

7. The promises of God to his people secure their perseverance. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." This language is unqualified, and the promise absolute. It is maintained, however, by some, that the promises are all conditional, and that where the condition is not expressed, it is implied. They accordingly attempt to correct the word of God, by adding, "If we continue to believe"—"if we do our duty"—"if we are not wanting on our part," &c. This is inverting the order of the promises, and also subverting the whole of God's work at a single stroke. For if we continue to believe—do our duty, and are not wanting on our part, God has nothing to do. The work is wrested from his hand; and the creature undertakes it alone. If these are the conditions on which we are to receive the promise of salvation, then there is not an absolute promise

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in the Bible; for such conditions cannot be fully complied with till death. Hence, it would be absurd to talk of promises on this side of the grave. For the conditions must be complied with, before the promise can be claimed. On this ground, as well may the infidel claim the promise before he believes, as the believer before his death.

Again—On such conditions all will be lost. If the promise of salvation is suspended on the condition that we do our duty—that we be not wanting on our part—then all will be lost. For if we do our duty, we shall keep all the commandments of God. This is our duty. And if we are not wanting on our part, we shall henceforth be absolutely perfect. After the performance of such conditions, there would be no necessity for God to carry on the work of sanctification. What shall we then say? *If we do as well as we can*, may we not claim some promise of divine assistance? My hearers, such language is common; but it cannot be found in the Bible, and if it could, not one soul would be saved on this ground. As well might we console ourselves with the thought, that if we have never sinned, we shall be saved. Who could claim the promise on this ground? Who will dare stand up before his Judge, and tell him that he has done the best in his power?

Besides—if the assistance of the Spirit of God is granted, only to lead the Christian to do his duty, as has already been proved, on what conditions does God grant that assistance? You will remember that every good work is the fruit of the Spirit. God begins and carries on the work. On what conditions, then, does he do it? Let me freely answer. None whatever. If you make the perseverance of the Christian depend originally on himself; he will never advance a single step. He will neither do his duty, nor do what he can. None ever did—none ever will. Very different is the language of the text. Paul said: “I have *no confidence in the flesh*.” But when looking at the christian and the work which God had undertaken, he could say: “I am confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

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While considering the promises of God to his children, your attention, my hearers, is directed to one important fact. It will be granted on all hands, that if God has made one promise to carry on this work, he will certainly do it. There is either some connection between your believing now, and your final salvation; or there is not. If there is not, then the fact that you now believe, is no evidence that you will not be lost. If there is no certain connection between the first act of evangelical faith and final salvation, then the fact that the jailor rejoiced, believing in God, was no evidence that he would not be in hell the next day. You, my hearers, believing in Christ, may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and your sins may now be actually forgiven; and yet this

is no evidence that you will not, for all your sins, suffer the pains of hell forever. My brethren, can you believe there is no sure connection between your believing now, and your final salvation? Where, then, will you look for safety? Will you begin to form resolutions? But these are no evidences of safety. You may now say, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." But look at Peter. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." If you have ever seen the depravity of your hearts, and your absolute dependence on the sovereign unmerited grace of God, where can you find an anchor for your souls? Nowhere, without adopting the language of Paul in the text. If you can not say that you are *confident* that *God will perform* the good work wherever he begins it, you certainly can have no *confidence* that you shall be saved. Whatever hope or consolation you may derive from any other source, it is all vain confidence and mere delusion. Whoever thinks he shall be faithful, unless God is first faithful to him—that man is deceived. He has never yet seen his own heart. Where are we, then, my brethren, and whither are we going? If God has made no promise to secure the perseverance of his children, the best Christian on earth stands in jeopardy every hour. But God has not only promised to save his people if they shall persevere; but he has promised *perseverance itself*. "The foundation of God *standeth sure*. Wherever he has begun a good work in the believer, he

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has sealed it with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of his inheritance. The Father of mercies hath declared, in reference to his people, that he will "confirm them unto the end," and "preserve them unto his kingdom"—that "the righteous shall hold on his way," and "be stronger and stronger"—that though the good man fall, "he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand"—that he will put his fear in the hearts of his people, "that they shall not depart from him"—and that he will never—no, never leave them, nor forsake them. These promises, with many others, are unconditional and absolute; Yea and Amen. They were made by him who cannot lie, and he has annexed to them his most solemn oath, for the express purpose "that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." If God is immutable—if there is any validity in his promises, the true believer will certainly persevere. Rejoice, then, ye feeble followers of the Lamb. The basis of your confidence and consolation is firm and strong. The only wise God, who has begun this

good work in regeneration, will not leave it unfinished. No—it shall never be tauntingly said by his enemies, that God began to build, but was not able to finish.

There are some objections to this doctrine, which it may be important to notice.

1. It is said, that if christians believe that their salvation is certainly secured, they will feel that it is no matter how they live.

This objection involves the grossest absurdity. It may be thus expressed. If we believe we shall certainly persevere, it is no matter how we live; because we shall certainly persevere? whether we persevere or not. If the righteous shall hold on his way, it is no matter if he stops, or even goes back. Nor is the supposition that the belief of this doctrine tends to make the christian careless, less absurd. It is true, that the formal professor, the self-righteous, the hypocrite, and all who esteem the service of God a weariness, and who are building their hopes of heaven on the sand, may think to find some relief in this doctrine. But the person who can thus pervert this doctrine, has no evidence that he is a child of God. The objection involves

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this plain absurdity. I have evidence that I love God and the duties of religion; and now, since I shall certainly continue to love God and the duties of religion, I care nothing about the honour of God and the duties of religion.

This objection, if made sincerely, is likely to prove that the objector has no religion, and that he would be glad to give up all attention to the duties of religion, as an intolerable burden. No one who feels disposed to make this objection, can possibly have good evidence that a work of grace has been begun in his soul. On the contrary, this disposition itself is positive evidence against him. Besides—there are many zealous christians who firmly believe this doctrine. I adduce Paul as an example. He says: I am persuaded that neither death nor life *shall be able to separate us from the love of God*. And yet Paul was not a careless christian.

2. The following passage of Scripture has been supposed to militate against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance." Hebrews 6:4-6.

It may admit of a question whether this passage was intended to describe the experience of real christians. There is nothing said respecting their love to God, their faith in Christ, and their repentance for sin, which are the common evidences of regeneration. If the text was intended to describe the condition of those only who have been greatly enlightened and outwardly reformed, it proves nothing against the doctrine we are considering. But if it was intended to describe the experience of real christians, it is only hypothetical. It does not affirm that any such ever did, or ever will fall away. It barely states what the consequence would be, if they should fall away.

But it may be said, if Paul was not fearful that those christians to whom he wrote would fall away—if he was persuaded that they would persevere, why did he speak in this manner? I answer—Paul was persuaded that they would persevere, and

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yet he did speak in this manner. Anticipating this very objection, he adds: “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, *though we thus speak*.” This passage, therefore, taken in connection with the context, goes to establish the doctrine which we are considering. For Paul here declares his full persuasion that his Hebrew brethren had experienced something which was infallibly connected with their final salvation.

3. It is said the Scriptures mention cases of total and final apostasy, such as Hymeneus, Philetas, Alexander, Demas, Saul, Judas, and others.

In reply to this objection, I would say that the lives of these persons clearly proved that they never were true saints. Their case is described by the apostle: “They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us.” It seems that in the opinion of the inspired apostle, *there could be no doubt* of the perseverance of true believers. Besides—when the wicked shall be assembled on the left hand of Christ at the day of judgement, there will not be found among them one whom Christ ever did acknowledge as his disciple. Although it is now maintained that Saul and Judas, and others were once real saints, and although they may stand up at the last day and plead for themselves, saying, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?” he will profess unto them, “I *never* knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

I shall dismiss the objections with a short contrast.

On the one hand it is said: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."

On the other hand it is said, he may be lost.

On the one hand: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation."

On the other: he may be condemned.

On the one hand: "There is, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

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On the other: they may be condemned.

On the one hand: "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

On the other: some who believe will be lost.

On the one hand: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?"

On the other: no, we do not believe it.

INFERENCES.

1. We see a reason why angels rejoice at the repentance of *one sinner*. If angels did not believe this doctrine, they could have no ground on which to rejoice. They must wait till the sinner gets to heaven.

The true penitent will certainly arrive safe at the mansions of the blessed. A firm belief of this doctrine lays the only foundation for joy in heaven over his repentance. If angels did not believe this doctrine, their joy would be unfounded. Their language would be: that sinner has truly repented. He is now a child of God—an heir of heaven. But whether he will ever reach this happy place—whether he will ever sing with us in glory, is a matter of great uncertainty. He may yet become a child of the devil, and an heir of hell. Could we *know* that he would certainly arrive safe at heaven, we might now tune our harps, and sing *glory to God in the highest*. But since we have already been disappointed, and devils and damned spirits are now triumphing over some at whose repentance we once rejoiced, it is best to wait and see how he holds out. Hear them triumph in the regions of despair. "Ye angels," say they, "ye may suspend your songs, and hang up your harps. Let your joy be turned into mourning. Victory is ours."

What think ye, my hearers? Has there been joy in heaven over some who are now in hell? If they so rejoiced at the news of the sinner's repentance, what messenger shall carry back the mournful tidings that he is lost?

2. It is a great thing to be a christian.

If this doctrine were not true, the state of the christian would be little or no better than that of the sinner. He would be no

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more certain of salvation than the sinner. Though he may be a christian to-day, he can have no evidence that he shall be a christian to-morrow, or the next moment. He may be a christian one day, and a sinner the next—a christian one moment, and a sinner the next. But it is not so. A child of God is an heir of heaven. When we look on a christian, what do we see? A stranger—a pilgrim on the earth—an inhabitant of another world.

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 3. A revival of religion is a joyful event.

On the supposition that the doctrine which we have been considering is true, there is solid ground for rejoicing in a true revival of religion; because those who are truly converted have a sure title to eternal life. Hence we read that when Philip preached in Samaria, "there was great joy in that city." But if this doctrine is not true, their joy was premature, for there was no certainty that all who were then converted, would not be lost. If this doctrine is not true, all who were converted on the day of pentecost may now be in hell. We have no proof to the contrary. On this ground, you, my hearers, may now rejoice in a revival, because sinners are brought out of darkness into marvellous light; but this is no evidence that they will not dwell in the blackness of darkness forever. But it is not so. Whenever God has begun a good work, he will certainly perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Being confident of this very thing, how joyful to behold sinners flocking to Christ. "Him that cometh unto me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." All who truly repent of their sins, will certainly meet in heaven.

I infer—

4. That there may be such a thing as the full assurance of hope in this life.

If the doctrine is not true, the best christian on earth must be altogether uncertain of heaven. But it being true, we learn on what the full assurance

of hope is founded. So far as the christian can be certain that the good work has been begun in his soul, so far he can be certain of arriving at heaven.

It is surprising that some who deny this doctrine, will yet say

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that they are certain of heaven. This is plainly absurd. If one christian may fall away and perish, then another and another may; and so all may be lost. Not one can have assurance of salvation.

I remember a short conversation on this subject, of the following import. A person who denied this doctrine, was expressing his joy in believing. He was interrogated on this subject. "Why do you rejoice, my friend? Do you think there is any certain connection between your believing now, and your final salvation?" He perceived that if he answered in the affirmative, he must admit the doctrine, and so he answered in the negative. The question was then put to him: "If there is no certain connection between your present belief and your final-salvation, why do you rejoice? He replied, because my sins are forgiven. But why rejoice because your sins are forgiven? You say you have no evidence that you are to suffer in hell for your sins after all, why rejoice because you sins are forgiven? Why if I am faithful, if I persevere to the end, I shall be saved. Very true—unless you persevere, you cannot be saved. But what reason have you to conclude that you shall persevere? What makes you so confident that you shall be saved? Show us the ground of your confidence. Do you trust in your own resolutions? No. Well, what then? Do you trust in the stability of your own will? Do you feel superior to the power of temptation? Do you think you are a person of such decision, such stability and firmness, that when you undertake the work, you shall certainly go through with it? Is this the reason you have to think that you shall persevere and be saved? No. What then? What reason have you to think that you shall be faithful—that you shall persevere and be saved? If God is not first faithful to you, you will not be faithful to him. And, my hearers, he could see no reason why he should rejoice. He could find no rest for the sole of his foot, until he was driven back on the ground of our text: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." And, my hearers, what evidence have you that you shall persevere? Do you trust in

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yourselves? You lean on a broken reed. You build on the sand. There is depravity enough in your hearts to sink you to hell, if left to yourselves. If you have never seen and felt this awful truth, you have never yet seen your own hearts, nor been thoroughly awakened. If you have not felt this awful truth, you have not been driven out of yourselves—not yet left the strong-hold of self-righteous deception—not yet fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you.

6. It follows from what has been said, that salvation is entirely of grace, from first to last.

The believer is taught to place no confidence in his own strength or resolutions. It is of free, rich, and sovereign grace, that he has been renewed in the temper of his mind; and the same grace which begun the work, has engaged to carry it on to perfection. However weak and feeble the christian may be, the Almighty has said, "I will never leave thee"—"Fear not—I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." And what God has promised, he is able to perform. When the powers of earth and the gates of hell combined, assail the christian, menacing his destruction; then the name, the promises, the oath and the attributes of God, are a strong tower—an impregnable fortress; and conscious of his own weakness, he runneth into it and is safe. The righteous man dwelleth on high. "His place of defence is the munition of rocks—immovable as their solid foundations, and inaccessible as their lofty summits. Those who have evidence that they are true believers, can with confidence take hold of the promises. Those great and precious promises, to which God has annexed his oath, were made, that such persons who have no other hope, and who would otherwise sink in despair, might have strong consolation. But no others can derive consolation from this doctrine, or from any of the promises of God.

If any of you, my brethren, have no present evidence of your adoption, you have great reason to question, not the truth of this doctrine, but the genuineness of your conversion. The good work which God begins, will be carried on to perfection, and if you find no evidence that God is carrying on such a work

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in your hearts, you have great reason to fear, that such a work has never yet been begun.

And let the true child of God take warning. God has not promised, my brethren, that you shall never fall into sin. But he has promised to correct his backsliding children, and sometimes they are sorely chastised. God hides his face in anger. Their hope of heaven is terribly shaken, if not lost for a season, and their hearts are filled with the keenest anguish; till after deep repentance and many prayers, they are permitted to enjoy again the light of God's countenance, and experience the joy of his salvation. God will correct his children, but he will not disinherit them. This is a part of his covenant with them; "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with a rod; and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless, my loving kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail."

That professor of religion, who can live long in the neglect of duty, and without sweet intercourse at the throne of grace, and experience no tokens of God's displeasure, has awful reason to fear that he is not a child of God. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." But "say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him." Christians, ye know not what ye are—heirs to an eternal inheritance, reserved in heaven—heirs of God—it doth not yet appear what you shall be; but if it be true that you are now the sons of God, "we know that when he shall appear, [you] shall be like him for [you] shall see him as he is." Shortly will you join the company of angels, and unite in the song of the redeemed. For God has undertaken your salvation. All heaven was moved at your repentance. Angels are now waiting with joyful expectation to see the work completed: "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Yes,

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins,
The work that wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

SERMON VI.

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP.

“And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you having an 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. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.”—Luke 15:3–7.

Our Saviour taught much in parables. Some of his parables appear to be true histories. Others are merely supposed cases, intended to illustrate important truth. This mode of instruction possesses many advantages. It is simple, clear, striking, and forcible. It always arrests the attention, and serves to fix divine truth in the memory. Whether the parable be fiction or matter of fact, is not material. A true history may illustrate some important doctrine; a supposition may do the same.

The parable which I have just read to you, was spoken on the following occasion. Many were flocking around the Saviour. “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.” His audience was composed of persons of very different views and feelings. Some were doubtless in tears, desiring to know what they should do to be

saved. They came not to gaze; but they “drew near to *hear* him.” Others, it appears from the sequel of this discourse, had returned home like the prodigal son, and were now rejoicing in hope. Others, it seems, were present with feelings entirely different. They were proud, self-righteous and scornful. These were present for no better purpose than to look on, make observations, and find fault. “And the scribes and pharisees murmured.” To see sinners flocking around the Saviour, all attention—some

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weeping, and some rejoicing, made them angry. They murmured saying, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” Such was the Saviour’s audience. The subject was suited to the occasion. It affords encouragement to penitents; and at the same time, administers pointed reproof to those who stand murmuring.

The parable was spoken in answer to the charge which the scribes and pharisees brought against him; “This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” Our Saviour did not deny, but fully admitted the charge. He did not attempt to show that the sinners assembled around him, were less guilty than they supposed themselves to be. He admitted that they were lost and hell-deserving; and this his anxious hearers knew and felt to be true. Nor was our Saviour ashamed to acknowledge that he made it his great business to seek and to save just such sinners. “This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” Very true. You pursue your business, and I pursue mine. “What man of you, having an 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?” So I profess, says the Saviour, to be the great shepherd and bishop of souls. These have all gone astray. They are lost, and have no disposition to return. My errand on earth is “to seek and to save that which was lost.” What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if one be missing, would not range the fields and mountains, and call, and seek diligently until he found it? So I have descended from heaven to earth on this great errand, “to gather together in one, the children of God which are scattered abroad. “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.” (Doubtless some of them were then standing round him, listening to hear his voice). And now, ye murmurers, what would be your conduct on finding that which was lost? You would publish your success to all around, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” “I say

unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.”

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Here it may be asked, whom did Christ intend by just persons who need no repentance? Some have supposed that he meant *self-righteous person*. It is indeed true that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine self-righteous persons. But it does not appear that such were intended. 1. Because they are called *just persons*. The word just never means *self-righteous*. 2. Because it is not true that self-righteous persons need no repentance. They do need repentance. All *men*, need repentance, and they must repent or perish. Should it be said, that Christ did not mean that they actually needeth no repentance, but only that they felt no need of repentance; like those whom he describes when he says, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the *righteous*, but sinners to repentance.” I reply, the interpretation giving to this text, is liable to the one objection. It is not true that Christ came not to call the *self-righteous* persons to repentance. He did come to call such, and no others. For all are by nature proud, stubborn, and self-righteous. Such was Paul before his conversion. And thousands of such, have, like him, been brought to see their sinfulness, and to bow at the foot of the cross. And, 3. There is no joy in heaven over self-righteous persons. Christ is speaking of the great joy there is in heaven over one true penitent. If the comparison is with the self-righteous, it might be expressed thus. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. How much? More than over ninety and nine over whom there is no joy. Such certainly could not have been our Saviour’s meaning. Self-righteous persons, therefore, were not intended in the text. It is true the parable was addressed to such. The scribes and pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Our Saviour did not undertake to show them *directly* that they were guilty, ruined, and lost sinners, and that they must be brought to see this to be their condition, or they could not be saved. His direct object was to convict them of the unreasonableness of their conduct in murmuring at the repentance of others. He takes them on their own ground. Admit that you are righteous, and that

these are great sinners. Why murmur at their repentance? Vile as they are, they have souls of infinite value. One soul that is lost, must suffer more pain than all that has ever yet been endured by the whole race of Adam. The past sufferings of all the damned in hell, are not to be compared with the miseries of one soul through the boundless ages of eternity. Is not, then, the salvation of one such soul of infinite importance? Is it not matter of joy on earth to witness one such sinner brought to repentance? Must not such an event touch the heart of every pious man? What heart must that be, which can rejoice at finding a lost sheep, or a piece of silver, but cannot rejoice at the repentance and salvation of a lost sinner? If friends and neighbours assemble and rejoice together on an occurrence so trifling, how must the friends of the Redeemer rejoice at the repentance of one sinner? On such an occasion, how would the news fly? What conversation—what joy and animation would be witnessed all around? Surely thus it would be with all benevolent beings. If there were any just persons on earth, who had never sinned, and who needed no repentance, they would be the very first to assemble and rejoice together on such an occasion. It is true, there are no such persons on earth. Strictly speaking, “there is none righteous; no, not one.” But if there were ninety and nine just persons, who had never committed a single sin; who were never lost, and who needed no repentance, what a group?—what a lovely sight!—such as earth never beheld—And yet, the repentance and salvation of one sinner, is matter of more joy to all holy beings, than the happy condition of the whole ninety and nine who had never been lost. Strange as it may seem to sinners on earth, yet our Saviour declares that this is true in heaven. Whenever Christ finds a lost sinner on earth, and he is brought to true repentance, the holy inhabitants of heaven rejoice together on the occasion. And their joy is greater than over ninety and nine of those holy beings who have never fallen.

The subject suggests the following reflections.

I. Sinners are lost. If they were not lost, Christ would not have come to seek and save them. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” And since he

has, come from heaven to earth, and shed his precious blood to save them, they “will not come to him that they might have, life.” They are

out of his fold, having no part or lot in his kingdom. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life,—and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God abideth on him.*" They lie in the open field, exposed to the storm of divine wrath, which is coming upon the world of the ungodly. They are wandering farther and farther from God, and every moment liable to fall into the pit of destruction. They are lost. and yet totally insensible of their condition.

2. Christ knows his own sheep before they are brought into his fold. The good shepherd knows just the number that are missing. If one of them be gone astray, he knows it. Indeed, he would not go after it, did he not know it was gone, and would not, of itself, return. He says, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also. I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." He knows who they are, and what are their names. "He calleth his own sheep by *name*, and leadeth them out." He knows how far they have wandered in the paths of sin and folly. His eye is ever upon them, and follows them in all their wanderings. Is there one more lost sinner in this place to be saved? Where is he? What is his name? Christ knows. Yes—"The foundation of God standeth sure, having this zeal, the Lord knoweth them that are his."

3. Christ finds the sinner. He finds him in his sins—careless about his soul—casting off fear and restraining prayer—wandering farther and farther from God, from happiness and from heaven. He often comes upon him by surprise in the midst of his wickedness, and awakens him to a sense of his guilt. He trembles and is alarmed; but he is unwilling to return, and would fain flee out of the Saviour's hand. No sinner will ever awaken himself. Left to himself, not another sinner in this house will ever begin in earnest to seek the salvation of his soul. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Every Christian knows this to be true

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in relation to himself. He knows that after he was awakened, that if the Spirit of God had left him, he should have returned to his sinful courses. All who have found the Saviour, will acknowledge that the Saviour first found them. "Since we have known God, or *rather are known of God,*" is the language which they are ready to adopt.

This parable may serve to correct a very common mistake among sinners;—and I may add, among some professors of religion. They often think they are seeking Christ, and wonder why they fail of success, when they are actuated only by the fear of hell. They think they are following hard after Christ, and that he is departing from them. They flatter themselves, that if they hold on their way, they shall soon overtake him. They take it for granted that they are *ready* and *willing*; and they are now labouring hard to make Christ willing. But the very reverse is true, as we are taught in this parable. Sinners are departing from Christ, and in order to find him, they must not hold on their way, but stop, and turn. They are all as sheep going astray, and the great shepherd and bishop of souls, is calling upon them to return; saying, “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die.” When he finds them, he finds them wandering farther and farther from him. And when they hear his voice, it is *behind them*, “saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

4. How great must be the joy occasioned by the repentance of one sinner. It is contrasted with that over just and holy beings who need no repentance. Joy so great was never occasioned by any other created being, as that occasioned by a repenting and returning sinner. Joy so great, was never occasioned by an angel of light. Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, never occasioned so much joy in heaven. We may number ninety and nine holy angels, and then say, “There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over those, ninety and nine just persons.” The creation of the world was a joyful event, when “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” But this is not to be compared with the joy over one sinner that repenteth. The earth itself was created to subserve God’s purpose of saving sinners—as a

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stage on which to display the wonders of redeeming love to an admiring universe.—“To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.” If it be asked, why did the Son of God become incarnate? In the repentance of a lost sinner, you have the answer. “He came to seek and to save that which was lost.” “He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Why did the angels announce to the shepherds the news of his birth, and sing “Glory to God in the highest?” In the repentance of a lost sinner, you have the answer.

Nor is this joy confined to angels. The Lord himself rejoices. Why did the Son of God leave the bosom of his Father—condescend to be born in a manger—and to suffer and die on the cross? In the repentance of a lost sinner, you see the glorious object which he had in view, accomplished. For this he bled, and died. Here he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. This is the fruit of his toil, his shame, his sufferings, and his death. “Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.” Every Christian, in his turn, has occasioned this joy in heaven.

5. The repentance of every sinner, when first discovered, is the cause of new joy. The joy of angels is most sensibly felt every time one more is added to the company of the redeemed. The ninety and nine already redeemed, seem to be forgotten, when, with wonder and joy, they behold their new companion with whom they expect to dwell forever. Could we know, as well as angels do, the reality of a sinner's repentance, we should know better how to rejoice. The tidings of his repentance must be received by Christians on earth with mingled emotions. They “rejoice with trembling.” While they delight in each other, the news that a soul is converted to God, excites in them peculiar joy. For a time, they seem to forget themselves and each other. They cannot forbear to assemble and rejoice together on the occasion. And well they may, for Christ himself rejoices; and he says unto his disciples, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.”

6. What must have been the hearts of the scribes and pharisees

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who stood murmuring, while converted publicans and sinners drew near to Christ, to hear the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. While angels in heaven were rejoicing over these sinners, there they stood murmuring. What a contrast! Angels, and the Saviour himself, and all holy beings were rejoicing over the repentance of these sinners, but they stood murmuring and finding fault, and saying, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” How must their conduct have, appeared to angels, and to God!

My hearers, had you been present on this occasion, what part would you have acted? Would you have rejoiced at the sight of sinners flocking to the Saviour, and weeping for their sins? Or would you have joined with those that murmured? Bring the subject home to your hearts. How would you like to see sinners flocking to Christ in this place? Are your

hearts prepared to welcome a scene like this? Scenes similar to this, may now be in the recollection of many present. At least, you must have heard of the conviction and conversion of sinners—some of them perhaps of your own acquaintance. And how did the news affect your hearts'? Did you hear the news with angelic joy, or with sullen sadness? I would put the question to the consciences of all my hearers. How does the subject of the conviction and conversion of sinners affect your hearts? It is a subject in which God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and saints and angels, are all interested. All heaven is moved at the repentance of one sinner. And, my hearers, if your hearts are not deeply interested in this subject, it is because you have no claims to the Christian character. Beware of deceiving yourselves in a matter of such infinite moment. If you cannot rejoice in the repentance of sinners, you have none of the spirit of Christ. If you cannot rejoice in the repentance of other sinners, you have never yet repented of your own sins. Your hearts are not right in the sight of God. For those who die with such hearts, there is no happiness, and no heaven hereafter. If such tidings vex the heart, and grate on the ear now, and if you would fain fly from such a scene, whither can you go at the solemn hour of exchanging worlds? Can you enter heaven, and

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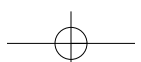
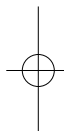
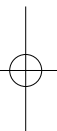
be happy there? Heaven is filled with this joyful theme. There the tidings of the conversion of every penitent on earth will be told. And every saint, and every angel that sings in glory, will proclaim it in loud hosannas around the throne of God and the Lamb. There, too, the story of your own repentance must be told, ere you leave this world, or you can never join the company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.

To all my impenitent hearers in this assembly, let me say—You have seen what a lively interest angels take in the repentance of *one sinner*. Will there ever be joy in heaven over *your* repentance? Wherever the gospel is preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, there angels are hovering round to witness the effects. "Which things the angels desire to look into." Yes, angels attend on our worshipping assemblies, to witness the effect of a preached gospel.

"Invisible to mortal eyes they go,
And mark our conduct, good or bad, below."

Sinners, these heavenly messengers are now waiting to carry back the tidings of your repentance, to the courts above. And shall they stoop, and gaze, and wait in vain? Have you no tears to shed for your sins?

‘ O, ye angels, hovering round us,
Waiting spirits, speed your way,
Hasten to the court of heaven,
Tidings bear without delay;
Rebel sinners
Glad the message will obey.



SERMON VII.

**THE PARABLE OF THE
PRODIGAL SON.**

Luke 15:11–25—And he said, A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.”—Luke 15:11–25

It will be my object to give a plain, practical exposition of this parable for the benefit of all whom it may concern.

This is the third parable spoken by our Saviour on the same occasion. The two others show what God does, or the part which he acts, in the recovery of the lost sinner to himself. This is designed to show the criminality of the sinner, and the nature of true conversion. Our Lord always spoke directly to the point, and this parable applies exactly to the persons to whom it was addressed. The younger son represents the persons mentioned in the first verse of the chapter. "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." The elder brother represents the scribes and pharisees mentioned in verse

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2d, who "murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The whole is strikingly applicable to the persons to whom, and the occasion on which it was spoken.

Some of our Lord's hearers were then, doubtless, in tears, mourning for their sins. Our Saviour had already assured them, that however the scribes and pharisees might murmur and find fault, yet God and angels were rejoicing over them, provided their repentance was genuine. But how should they know whether their repentance was genuine? On this point, they were doubtless anxious to hear something further. To give them the instruction which they needed, our Lord spake this parable. The history of the prodigal son is a general history of christian experience. In the story as here related, every child of God may trace the outlines of his own history. Then let us follow it, and see its application.

The parable contains two parts, representing the life of the christian before, and at the time of his conversion. Let us, then, consider—

I. The departing prodigal.

II. The returning prodigal.

I. The departing prodigal.

"A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." His father is represented as kind, tender, and affectionate, and yet this son is not satisfied. So God is a kind and tender parent, and yet sinners do not love him. They murmur at the allotments of providence, and manifest little or no interest in those things which concern their eternal peace. Regardless of God and the world to come, they desire a large portion of the good things of this world. And this desire is expressed, not in a humble petition to the Father of mercies, but in the form of an impious demand. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Such is the language of the sinner's heart,

and of his conduct. Whatever may become of his soul, he wishes a large portion of this world; and will murmur and find fault if his wishes are not gratified.

“And he divided unto them his living.”

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This represents God's providential dealings towards mankind in this life. He is kind to the evil and the unthankful. He sometimes bestows blessings on sinners with a liberal hand. This he does to try them. His goodness lays the sinner under peculiar obligations to love and serve him. But these obligations are disregarded.

“And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country.”

We see here the disposition of the sinner to depart from God. The prodigal took his journey into a far country, where he thought he should be out of the sight of his father, and where he should feel free from restraint, and be at liberty to follow the inclination of his heart. So sinners, when at a great distance from God, cast off restraints, and go on boldly in sin. They may fear detection from mortals, but they have wandered so far from God, that the thought of his presence does not disturb them. They live “without God in the world.”

“And there wasted his substance in riotous living.”

Sin is expensive. And sinners use the bounties of providence to no better purpose than to gratify a depraved inclination. All the good things which God bestows upon them are wasted. He feeds and clothes them, that they may go and work in his vineyard; But the language of their hearts is: “Who is the Almighty that we should serve him?” He calls them to engage in the christian warfare, but they go and join his enemies. Instead of labouring to build up, they are labouring to destroy the Redeemer's kingdom. They are employed in the service of Satan, and at the same time riot on the bounties of God's providence. Sinners also waste their advantages for securing eternal life. They are favoured with a day of grace—a season for repentance—a precious opportunity to secure an interest in Christ, and to lay up a treasure in heaven. But they will not attend to the concerns of their souls. This precious season of probation is fast drawing to a close, and notwithstanding the kind and melting invitations, and solemn warnings which are addressed to them in the word of God, they persist in the road to death. All the labour and pains taken for their conversion

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and salvation, so far as they are concerned, are lost; nay, worse than lost, for all their abused privileges will serve as so many weights to sink them deeper and deeper in hell. They have lived so long—and yet nothing is done. They have wasted their privileges. They have heard so many sermons, and yet nothing is done. They have lived so many years, and have wasted them all, and thus they continue to waste the precious day of salvation. A price is put into their hands to get wisdom, but they have no heart to it.

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his field to feed swine.”

The prodigal was now in a wretched condition—had spent all—was in a land of famine—and began to be in want. But he had too much pride to be willing to return home to his father. He therefore went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, who, deeming him fit for nothing else, sent him into his fields to feed swine. This represents the condition of a sinner beginning to be awakened. He finds himself in a wretched condition. He is entirely destitute—has spent all—is awfully in debt to the justice of God—is in a land of famine—in a world that can give him no relief. He is now invited and entreated to return home to God, and cast himself on his mercy. But his proud heart revolts at such a proposal. He is too stubborn to confess his sin, and ask forgiveness. Nor can he bear the thought of engaging in the service of God. He prefers the service of Satan, the God of this world. Rather than break off his sins by righteousness, he will serve the vilest of masters, and submit to the meanest employments.

“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat.”

This represents the unsatisfying nature of all sinful pleasures. The sinner may think to find happiness in the enjoyment of the world, but he will not succeed. His soul is ever restless, and nothing in this world can satisfy its boundless desires. He is never satisfied with the past; and the more he indulges his sinful inclinations, the stronger they become. It is just like

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feeding on husks to satisfy the cravings of hunger. The more the sinner attempts to satisfy himself with sinful gratifications, the more uneasy

and miserable he becomes. He plunges himself deeper and deeper in misery at every step. And yet he cleaves to his sins, and would fain satisfy himself with sinful pleasures. But he will not succeed. O, sinner! how shall we convince you of your folly? Look at this wretched prodigal. Go to the field; see him among the noisy swine. See him feeding on husks, when in his father's house there is bread enough and to spare. See him famishing and just ready to perish with hunger. Go, sinner, and plead with him to return home to his father. Is he not beside himself? Pity him; for die he certainly must, unless prevailed on to return to his father's house. Go, sinner, and tear from him his husks, and show him his folly. If, after all, you cannot persuade him to return to his father—if you must leave him to perish in the field—then, O sinner, if you will not be persuaded to drop your sins, and go home to God as a humble penitent, I must leave you to perish in your own corruptions; for let me tell you, thou art the man. There is no other prodigal, but just such a sinner as thyself.

“And no man gave unto him.”

We may suppose that when the prodigal became anxious about his condition, he was surrounded by sinful companions, no one of whom would advise him to return to his father. If he made known his distress, they would probably attempt to divert his attention, by offering him some sinful pleasure, which would only increase his torment. At all events, they would do nothing to relieve his wretchedness. And thus it fares with the sinner, when he begins to be alarmed at his awful condition. He is among sinners, who are ignorant of his condition. Not one of them is a friend to his soul. Not one of them will point him to the Saviour, and urge him to return home to God. If he makes known his distress to his sinful companions, they will sometimes mock at his sufferings, or attempt to divert his attention from the concerns of his soul.

“And no man gave unto him.”

Nor is it in the power of any man to relieve an awakened

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conscience. No arm of flesh can help him. And after having looked round on all sides for help, he sometimes begins to think he has not a friend on earth. Thus, friendless and hopeless, he is almost ready to sink in despair. He feels that he is lost.

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Thus far we have followed the departing prodigal. Let us turn our attention

II. To the returning prodigal.

“And when he came to himself.”

This was the turning point. We have here a beautiful representation of the change which takes place in the sinner, when his heart is renewed by divine grace. The expression implies that he had been beside himself, and that he had now come to his right mind. Who are the sinners that will not this day return home to God like the repenting prodigal? The Bible represents them all as madmen—“madness is in their hearts.” Such is the infatuation of every impenitent sinner, that he may with great propriety be said to be beside himself. Time will not permit me to enlarge on this point. But I will just inform the sinner that if he does not this day return home to God, like the repenting prodigal, it will be because he prefers to run the tremendous risk of lying down in hell to all eternity. I would now appeal to the conscience of every one who hears me, whether it is extravagant to say, that the person who is willing to run such a risk, is beside himself.

But to return. The sinner has now come to himself. He views his past conduct with astonishment, and with unfeigned sorrow. He turns his thoughts homeward.

“How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger.”

He is now sensible of his folly in departing from his father, and wishes to return. But he knows that he is unworthy to be received. He is ready to say, did ever such a sinner obtain mercy? Will not my father spurn me from his presence? Can I hope to obtain his forgiveness? Vile as I am, I am resolved to try.

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father,

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I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.”

Never did a sinner adopt a better resolution. Let us examine its import. Every sinner is requested to attend and make the resolutions his own. *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.”* He had sinned against the God of heaven. It was this that grieved him. Not a word is said by way of excuse. He does not say: Father, I have come to make my apology for what I have done; I hope you will overlook my past conduct? and

I will endeavour to do better in future. He does not say: I have exposed myself to punishment. That was not the thing which lay with the greatest weight upon his mind; but the thought that he had sinned against God. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." What we have hitherto said of the prodigal since he came to himself, relates to the state of his heart. While he sat musing on his lost condition, all at once he *came to himself*. He began to see how stubborn he had been, and as his thoughts turned on his past conduct, his sins began to rise up to his view. He was almost overwhelmed at the sight. And while he sat mourning and weeping, the thought occurred to him that he had not confessed his sins as he ought. At the same time, he had different views respecting the presence of God. Hitherto he had been regardless of the divine presence. But now he had realised that God was perfectly acquainted with all his sins. During his wanderings he little thought that the eye of God was constantly upon him, and that all his secret sins were set in the light of his countenance. But all this, to his shame and confusion of face, this broken-hearted sinner now begins to realize; and he resolves no longer to cover his sins, but to confess them without any reserve.

"And he arose and came to his father."

But his father was not ignorant of what had taken place. He is represented as standing on an eminence where he could see to a great distance, and as anxiously awaiting the return of his son.

"But while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion."

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The father was affected by what he saw. He said nothing, but ran. Mercy is swift. But what did he see? And why did he run? Yonder, at a distance you may see him. Come, anxious sinners—come, careless sinners, all assemble round, and behold this sight. Yonder is something worthy of your notice. Borne down with distress, he has long been a wretched wanderer from his father's house—has squandered his substance—is worn down with hard labour in the service of the vilest of masters—has left all his sinful companions—is coming directly from the field, and from the mean employment of feeding swine—is famished, and just ready to perish with hunger, and has not a friend to help him. Borne down under a sense of his sin, he moves slowly along, while his father hastens to meet him. Ashamed and confounded you see him coming home, just as he is, in all his poverty and rags. In this situation his father

met him, *fell on his neck and kissed him*. What a meeting this! Is it possible? Yes; for it is the compassion of a God. Not a frown is seen on the father's face—Not an angry word drops from his lips.

With what kind reception does the poor broken-hearted sinner meet, who goes home to God just as he is. But a little while since you saw him arise to go to his father, that he might make his acknowledgement. But before he has time to carry his resolution fully into effect, he is graciously received. But does he keep back his confession? Listen—what do you hear? "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*" But why this confession, since he is already received to favour? Because, a sense of pardon, so far from lessening, tends only to increase the sorrow of the penitent. He esteems it a privilege to confess his sins. This confession of the prodigal is a striking example of genuine repentance. You will perceive that it was not prompted by a slavish fear of punishment; for his father had already kindly received him. Thus it is with every true penitent. If there were no future punishment, he would still confess his sins with godly sorrow. Though forgiven of God, he will feel that he can never forgive himself. When the prodigal first adopted this resolution, he

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intended, after confessing his sins, to petition for a low place among his father's hired servants. But before he had time to offer his petition, he was interrupted by his father.

"*But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe and put it on him.*"

It will be recollected, that the prodigal son had been long absent from home. He spent all his substance, and was reduced to poverty and rags. The moment he thought of returning home, he felt ashamed of himself. He could hardly endure the thought of appearing in the presence of his father, in such a mean and tattered dress. But it was in vain for him to attempt to procure a better garment, for he was poor, and had nothing to give in exchange. It was in vain for him to beg; *for no man gave unto him*. Equally vain was it for him to wait, for the longer he tarried, the worse his condition became. O, wretched sinner! He thinks of coming to God, but is ashamed to come as he is. But he must come just as he is, *wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, or he will never come at all.

The longer he labours to establish a righteousness of his own, the more wretched he becomes. The best robe—the robe of Christ's righteousness—is already prepared. This is the very best robe that was ever wrought; and what is more, it exactly befits the sinner. Clad in this robe, the sinner stands complete in the righteousness of Christ.

“And put a ring on his hand.”

A token of friendship—a pledge fitly representing the unchanging and never-ending love of God to the pardoned sinner.

“And shoes on his feet.”

“Shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Prepared to run in all the ways of holy obedience.

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“And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.”

The satisfaction found in religion, is here represented by a feast.

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“For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was, lost and is found.”

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His return was matter of astonishment. Had he actually come out from the grave, where he had long been buried and lost, it would not have been more surprising. The whole scene could not have been more interesting and joyful.

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Christians, at such a season, have introduced to their society, those who before were the greatest strangers to them. Characters to human view the most unlikely, are often made the subjects of renewing grace.

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“And they began to be merry.”

His sorrow is now turned into joy. Never before did he know what true happiness was. Thus was it with the sinners who had assembled around the Saviour when this parable was spoken. Thus was it when Philip preached in Samaria. “There was great joy in that city.” Thus is it in many places where God is now pouring out his Spirit and reviving his work. And thus it will be, wherever sinners are flocking to Christ. “Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.” In a revival of religion you may see this parable all acted out.

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“And they began to be merry.”

Here is the joy of the young convert. At this point I must stop; for the sinner can follow me no farther. Do sinners in this assembly wish to know the joy of this prodigal son? You will please to remember one word. If you lose that, I have lost my labour. One word, you will please to remember. If you lose that, you lose all. If you lose that, you lose your souls. *Go ye and do likewise.*

SERMON VIII

INDECISION IN RELIGION.

“How long halt ye between two opinions?”—1 Kings 18:21,

These were the words of the prophet Elijah. They were addressed to a large concourse of people assembled on Mount Carmel. Displeased with the character and worship of the true God, they had generally departed from him. But to quiet their consciences, they had set up and worshipped false gods. Conscience, however, is not so easily pacified. At times, it will admonish the sinner that all is not right. “Whither art thou going? What will be the end of thy course?” It led the idolatrous Israelites to hesitate, and halt between two opinions. They were fearful of the consequences of persisting in the worship of Baal; yet they could not bring themselves to decide to abandon his worship, and engage in the service of God. The prophet attempted to bring them to a decision on this subject. “And Elijah came unto all the people and said—How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”

This subject is applicable to all impenitent sinners. There is not a sinner in this house, who intends to die without an interest in Christ. And yet many have hitherto neglected the great salvation. When urged to secure immediately their immortal interests, they hesitate—they halt between two opinions; whether to begin a life of religion now, or to postpone the subject to a future opportunity. The text calls upon all such to come to a decided choice. Addressing such, let me inquire,

- I. Why you have hitherto neglected to come to a decided choice?
- II. How long do you purpose to halt?

- I. Why have you hitherto neglected to come to a decided choice?

It is not for the want of power. I speak now of what is usually denominated power. It is not for the want of faculties which render you capable of doing your duty. It is true, sinners are represented in the

Scriptures, as being *unable*, in a certain sense, to do what God requires. But this inability arises not from the want of faculties, but from the want of a disposition. They are said to be unable to do, what they have no inclination to do. Thus it is said of Joseph's brethren that they could not speak peaceably to him. Not because they were incapable of speaking peaceably, but because they hated him, and had no disposition to speak peaceably. When I say, therefore, that it is not for the want of power that you have hitherto neglected to come to a decided choice; I mean that you might have done it, had you been so disposed. It is plain that God does not condemn sinners for being unable, in this sense, to do their duty, but for being averse to their duty.

Let us appeal to facts on this subject. There are some sinners now in the prison of hell. Were they able to repent in the sense above explained? Able, or unable, the Lord punishes them, and will punish them to all eternity for not repenting. Is it for the want of power, or for the want of a disposition, that he punishes sinners? Evidently for the latter. It is not for the want of power that you have not repented. In the sense above explained, you have all the power that Christians have—all the power that you will ever have—all that is necessary to enable you to repent. If you had ten thousand times more, it would not give you a disposition to repent. An increase of power will not change the disposition. Nor—

2. Is it because God requires of you anything unreasonable. God's commandments are not grievous. What can be more reasonable than that you should be required to love God. If you were required to love a vile and hateful character, it would be hard. But it is not so. It is the perfect character of God. You are required also to repent of sin. Is not this reasonable? If you were required to repent of virtuous conduct, it would indeed

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be hard. But what can be more reasonable than that you should be required to repent of sin, that abominable thing which God's soul hateth.

Why do you not love God? Why do you not feel sorrow for sin? Why do you not love to pray and praise, and to perform all the duties of religion? Why have you not performed these duties long before this time? Not because they are grievous. Is it not more pleasant to walk in the path of duty, than in the path of sin? Are not the ways of wisdom, ways of pleasantness? Is there not joy and peace in believing? Is there

not a great reward in keeping God's commandments? Why, then, do you not obey them? Not because God requires anything unreasonable. Nor—

3. Is it because you have not been instructed in your duty. You cannot plead ignorance on this subject. You cannot say, that you did not know that there was a heaven and a hell. You cannot say, that you have not been warned to flee from the wrath to come. You cannot say, that the Spirit has not striven with you, and that you have not been warned of the awful danger of resisting the Spirit. You cannot say, that you have not been reminded of the uncertainty of life—of the certainty of death—and of the solemn scenes of judgement and eternity. The reason, therefore, that you have not come to a decided choice, cannot be that you have not been warned. Nor—

4. Is it because you have not had time. For what was time given you, but to prepare for eternity. Life and death have, for a long time, been set before you. From Sabbath to Sabbath, and from year to year, you have been called upon to make your choice. You have found time to sin; and why is it that you have found no time to repent, and pray, and become the disciples of Christ? If you had died yesterday, or the last year, you could not have said that you had not had time to prepare for death. This, then, is not the reason. Nor—

5. Is it because the subject is not important. There are but few who will not acknowledge the importance of the subject of religion. You may feel that you have important worldly business which demands your attention. But in comparison with

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this subject, it is nothing. All is vanity. "The fashion of this world passeth away." After all their labour, and sorrow, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, must meet on the same level, and lie down together in the grave. If you have not been laying up a treasure in heaven, you have been labouring in vain. In comparison with the subject of religion, all other subjects dwindle into nothing. The world itself will soon be destroyed. "The end of all things is at hand." "The earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." But the soul is immortal. Of all which you possess, that alone will survive the ruins of time. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Eternal life, and eternal death are before you, and will you say, that the subject is not all-important? If the sinner, after suffering in hell for thousands and thousands of years, could then be delivered, the subject

would not be so important—and yet, if you really believed that you were condemned to suffer extreme torment for a thousand years, how would you feel? What horror would seize upon you? Would not your case be awful? Would you not be alarmed? But this is nothing compared with the danger to which you are exposed. If the sinner, after suffering in hell thousands and thousands of years, could then hear the sound of pardon, his case would not be so alarming. We would not feel so anxious for him. We would not press him so earnestly to attend to the concerns of his soul. But it is not so. When the soul is once lost it is lost for ever. There is no other season of probation. The lost sinner must suffer while God exists. The reason, therefore, that you have not come to a decided choice, is not because the subject is not important. Nor—

6. Is it because salvation is not freely offered. The invitation is, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; buy wine and milk without money and without price.” “The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that heareth say, come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” “Come, for all things are now ready.” Salvation is now freely offered, and always has been;

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and you may rest assured, that it will never be offered more freely. Nor—

7. Is it because you intend to die without religion. Although you may labour to silence your fears, and soothe your consciences, yet you cannot always succeed. Although you may cast off fear and restrain prayer, yet, at times, you cannot but reflect that a day of reckoning is coming. You cannot but think of the shortness of human life, and the transitory nature of all sublunary pleasures. You know that you must die and go to judgement. I well know that you intend to die the death of the righteous. So did Balaam. So did thousands who are now in hell. Could you visit the lost spirits in hell, you could not find one who made his calculations to go to that place of torment. I know you do not intend to die without religion. Were you assured that in a few days, you must lie down in eternal sorrows, you would be overwhelmed, and begin to utter the cries and shrieks of the damned. It is evident then, that the reason that you have not come to a decided choice, is not because you intend to die without religion.

What, then, is the reason?

You have all the power that you will ever have.
 God's requirements are most reasonable.
 The terms of salvation will never be altered.
 You have time enough.
 The subject is of overwhelming importance.
 Salvation is freely offered.
 What, then, is the difficulty?

In answer to this inquiry, I would say, as queen Esther said of Haman, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked" heart. You do not like the duties of religion. Your hearts are so wicked that you will not come to Christ. This is the true reason.

1. The reason why we call upon you to come to Christ, is not because you cannot, but because you will not.

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2. The reason why God will punish you for not obeying him, is not because you cannot, but because you will not

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3. The reason why the Almighty power of God is necessary to draw you, is not because you cannot, but because you will not come to Christ.

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The whole difficulty is to be explained by correcting the sinner's views of his own depravity. Only admit that the sinner is so wicked, that he never will do what he can, you will see why we call—why God commands—why he will punish—and why his power is necessary to subdue the sinner's heart

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Other ways of explaining the difficulty have been devised, but they have all failed.

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No other reason, than the one here given, can be assigned, why do you not love God, repent of sin, and obey all the divine commands. This is the reason which conscience gives. It is the reason which God will give when you shall stand at his bar.

Having ascertained the reason why you have hitherto neglected to come to a decided choice—I proceed to inquire,

II. How long do you purpose to halt? How long do you intend to postpone this momentous concern? Permit me to bring the question home to your consciences—How long have you already put off this

subject? How many years have you lived without God in the world? How many warnings have you slighted? How long has the Spirit of God been striving with you? How large a part of your probation is gone?

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So long God has been waiting to be gracious,—and you have not yet begun to live for eternity... So many years of your probation is gone, and yet nothing is done. ... So much of the precious day of salvation you have spent worse than in vain.

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Once more we beseech you to make a solemn pause. Hitherto all warnings have proved ineffectual. Sometimes, like Felix, you have begun to tremble in view of a judgement to come. For a moment you have been alarmed, and have looked about you

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with solicitude, while the solemn realities of eternity have rushed upon your view. For a moment, you have been on the point of deciding. But you have gone away, and soon all has been forgotten. You have said, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Thus the matter has ended in a vain resolution, which has served only to harden the heart. No decided choice is yet made. Now how long do you intend to conduct in this manner? "How long halt ye?" The text demands the time—I pause for you to fix the time now ... Let me remind you that God sees you.

Let me also remind you that God's Spirit will not always strive. ... There is another consideration which you must not forget. Death is certain, and you have no security of life for a single moment. With these considerations in view, fix the time now when you will attend to the concerns of your souls. And decide as you shall wish you had done, when you open your eyes on the dread realities of the eternal world.

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My hearers, if there is nothing in religion, then renounce it. If the Bible is a fable, cast it away. But if it be true, as you profess to believe, why hesitate to obey its precepts? Being true, it is tremendously true.

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Ye parents, who never worship God in your families—this subject speaks to you. Your consciences have often been alarmed. You have been almost persuaded to adopt the resolution, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." But hitherto you have neglected this important

duty. Do you not see that you are likely to die as you are? Have you not the greatest reason to apprehend that you will go to the bar of God without having once prayed to God in your families? And yet you do not intend to neglect this duty till you die. Why then, halt any longer between two opinions?

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Our subject speaks to those who are in the morning of life. To you, my young friends, the present is a season of peculiar interest. Many of your companions are anxious for their souls.

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Some, we trust, have already come to a decided choice. They no longer halt between two opinions. They have chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away. They are now ready to leave *all* for Christ. They no longer hesitate whether to pursue the vanities of the world, or engage in the duties of religion. They are now about to bid you a long—an eternal farewell. At such a crisis, many anxious thoughts arise in your minds. While you see one and another of your companions leaving you, you cannot but reflect that you too have souls to be saved or lost. But still you halt between two opinions. On the one hand, you are unwilling to leave your sinful pleasures and companions. You are afraid of incurring the displeasure of God's enemies. You are ashamed to have it thought that you have any concern for your souls. You are ashamed to come out from the world, and openly espouse the cause of Christ. You are ashamed of Christ. On the other hand, you know that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" and that "the companion of fools shall be destroyed." You know that the season of youth will soon be over and gone for ever. You know that you must die, and go to judgement. You know that the Spirit of God will not always strive—that your day of grace is limited, and that you will soon have passed the bounds of divine mercy. At times, these thoughts alarm you. Is it not so, my young friends?

Perhaps, you are now on the point of deciding. You have been before. Your condition is no better, but is continually growing worse. How long will you trifle with your souls? This indecision is the high road to perdition—It is the path which all the wicked have trod, who have gone down to hell before you. They went halting between two opinions—flattering themselves that they should escape the second death. And you are treading in their steps. My young friends, God will not be mocked. The business of religion, above all others, requires decision. God requires

the whole heart. He will have that or he will have nothing. You are required without delay to break off your sins—to come out from the world—to leave all—to take up every cross, and follow Christ. If you

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halt at this, Christ will have nothing to do with you. If you are ashamed of him, he will be ashamed of you.

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You may think to obtain the favour of God by giving him a part of your services. Some have thus attempted to compromise with their Maker. Being ashamed of Christ, they have resolved to be religious in secret, and openly to serve the world. But you will not succeed in this attempt. "No man can serve two masters." You may in this way obtain a false hope; but you will not secure the favour of God. God will abhor all that you do. If you are not willing to engage in all the duties of religion, and to make an unreserved consecration of yourselves to God, you may stop where you are. The path to heaven is too strait. The righteous, who take to themselves the whole armour of God, will be scarcely saved. ...

Do you fear the reproach of your companions? Are you so weak, and so timid? Think what is the breath of an enemy of God, to the blast of the soul by the breath of the Almighty. If you fear the frown of a fellow worm, how will you stand in judgement with an angry God? Be entreated to stand halting no longer. Go one way or the other, with all your hearts. Life and death are now set before you, and God is witness to the choice you make.

In view of all that God and religion require, "how long halt ye?" In view of all the scorn and contempt of wicked men, "how long halt ye?"

Finally:—If the joys of heaven will not allure—if a bleeding Saviour has no charms for you—if the thunder of his vengeance does not strike terror through your guilty souls;—then halt no longer—go on—"Rejoice, O young man in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth." Cast off fear and restrain prayer—trample under foot the Son of God—Resist the strivings of the Holy Spirit—Sport with eternal vengeance and defy the thunders of the Almighty—But remember, that your fair morning will soon be turned into darkness. When your course is run, your bodies will fall into the grave, and your souls into the hands of the living God.

SERMON IX.

**THE FEARFUL CONDITION OF
APOSTATES.**

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and 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 he goeth 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.”—Matthew 12:43–45.

In these words our Lord describes the state of the unbelieving Jews. This he does by a parable, founded on the case of a demoniac.

Christ had just healed one possessed of a devil. But the pharisees, filled with envy, attributed the whole to Satanic influence. Our Lord repelled the blasphemous charge, and added a most solemn address on the unpardonable sin. At the close, he drew a picture of the state of that generation. The occasion furnished an example. After the description given in the text, he makes the application. “Even so also shall it be unto this wicked generation.” The text is also equally applicable to individuals under the gospel at the present day. We shall then consider it applicable

I. To the Jews.

II. To sinners under the gospel.

Our Lord knew the hearts of all men. When he cast out devils, he knew what took place. Invisible spirits—the powers of darkness were under his control. He cast out the spirits with his word.

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none.” It is not the man that walketh through dry places, as some have supposed, but the unclean spirit.

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The unclean spirit is supposed to quit possession of the man, doubtless at the approach of Christ, lest he should be expelled by force. Yet this is done contrary to his inclination, and therefore he cannot rest. Being disturbed, he walketh through dry, or *desert* places—places the most barren, and destitute of the water of life, and where there is nothing to oppose his designs—through dry places, where there are no showers of divine grace. *Seeking rest.* Being driven from one habitation, he seeks another, where he may rest in the hearts of men, and there carry on his designs, undisturbed by Christ. But he does not succeed. He seeketh rest, but being pursued, he findeth none.

Thus when Christ appeared among the Jews, wherever he went, he disturbed the powers of darkness. Evil spirits being driven from one habitation, sought another, where Christ was not known. Being pursued by the preaching of the gospel, and disturbed by the doctrine and miracles of Christ and his apostles, they departed for a time from the Jews to seek rest among the Gentiles, in those dry lands where the water of life had not been found.

But the evil spirit, being driven from place to place, and finding no rest, saith, “I will return into my house.” *My house.* The hearts of wicked men are the residence of unclean spirits. Here they dwell and carry on their designs against the Redeemer’s kingdom in this world. Wicked men are considered as the property and possession of the prince of darkness. He works in them, and by them as instruments to accomplish his purposes. They are called his servants—his children, and are led captive by him at his will. This is the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

“I will return into my house from whence I came out, and when he is come, he findeth it empty”—a lonesome, dreary mansion, without inhabitant, or any occupant to oppose his entrance. Christ had not been admitted. If he had been, it would not have been empty—empty of all good, and of many former obstructions, so that now there is room for more evil spirits.

“Swept and garnished”—prepared for his reception. On this discovery, “then goeth he and taketh with himself seven

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other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there." Thus reinforced, the possession becomes strong. They enter in and dwell there, without disturbance.

"And the last state of that man is worse than the first." The possession becomes strong, and more dreadful and incurable than ever. Even so was it also in fact, with that wicked generation.

The powers of darkness, driven from place to place, for a time, by the successful preaching of the gospel, and finding no rest, did actually return among the Jews. Their former habitation was indeed empty. The Spirit of God was gone. They had crucified the Saviour, and was abandoned by God himself. "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Evil spirits did actually return, found the hearts of the Jews empty, and repossessed that unbelieving generation. And thus they continue till the present day, seven times more hardened than they were before the coming of Christ.

But the parable is applicable

II. To sinners under the gospel.

It is more particularly applicable to individuals where the Lord appears to pour out his Spirit and revive his work.

Sinners are awakened to a sense of divine things. A solemn awe fills the place. The Lord appears in his glory. The powers of darkness flee at his approach; and one would think they had fled for ever—that all were about to become followers of Christ. But it is not so. Many a sinner is awakened who never becomes a true disciple of Christ. He is alarmed. He looks around, and perceives that all is vanity. He feels that he is mortal, and that he is acting for eternity. Surprised at his former stupidity, he breaks off his habits, and forms new resolutions. With amazing anguish, he looks forward into the eternal world. He is now determined to bid farewell to all sinful pleasures and companions. He listens with earnestness to the word of God. He begins to realize his lost condition. Everything which he hears or reads, condemns him. A dreadful sound is in his ears. The thunders of a broken law, and the wrath of an angry God, strike terror through his guilty soul. He now begins with all his might to recommend himself to God. And thus for a while

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he continues to read, and pray, and weep. An outward reformation has indeed taken place. And in this sense, the unclean spirit may be said to

have gone out of the man. But the state of his heart remains the same. Christ is not admitted to dwell there. Of this fact, the sinner himself is conscious. He knows that he has no love to God, or to the duties of religion. But he rests on what he is doing, and what he intends to do. He flatters himself that he is preparing to go to Christ—preparing to believe—preparing to repent. Meanwhile, the work of God goes on. Others are alarmed. They see and feel that they are lost, and earnestly inquire, what must we do to be saved. They are brought to repentance, and receive the Saviour into their hearts. The unclean spirit departs, and Christ sets up his kingdom in their hearts. Christ is formed in them the hope of glory. The Spirit of God descends like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. These are indeed times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

But such seasons are commonly of short continuance. The Lord is about to depart, and yet many who have been alarmed, are still without hope, and without God in the world. It is now an awful crisis. The awakened sinner will not remain long in his present condition. God has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." A few months usually decides the point, and heaven and hell are now depending. The scale is now turning. The Spirit of God departs, and the sinner is lost for ever. The evil spirit, as a roaring lion, walking up and down in the earth, seeking whom he may devour, now returns to his old abode. On examination, he finds it empty—a desolate and dreary mansion. The Spirit of God is gone—The Saviour is gone; and no Christian graces adorn the soul. It is swept of convictions, and serious thoughts. In this manner it is garnished, and furnished for the reception and entertainment of unclean spirits. His heart is prepared to welcome, and comply with their suggestions.

The dreadful state of this man is often marked—so plainly marked, that it cannot but be observed by others. He begins to manifest a reluctance to religious conversation. He carefully

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avoids those places where he apprehends danger of being interrogated on the subject of religion, and the state of his own heart. He is particularly cautious to avoid the company of those who are faithful to the souls of men.

The man who is in the state I am describing, has fled not only from serious company, and serious conversation, but what is worse, from the throne of grace.

Persons of this description sometimes profess to have changed their sentiments on the subject of religion. This they do to keep themselves in countenance, while their conduct is so glaring that they only betray the hypocrisy and deformity of their hearts. In them is fulfilled the words of the apostle. They received not the love of the truth; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they might believe a lie, and be damned.

Their conduct frequently becomes as loose as their sentiments. The company which before they avoided as dangerous, they now frequent. They return again to the same course of conduct, which before they regarded with abhorrence. Their apostasy is thus described by the apostle Peter: "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Having long been impatient under the restraints of religion, at length, they burst the bonds, and break through all restraints. And to ward off reproof, and keep themselves in countenance, they make it their business to scan the lives of others, and especially to rail against professors of religion.

The persons here described, are commonly the most hardened of any. I do not recollect an instance in which a person of this description was ever brought to repentance. *The last state of that man is worse than the first.*

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This was the case with numbers in the time of Christ and the apostles. Many who, for a while, listened with solemn attention to the instructions of Christ, and followed him from place to place, afterwards lost these impressions. Their apostasy was final. They went back, and walked no more with him. This is also the case of many in all places where the

gospel is faithfully preached. Such cases doubtless exist in every revival of religion.

You will carefully notice the character described. It is the case of one in whom powerful convictions, are succeeded by great obstinacy, and awful stupidity.

In regard to such individuals it may be observed, that there is no prospect that they will ever be brought to repentance. From our Lord's discourse we have reason to believe, that some of those whom he had addressed in the text, had committed the unpardonable sin We do not say that the persons described have committed that particular sin. This, however, may be the case. Nothing but deep repentance can prove that it is not so. And it should not be forgotten that all sin is unpardonable without repentance.

But it appears from various passages of Scripture, that some kinds of apostasy, whether they are to be regarded as the unpardonable sin or not, are equivalent to it. We are clearly taught that persons have in their lifetime passed the bounds of divine mercy. They have been given up of God. All the hope that any sinners will be saved, is in the sovereign mercy of God. If they are brought to repentance, it must be by the agency of the Holy Spirit. But of him, sinners are sometimes given up. They have done despite unto the Spirit of grace, and are given up to strong delusions to believe a lie. It is impossible to renew them again to repentance. God has said concerning them, they are joined to idols, let them alone.

Such persons have lost their day of grace. They are given over not only by the Holy Spirit, but by the Saviour himself. This was true of those to whom he said, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins." It was true of those over whom he wept, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou,

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at least, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes!" Their day of grace was past. Their eyes were blinded, and their doom was fixed.

Again—The persons here described will probably not be aware of their danger till they awake in hell. They flatter themselves that they shall repent before they die; and with this they quiet their fears. The Spirit of God has ceased to strive with them, but they are the last to conclude that this is the case, or that they are in any very great danger.

It is true they may have some flashes of conviction, some pangs of remorse; but they will soon pass away and leave the heart still more hard.

Sometimes, however, apostates have seen their awful condition a little before the close of life. Some in their last hours have been made awful monuments of the truth of God's word, and have been filled with horror which no tongue can describe.

But their destruction is generally more sudden. "When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape." "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." As it was in the days of Noah, so it is now—"They knew not until the flood came and took them all away. So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." Generally, those that are given up to hardness of heart, are also given up to blindness of mind. Their consciences being seared as with a hot iron, they are past feeling. O, how awful is their state! Nothing can alarm them. On hearing their state described, one would think that they might now be seen trembling on their seats. But it is not so. Nothing moves them. They are not affected by all the solemn and momentous considerations addressed to them in the gospel—by heaven on the one hand, and hell on the other. These considerations may be presented to them by the faithful preacher, in the kindest and most affectionate manner, and produce no other effect than a smile of contempt.

Such persons are commonly given over by all serious, praying people. If you attempt to give them a friendly warning, it will only exasperate them. "He that reproveth a scorner getteth

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to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth to himself a blot." Hence the direction, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee." When such obstinacy and contempt are manifest, Christ says to us, let them alone.

If the Lord should again revive his work, it is not expected that these persons will be made subjects of it. Those who have been partially awakened, and whose convictions have not been wholly lost, may again be awakened. But those who have had powerful convictions, and who have wholly lost their concern, and who have gone so far as to make light of the subject of religion, will in all probability be passed by. A second and a third revival have been witnessed where persons of this

description have been uniformly left in awful stupidity and hardness of heart *Their last state is worse than the first.*

It now remains to apply the subject. Are there any persons present whose case has been described? We shall pass them by. There is nothing in the law, and nothing in the gospel which will affect their hearts. Neither the mercies of God, nor the terrors of his wrath—neither the joys of heaven nor the pains of hell, can awake them from their slumbers. Nothing but the Almighty power of God can do it. But of him they are given up. The Holy Spirit lets them alone. And could we see, and certainly know them, we too would let them alone. They have “trodden under foot the Son of God;” and “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries.” Hence it is a hopeless undertaking for the servants of God to undertake anything for their recovery. Our object in holding up their case to your view, my hearers, is to warn others to beware.

Although we cannot expect to give them a sense of their danger, we point you to their condition, that those of you who are not yet given up of God, may take warning. We would especially point those of you who are now anxious for your souls, to the rocks on which others have made shipwreck of their souls. These, O sinner, like yourself, were once alarmed they turned to flee out of Sodom, but, while lingering on the

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plain, they turned back in their hearts, and have now become pillars of salt. These monuments are to be found in many places where God has lately revived his work. Whether there are any persons of this description in this place, it is not for me to say. God knoweth. I am permitted to say to every sinner, if you will repent you will be saved. But those who are given up of God, will not repent. They may resolve and re-resolve, but they will die the same. These persons, if there are any such here, will doubtless go from this house as stupid as they came. Instead of applying this subject to themselves, they will endeavour to silence their fears, and to soothe their consciences. Instead of labouring to be convinced of sin, and to come to repentance, they will attempt to justify their conduct, and to flatter themselves that they never have been awakened. Instead of being alarmed about themselves, and inquiring what they must do to be saved, they will, perhaps, go from this place finding fault with others, particularly with professors of religion. Instead

of repairing to the throne of grace, and crying for mercy; they will say in their hearts to the Almighty, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him." No person will be more likely to go away finding fault with this discourse, than that very man whose case I have described.

Do you feel no concern for the salvation of your souls, you have awful reason to fear that the case described is your own. There is no safety here. Do you begin to feel some concern for the salvation of your souls. Beware, then, O sinner, beware of every approach to so tremendous a precipice. It is dangerous, awfully dangerous to resist the strivings of the Spirit. It is plain from the Scriptures, that the Spirit does strive with man, and that he will not always strive. How often he will strive with this man, and how often with that man, we cannot tell, but God knows perfectly well. Now, to resist the last effort of the Spirit of God on the soul, is what plunges the sinner into this hopeless state.

While the Spirit is striving, the sinner feels himself moved

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by something, he cannot tell what. He is alarmed. He feels anxious for his soul. But he resists. The Spirit withdraws, and he becomes careless again. The sinner flees to some diversions, or perverts some doctrines to give ease to his troubled conscience; or fixes on some self-righteous plan. In some way or other he gets relief. The Spirit visits him again and again. The sinner still resists its strivings, until the last time is come.

Awful crisis! Once more he moves upon the heart of the sinner. He is now for the last time awakened. But alas! he wards off conviction! He says, depart—depart. The Spirit bids him adieu—And the sinner is gone for ever.

SERMON X.

THE DANGER OF HYPOCRISY.

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom and five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.”—Matthew 25:1–8.

The parable, of which the text is a part, was intended to represent, not the state of the world at large, but the visible church, and to teach the danger of making a hypocritical profession of religion. The incidents are taken from the customs which prevailed among the Jews in connection with the marriage solemnity. It was customary for the bridegroom to come, attended by his friends, late at night, to the house of the bride, who was expecting his arrival, attended by her bridesmaids, who, upon being notified of the bridegroom's approach, were to go out with lamps in their hands to meet him and accompany him to the house. These were usually ten in number. “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.”

By the kingdom of heaven is meant the visible church. The ten virgins represent professors of religion. The bridegroom is Jesus Christ.

The parable may be applied to the whole church collectively, or to the individual professors of religion. In the former case, the coming of Christ may be considered to be at the day on judgement, when the church, the Lamb's wife, will have made herself ready. In the latter case, the coming of Christ may be

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considered to be at death. It is in reference to individuals that I shall at present consider it.

They "took their lamps." This denotes their profession of religion.

They "went forth to meet the bridegroom." This denotes their journey through life, in which they profess to be travelling towards heaven.

"While the bridegroom tarried." His delay denotes the whole term of life.

"They all slumbered and slept." This denotes that spiritual sloth which is too often visible in the lives of christian professors.

"At midnight, there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh." This denotes the solemn summons made by the sudden and unexpected approach of death.

"Go ye out to meet him." They must go out of time into eternity to meet Christ in judgement.

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." The loud summons of death will arouse from their slumbers both christians and hypocrites, and lead them to inquire whether they are prepared to meet their God.

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil." Oil is the emblem of grace in the heart, which constitutes the distinguishing characteristic of the true child of God.

"For our lamps are gone out." But how could they go out, if they had never been lighted, and how could they have been lighted without oil? Here I pause, and propose to my audience this question. Does not this text prove that real christians may fall from grace, and finally perish?

That it teaches this doctrine has often been strenuously maintained. It has been asked, with an air of triumph, "How could their lamps have gone out, if they had never been lighted? And how could they have been lighted without oil?"

Let us test the force of this reasoning. If it can be fairly made to appear, that Christ did, in this parable, intend to teach that some who shall be finally excluded from heaven, were once real christians, it is conclusive argument against the doctrine of the saint's perseverance. And the argument will take a tremendous

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sweep. It will go far towards proving that one-half of the whole number of real christians are finally lost. For "*five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*"

But what is the proof that the foolish virgins denote those who were real christians? It rests solely on their own testimony. "*And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*"

The evidence against them rests on the declaration of Christ. He says, "five of them were wise, and five were foolish." Now, if all were christians, then all were wise. The terms wise and foolish are used in the scriptures to designate the righteous and the wicked.

But were they not wise when they commenced their journey? Did they not take oil with them, and afterwards become foolish by suffering their lamps to go out? This is, doubtless, what they intended to intimate. But what was the fact? Christ asserts that they took no oil with them, and plainly intimates that their folly consisted in taking their lamps without oil. If they had one drop of oil, or one spark of light kindled by the oil of grace, the declaration of Christ cannot be true. Here lies the contradiction. Not that our Saviour contradicts himself; for he never said that their lamps had gone out. He only relates what the foolish virgins say of themselves. The contradiction lies between Christ and the foolish virgins. They would intimate that they had once had religion, and lost it; for say they, "*Our lamps are gone out.*" But Christ says no such thing. He says, "*they were foolish, and took no oil with them.*"

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The only difficulty in understanding this parable, seems to arise from taking it for granted that what hypocrites and apostates say of themselves must be true, although it contradicts the plain declarations of Christ.

From this. parable we learn—

1. That many professors of religion will be finally lost. "The kingdom of heaven"—*i.e.* the visible church, which is composed of those who profess the true religion—is likened unto ten virgins—five of whom were wise, and five were foolish. The church

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is composed in part of hypocrites, who will never be admitted to heaven.

This solemn truth our Saviour has most explicitly taught. He would have us all remember it, and take warning. Many who belong to the same church, who profess the same creed, assemble in the same sanctuary, and commune at the same table, will never meet in heaven. In some churches a majority may be saved. In Sardis, a few names only were found who had not defiled their garments. ... "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness."

Will you say that such representations are uncharitable? But shall we pretend to be more charitable than Christ? If, my brethren, you do not suspect danger from this quarter, you reject and set at nought some of the most solemn warnings which our Saviour ever delivered to man. Many will take up with a mere empty profession of religion. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you, yourselves, thrust out."

This warning is delivered to professors of religion. Of them it is said, "Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." Many will stand without, knocking when it will be too late. And may not some of us be found among that number?

2. Persons who appear alike now, may possess characters widely different in the sight of God. "Man looketh on the

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outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." No degree of exactness in externals can determine the state of the heart. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly." Our Saviour speaks of some whose outward

appearance was indeed beautiful, and yet he compares them to whited sepulchres, within "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."

Without a *beautiful* external appearance, we may safely conclude there is no religion. If true religion exists in any church or any individual, there must be outward appearance. The light must and will shine. But where the appearance is the same, there may be a great difference in the sight of God—a difference wide as that between light and darkness—holiness and sin—heaven and hell.

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3. It should be our great and constant object to be prepared for the coming of Christ.

All our views and aims, and everything which we say and do, should have reference to that solemn event. Every moment we should stand prepared to hear the summons, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." This is our business; to be ready now. If we are not, we do not live agreeably to our profession. Brethren, are you prepared to hear the summons? "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding."

4. Real christians, even the very best of them, are never too much engaged in religion. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."

There may be a misguided and false zeal. But true christian zeal—humble, holy love to God, can never rise too high. "All slumbered and slept." The Bible is full of complaints of the sloth and lukewarmness of christians, and loud warnings and exhortations to them to awake—to be zealous and repent. Every christian will hereafter look back and reproach himself, because his heart was no more deeply and warmly engaged in the cause of Christ. At the hour of death, not one will have to lament that he has laboured too hard, and been too much devoted to the service of

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Christ. At that solemn hour, every child of God will wake up as he never did before. The very moment he meets Christ in another world, he will doubtless blush at his past stupidity. Never will christians be sufficiently awake, till their hearts burn with an angel's flame.

6. We see in what lies the distinction between true and false professors of religion.

Not in the head, but in the heart. "The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." Here is something which they *took*, and which the others did not. It is a difference of *hearts*. The one has *oil in his vessel*, the other has not. One is solicitous mainly about his *heart*, that *that* may be replenished with all the christian graces. The other takes up with an empty profession. "He is a Jew, which is one *inwardly*, and circumcision is that of the *heart*, in the *spirit*, and not in the *letter*."

6. We learn from this subject, the true reason why so many professors of religion will be lost.

On this point, there is a difference of opinion. Some say, it is because they once had religion in their hearts, but have since lost it. So said the foolish virgins: "our lamps are gone out." But Christ has given us the true reason. He declares that they were foolish, and "took no oil with them." The reason why so many will be lost, is not because they have lost true religion, but because they never had it. They did not *begin right*. They took the lamp of profession without grace in their hearts. This was their folly. It was their final ruin. None are more likely to fail of salvation than persons of this class. To all such, the Saviour says, "Verily, I say unto you, publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

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My brethren, in application of this solemn warning of our Saviour, what shall I say! Shall I exhort you, without distinction, to persevere—to hold on, and hold out to the end? Shall I hold up to the view of all who hear me, that glorious promise, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved?" Alas, my brethren, there is one class of professors of religion, who, if they do persevere, if they do hold on, and hold out to

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the end, will certainly be lost. Such promises are often quoted for the encouragement of all who make any pretensions to religion. But, my hearers, we must sometimes warn you to pause and *examine yourselves*. If you are new creatures in Christ—if you have entered the *strait gait and the narrow way*—then go on—endure to the end and be saved. But if you have only a name to live while you are dead, you are warned to stop. Let the fatal example of the foolish virgins serve as a warning to you, *now to begin with your hearts*. Suppose the search should be made throughout this congregation—that every heart should now be laid

open—and that five out of every ten should be found who have no love to God—no light in them. Awful disclosure! What shall be done? All are travelling on together, and soon will their journey close. Shall they hold on, and hold out to the end? But some have no oil in their vessels.

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Brethren, are your hearts right with God? Are they replenished with all the christian graces? And do they burn with love to Christ, as you talk together by the way? *Have old things passed away, and all things become new?* If so, then go on—endure to the end, and you shall be saved.

But if your hearts are not thus prepared—stop where you are. Go no farther. “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” Go back—for you are on the road to death. Go back, I entreat you, and enter the strait gate and the narrow way. Persevere a little longer—take a few more steps in your present course, and you will be for ever too late. Make haste, for the time is far spent, and Christ is at hand. “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Haste thee, for the messenger of death is near; and, “behold, the bridegroom cometh.” “Then they that are ready will enter heaven; and the door will be for ever shut.”

SERMON XI.

THE GREAT SALVATION.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation”—Hebrews 2:3.

The apostle had just been speaking of the glorious author of this salvation. He calls him “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” In view of his exalted character, and of what he had done and suffered for the salvation of sinners, the apostle warns us to *take heed*; “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received the just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Which at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”

In discoursing from the text I propose to consider:

I. In what the greatness of this salvation consists?

II. Who are guilty of neglecting it?

III. The import of the language, “*How shall we escape?*”

I. In what the greatness of this salvation consists? It is a great salvation.

1. Because it delivers from great and awful punishment. The punishment denounced against the wicked is dreadful in its *nature*. “They shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” This punishment will be inflicted by God himself. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” When God arises to take vengeance, it will be inconceivably dreadful. “On the wicked God

shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup."

This punishment will be dreadful in its *duration* The eternal happiness of the righteous, is no more clearly revealed than the

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eternal punishment of the wicked. Those who shall be cast into the prison of hell, will have nothing with which to discharge their immense debt to the justice of God; and yet our Saviour has declared, "Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." The duration of this punishment is set forth in such language as the following:—"They shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt"—"To whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever"—"To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever"—"Punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"—"The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." But what decides the point, are these despairing expressions: "Cast into fire that shall never be quenched"—"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"—"Nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned"—"Whose end is destruction." If there should ever be a period in eternity when the wicked will be delivered from hell, this language would not be true. It could not be said, "their end is destruction." However long they might suffer in hell, their *beginning* would be destruction, and their end salvation. Abraham said to the rich man, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." And is not this a great and awful punishment? And is not deliverance from such a punishment a great salvation?

2. It is a great salvation, because it could be effected by nothing short of the death of the Son of God. "Redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ." "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission"—no, not of a single sin—not the blood of a sinner—not the blood of an angel. The mystery runs back to the triune God. Nothing but the precious blood of the Son of God can atone for sin. Here justice and mercy are gloriously displayed. For when Christ stood in the place of sinners, God did not in the least suffer his wrath to cool. He said, "Awake, O sword against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow."

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Surely a salvation, purchased at so dear a rate, is a great salvation.

3. It is a great salvation, because it delivers from the reigning power and dominion of sin. It is not merely a deliverance from punishment, the effect of sin; but a deliverance from sin itself. "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt." With their present disposition, they would be forever hateful and hating one another—tormented, and tormenting one another, by the rage and fury of their passions. Now it is the glory of this salvation, that it delivers from the dominion of sin, and sets the prisoner free from all these dreadful evils.

The christian, who now exclaims, "O wretched man that I am," can add, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The author of this salvation, was "called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins." This salvation is every way suited to those who hate sin, and who desire to be delivered from it as the worst of evils.

4. It is a great salvation, because it introduces those who accept it, into a state of complete holiness and eternal happiness, in the full enjoyment of God, and the society of all holy beings. There they will be adorned with every grace, which can render them happy in themselves, and lovely in the sight of God. "We will beautify the meek with salvation." They will be "accounted worthy to obtain that world." "Neither can they die any more, for they are equal to the angels." "Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father." And they shall sing, "Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever."

This, my hearers, is the salvation offered in the gospel. With a sense of the vast importance of the subject, let us inquire,

II. Who are guilty of neglecting this salvation?

Need I mention the openly immoral? The covetous, drunkards, swearers, railers, thieves, and all liars, we are assured shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. All who live in open wickedness—all who speak lightly of religion and its professors, are convinced

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in their own consciences, and need not to be informed that they are guilty of neglecting salvation. Passing by these, I remark, that all who do not comply with the terms on which salvation is offered, are guilty

of neglecting it. These terms are repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. All, therefore, who do not repent and believe, are, by the living God, charged with the guilt of neglecting the salvation of the gospel.

But is the awakened sinner, who trembles under the fearful apprehensions of divine wrath, and who cries earnestly for mercy, chargeable with this guilt? Christ says, "He that is not with me is against me." It is plain that all who do not repent, whatever else they may have done, shall perish. It is equally plain that all who perish from under the light of the gospel, whatever may have been their distress and their strivings, will be charged with the guilt of neglecting salvation, and of treading under foot the Son of God. It must be remembered, that this is a holy salvation. The name of its author is Jesus. He saves his people from their sins. Whatever sinners may do, for the purpose *merely* of escaping punishment, while they do not long for deliverance from sin, they are still guilty of neglecting the Saviour. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." If, therefore, sinners do not desire deliverance from their sins, they do not desire such a Saviour. What the prophet says is true of them. "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." All sinners desire to be delivered from punishment, and to be made eternally happy. But if this is all, they do not desire the salvation offered in the gospel; for that is a salvation from sin. Now, my hearers, do you desire this salvation? Is sin odious in itself? Is it your greatest burden, and that from which above all things, you long to be delivered? If so, then you desire the salvation of the gospel; and this salvation shall be yours. But if you do not desire to be delivered from sin, you do not desire the salvation of the gospel; and you do, of course, neglect it. Mistake not your hatred of punishment, for hatred of sin. Mistake not the fear of hell, for the dread of offending a holy God. "Devils believe and tremble."

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Let no one imagine that he desires the holy salvation of the gospel, while he cannot be persuaded to lead a holy life; or while his repentance does not flow from supreme love to God. For here that salvation begins, which is to be consummated in complete deliverance from sin, and in perfect love to God and his law. However much the sinner may flatter himself that, by his good wishes and laborious exertions, he is seeking salvation, if he does not now repent of sin, he is still under the condemning

sentence of God's law, and stands charged with the guilt of neglecting the only method of deliverance.

I proceed to consider,

III. The import of the expression, *How shall we escape?*

It is an interrogation containing the strongest assertion that those who neglect the salvation of the gospel shall not escape destruction. Merely neglecting salvation is sufficient to insure this result. Overt acts of wickedness are not mentioned in the text. It does not say, that those only who have been guilty of grossly immoral conduct shall not escape. All that is necessary to render the sinner's damnation certain, is mere indifference and neglect. He need not scoff at religion, if he will only let it alone, and like Galileo care for none of those things, he will be lost. Those who are saved must strive, and run, and fight, and make great exertions; but to treat religion with neglect, is all that is necessary to destroy the soul.

If this salvation is neglected, all the sinner's schemes to escape will utterly fail. I know that those who have hitherto neglected salvation, flatter themselves they shall in some way escape. But how will you escape? Do you presume that you shall repent and embrace the Saviour before life closes? But have not your hearts long been hardening under the gospel; and are they not becoming harder and harder every day? What reason have you to suppose you shall hereafter love what you now hate? Have you not great reason to fear that you will continue to reject the offers of mercy, and die in your sins?

Do you imagine that you may, in some way or other, appease the anger of God? But how can you appease his wrath, while you continue to reject the Saviour? God out of

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Christ is a consuming fire. He is angry with the wicked every day.

Do you imagine that if you cry earnestly to God for mercy at some future time, he will certainly pity your case, and have mercy on your soul? But how can you presume on his mercy if you refuse now to listen to his calls? His Spirit shall not always strive with man. Your day of grace is limited. There is a day—an hour—a moment—which if you pass impenitent, you are lost forever.

Do you flatter yourselves that you shall not die suddenly, but shall have sufficient warning of approaching death, to make preparation? But will God, in condescension to your desire of continuance in sin, defer

the stroke of death, lest you should go down quickly into hell? Those who are now in hell once thought and felt as you do now. But "he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." How will you escape the solemn hour of death? How will you retain the spirit, when these bodies shall turn to corruption, and crumble into dust?

The blood of Christ now proclaims mercy to the sinner, but it will shortly cry for vengeance on the guilty soul. "Behold he cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." And how will you escape the dreadful sight, ye murderers of the Son of God? Will you flee from the presence of the Judge? Will you escape to the rocks and mountains for shelter; or will you dig into the bowels of the earth to find a place of concealment; "The hour cometh when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth." The sea shall give up the dead that are in it. Death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them. The Judge shall "sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." In vain will guilty sinners now call to the rocks and mountains, saying, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall

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be able to stand?" How will you escape? Who will be able to stand?

Do you expect to be overlooked in the transactions of the judgement day? Will you be unobserved in the vast assembly? But how can you escape the omniscient and all-searching eye of Jehovah?

Will you resist? Have you an arm like God? Will you raise your feeble arm against Omnipotence? How shall you escape?

Now the righteous Judge descends. The long-neglected Saviour comes. Every eye shall see him. Mercy turns to wrath. Sleeping vengeance now awakes. Rebels, once deaf to his call, now shall hear his voice.

"See the Judge's hand arising,
Filled with vengeance on his foes."

Jesus, whose charming and inviting voice once sounded in the gospel, shall now pronounce their final doom—*Depart*. And how will you escape the dreadful sentence?

Horror and despair shall seize their guilty souls. And how will you escape the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels? Now they that are filthy will be filthy still. When ages on ages have rolled away, how will you escape the wrath to come? How will filthy and horrid blasphemers pay the still increasing debt, or pass the fixed gulf, or enter the pure and spotless regions of immortal life?

Once more I entreat you, cast your thoughts forward into a boundless eternity before you take the tremendous leap into the bottomless pit, and remember that the great salvation is still within your reach. What must be the reflection of that sinner who has lost his soul? "Once I enjoyed a day of salvation—once I heard the offer of pardon; but wretch that I am, I rejected it."

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He suffers on millions of ages, and then rejects again,—“Once I enjoyed a day of salvation. Once, millions of ages back, I remember well the time—it was near the commencement of my being—I was for a moment on trial for eternity. I heard of

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heaven, and I heard of hell. I was warned to flee from the wrath to come, but I neglected the great salvation.”

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Again, he suffers on millions and millions of ages, and then reflects again. “O, what a precious season I once enjoyed. But alas! it is gone forever. O, that I could once more hear the voice of the Saviour, and the sound of the gospel.” But

“In that lone land of deep despair,
 No Sabbath's heavenly light shall rise,
 No God regard your bitter prayer,
 Nor Saviour call you to the skies.
 No wonders to the dead are shown,
 The wonders of redeeming love:
 No voice his glorious truth makes known
 Nor sings the bliss of climes above.”

I look forward to blackness of darkness for ever—Eternity—It is an ocean without a shore. O eternity, eternity!—But stop, my hearers,—Here you are, out of hell. This is the time which thousands will lament for their neglect of salvation, through a long eternity. Awake, sinner.

“Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.”
Now heaven, with all its glories, is brought within your reach.

“Salvation, O the joyful sound.”

Yet a little while, my hearers, and time with you will be no more.

“Seize the kind promise while it waits,
And march to Zion’s heavenly gates,
Believe and take the promised rest,
Obey, and be for ever blest.”

SERMON XII

SELF EXAMINATION.

*“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith,”—2 Corinthians
13:5.*

The Corinthians, to whom Paul wrote, were disposed to inquire whence he derived his authority as an apostle; and to *seek a proof of Christ speaking in him*. But he exhorted them to turn their attention to themselves, and examine into their own spiritual state. As there was great danger of self-deception in relation to this momentous concern, this was the most proper employment for them. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

The duty enjoined in the text is no less important to us than it was to the Corinthians, and is as binding on professors of religion now, as in the days of the Apostles.

There are two thoughts suggested by the text.

I. A person may be a christian without certainly knowing it.

II. He who is a true christian may know it.

The first of these propositions is sometimes denied. It is said that the change in regeneration is such, that no person can be the subject of it, without a knowledge of the fact. But if this be true, the direction in the text is needless. It can be applicable to no one. It cannot be applicable to the sinner; for, on this supposition, if he does not know that he is a christian, he must be a sinner, of course, and so for him to examine would be useless. It cannot be applicable to the christian, for if he knows

that he is a christian, for him to examine would also be useless. Hence, it is evident, from the direction in the text, that a person may be a christian without certainly knowing it.

Again—the same truth is evident from the nature of the case. A person must be born again before he can know it; and the method by which he is to ascertain whether he has been born

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of the Spirit is, to examine the exercises of his heart, and see whether he possesses the fruits of the Spirit.

That a person may be a christian without knowing it, is also evident from the fact, that rules are laid down in the Bible, by which we are to examine and try ourselves. All this would be useless, on the supposition that no one can be a child of God without knowing it.

But it is important here to observe, that we do not assert that a person can be a christian, and yet know nothing about it. He who is a christian has been born again—he has passed from death unto life—he has been called out of darkness into marvellous light. That a person can experience all this, and know nothing about it, is plainly impossible. No person can exercise faith in Christ, repentance for sin, and love to God, without being sensible that a great change has taken place in his views and feelings, respecting divine objects. But whether it is the change which is necessary to prepare him for heaven, he may be in doubt. The person who has experienced no important change in his views and feelings respecting divine objects, should conclude, of course, that he is without God in the world. But if he is sensible that some change has taken place, in order to determine whether it is the change required, he must compare his religious exercises with the rules laid down in the Word of God. But, notwithstanding, a person may be a christian without knowing it, yet, as I propose to show—

II. He who is a true christian may know it; that is, he may obtain satisfactory evidence of the fact.

This is evident from several examples recorded in the scriptures. Job could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." He was assured that Christ was *his* Redeemer. "And that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom mine eyes shall behold, and not another." He felt assured that he should behold Christ for *himself*, as his portion, with his own eyes, in his own body raised from the dead. Paul could say, "I know

in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him

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against that day." In respect to his christian race and his warfare, the event was not to him uncertain. "I, therefore, so run, not as uncertainly—so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." He could say also, in connection with some of his Corinthian brethren: "For we *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And thus also, the Apostle John could say, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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." Here the apostle's assurance is twice asserted. "Now are we the sons of God." And "we know that we shall be like him." Again—"We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "And hereby we *know* that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." From these and other passages of scripture, it appears that christians may arrive at the full assurance of hope; and that some actually have attained to this assurance in the present life. It is a privilege to which all are exhorted to attain. "We desire," says the Apostle, "that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Again—"Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election *sure*." And again in the text: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Although the full assurance of hope may not be common among christians, yet we see that it is attainable. We are also taught how it is to be obtained. It is by *self-examination*, and by giving *diligence*. It is owing to the neglect of these, that christians often walk in darkness. It is also owing to the neglect of self-examination, that many are filled with a vain confidence. They are disposed to think well of themselves, and to take things for granted without investigation. Hence they take up with a false and delusive hope, go through life deceived, and at last awake in awful disappointment.

How important it is, that the christian "be ready always to give to every man that asketh him, a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear." And how important that those who are resting on a false hope, should be brought to discover

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their awful mistake, and to inquire in earnest, *what must we do to be saved?*

The difficulty of settling the important question whether we be in the faith, does not arise from any defect in the rules laid down in the Word of God. The evidences of regeneration there stated, are plain and numerous; too numerous to be considered in a single discourse. Some of them, however, it may be proper here to mention.

Love to the moral character of God.

Faith in Jesus Christ.

Repentance for sin.

Love to the duties of religion.

Love to the brethren.

Many others might be mentioned; but let these suffice for the present. Respecting the evidences here enumerated, it may be observed, that they are all *sure*. Each one has the promise of salvation. The person, therefore, who possesses one of these christian graces, is interested in the divine promises. And he who possesses one possesses the whole; though some may be more clear than others. So also, if a person is destitute of any one of these evidences, he is destitute of all; and is certain that he is not a christian.

If a person has true love to God, it cannot be said that he has no *faith*, no *repentance*, no *love* to the *duties* of religion, or no *love* to the *brethren*. Now, in the business of self-examination, there may be several difficulties. I will mention two which are perhaps the most common.

The first is, when persons, who are sensible of no real change in their views and feelings, attempt to collect evidence when no evidence exists. Such persons, being ignorant of their own hearts, may, perhaps, be resting in the externals of religion. Here, it may be proper to observe, that let the external conduct be ever so correct, if the feelings of the heart do not correspond with the rules of the gospel, it can be no evidence of a justified state. On the other hand, let a person's experience be ever so satisfactory to himself, yet if his general conduct does not comport with the rules of the gospel, this can be no evidence that

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he is a christian. Works without faith are *dead works*. And faith without works is a *dead faith*. Gospel faith and practice are inseparably connected. Persons may, and often do, for a long time search for evidence when it

does not exist. It is not to be taken for granted that the result of every examination will be favourable. Thousands may flatter themselves that they are christians, when they are not. And although in some cases there may be a real difficulty in deciding on which side the evidence preponderates, yet in many cases the evidence against is clear and decisive, and the persons could not fail to see it, if they would look at the subject with candour, and with a sincere desire to know the truth. In such cases the whole difficulty lies in a reluctance to give up an old hope. The individuals concerned are unwilling to believe that their case is so bad. They cling to their old hope, for fear they shall never find a better.

The other difficulty to which I referred, exists in such a case as this. A person is sensible of an important change in his views and feelings, but for want of information, is unable to discriminate between true and false religious affections. He has new views, new sorrows and new joys, and has no doubt that a change of some kind has taken place. But is this the change required? Is it regeneration? This is the question which he finds it difficult to decide. Although it may often be difficult for a person to determine, on the whole, that he is a christian, yet in some cases it might not be difficult for him to determine that he is not. There are certain infallible marks of an impenitent state laid down in the Bible. The following are some: "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in times past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Again. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor

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drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." While a person lives in the indulgence of any one sin here enumerated, it will be of no use for him to search for evidence that he is a christian.

Let us now consider the positive evidences of regeneration.

The true christian loves God. "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Here is something new—something pleasant and delightful. Now the question is not whether he possesses love of any kind, but

whether he loves God for what he is in himself—whether he is pleased and delighted with his moral character, because of its excellence. If this is the case, it will be the language of his heart: “Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.” He who has no love to God should conclude that he is a stranger to piety; for “he that *loveth not*, knoweth not God, for God is love.”

Again—the true christian believes in Christ. He receives him as his Saviour, and rests alone upon him for salvation. In himself, he is lost and justly condemned to everlasting death, and he despairs of all help from every other quarter. But now the Saviour is unspeakably precious. He sees a beauty in his character, and a glory in the plan of salvation, which fills him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord. He is willing to commit his soul, his eternal all, unreservedly into his hands. Of the power and willingness of the Saviour he has no doubt. The only question with him is, am I willing to embrace him, and trust in him?

On the other hand, the person who says in his heart, that he would trust his soul in the hands of Christ, if he knew that he would save him—who thinks that he is willing, and that Christ is not; has no evangelical faith, and no good evidence of an interest in Christ.

Again. The true christian possesses evangelical repentance. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Here the question to be decided is not simply, whether a person has sorrow on account of his sins; for there are two kinds of sorrow—selfish sorrow, or the sorrow of the world which worketh death; and godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto

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salvation not to be repented of Selfish sorrow for sin, which arises from the fear of punishment, is the sorrow which Judas felt when he had betrayed innocent blood, and the sorrow which the lost spirits in hell will feel to all eternity. But godly sorrow, or true repentance, flows from supreme love to God. It implies hatred of sin, on account of its own odious nature. The true penitent has a broken heart, and this is his language: “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” “*Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done evil in thy sight.*” Though forgiven of God, he feels as if he could never forgive himself. The true penitent may sometimes doubt

whether his repentance is genuine; but he who has no repentance—no sorrow for sin whatever, need entertain no doubt respecting his spiritual state. He may know that he has no interest in the divine favour; for “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Again. The true christian loves the duties of religion. “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.” He loves to read the scriptures, to meditate on divine truth, to pray and to practice all the duties of religion. He feels differently at different times, but that he takes delight in these things, he has no doubt. The only question with him is, whether he attends to these things out of love to God, and a supreme regard to his glory; or whether it is merely to quiet conscience, and to build up a self-righteousness. He knows, for example, that he must maintain secret prayer, or give up his hope. Now it is proper for him to inquire, whether he does not continue the practice without any love to God, merely to keep alive his hope. If he has grace in his heart, he will “delight in the law of the Lord, after the inward man.” It will be the language of his heart: “I esteem thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.” If there were no future state, he will be unwilling to give up his present pursuits. He would still love to meet with the people of God, to read and hear his word, to pray and praise.

He would still speak of the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and talk of his power. On the other hand, he who does not delight in these things, but uniformly esteems the service of God

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a weariness and a burden, and more especially he who lives in the constant neglect of known duty, need not doubt as to his character in the sight of God. He may know that he is in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. For “he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

Again. The true christian loves the brethren. “He know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. “Here is danger of deception. Perhaps no person, whatever may be his character, can help respecting and approving of the christian character. Virtue is certainly preferable to vice. To the truth of this sentiment, the judgement and conscience of every sinner are constrained to give their assent. The person will scarcely be found, who will acknowledge that he prefers a vicious to a virtuous character; or that he loves the sinner, and hates the

christian. But although the judgement and conscience may approve of the christian character, and although a person may love christians because he considers them as friendly to him; this is no evidence of regeneration. "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them." But that love which is evincive of the new birth, is entirely different from this. The true christian loves God's children, because they belong to Christ, and bear his image. This is the love of complacency. He delights in their society and heavenly conversation, and "esteems them the excellent of the earth."

Thus, my hearers, I have attempted to lay before you the evidences of a gracious state. Each one of you must examine for himself. No mortal can decide in your case. In this business, every individual must sit in judgement on himself. Deal faithfully with your souls. A false hope is worse than none. A mistake in this momentous concern is awful. Beware of building on the sand, for the trying hour is coming. Our business lies with the heart-searching God. Examine well the foundation on which you rest your hopes of heaven, lest you discover your mistake too late. On whatever foundation you build, remember well—remember all, that you are building for eternity.

SERMON XIII.

DEATH★

“O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.”—Deuteronomy 32:29.

Whenever we are called upon to mark the *end* to which we are hastening, we are required to take a serious view of death with all its consequences. Sometimes the peaceful and happy death of the righteous, and the glorious rewards of heaven, is the *end* to which we are pointed by the finger of God. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.” Sometimes the unhappy death and everlasting destruction of the finally impenitent, is the end which we are called upon seriously to consider. Says the psalmist, “I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked”—“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their *end*. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment.” “Whose *end* is destruction.” “Who are nigh unto cursing; whose *end* is to be burned.” “If judgement begin at the house of God, what shall the *end* be of them that obey not the gospel?”

Of similar import is the text. The Lord had repeatedly warned the rebellious Israelites, but they would not hear. He had annexed an awful penalty to his law—a penalty which could not be repealed. And yet they continued to rebel. Notwithstanding the awful end to which they were hastening, they continued to persist in their desperate course. And strange to tell, their insensibility increased with their increasing danger, until

the Lord himself exclaimed, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

* Preached on a funeral occasion, and also on the last Sabbath of the year.

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The text more than intimates a strong aversion in sinners to serious *consideration* of their death and its consequences. They can converse with freedom about the trifles of time. They are wise to plan, and active to pursue the business of this world. But few, very few, seem to be making their plans for the world to come. At times, however, the thoughts of death and eternity may alarm them, while they hear the thunders of God's law, or witness their friends in the agonies of death; yet how soon all is forgotten.

Others there are who form some faint resolutions to reform, or become christians before they die; but ere one short day or hour is past, all is gone and forgotten. The subject is dismissed. Death and eternity are viewed as at a distance. The sinner presumes that there is time enough yet. But ere long his friends assemble around him. They take him by the hand, and tell him, you *are dying*. Now, for the first time, he begins to realize that he is mortal. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." But he is now too far gone to make preparation. The solemn truth that he must die, is whispered to him at the last moment, on the very threshold of the eternal world. He perhaps dies, without uttering a word respecting his soul. His friends, too, may be equally reluctant to speak on the subject. All are concerned—all are active—all are anxious for the body; but if any are anxious for his soul, nothing is said—nothing is done.

What reluctance, what backwardness to speak of death, and its solemn consequences. Whence is it that mankind will not pause, and reflect on a subject of such infinite moment? Whatever may be the cause, the fact is obvious. On all other topics, friends and neighbours can meet and converse with ease and interest, but on death, judgement, and eternity, they have little or nothing to say. The great end for which we came into being, must neither be talked of, nor thought of. In this, both the wickedness and folly of sinners appear. On all other subjects they seem to have some wisdom, and *a little understanding*, but on this they have neither. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

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However reluctant men may be seriously to reflect on death, and its consequences, it is absolutely necessary. Without it no preparation will be made. God once commissioned a prophet to cry in the ears of all the world. "The voice said cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth. the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord shall stand for ever."

Philip, king of Macedon, it is said, employed a crier to call at the door of his bed-chamber every morning, and cry, "Philip, remember that thou art mortal." Were the sinner seriously to reflect on death, judgement, and eternity, for one half-hour every morning and evening, he would soon be astonished at his own stupidity, and the folly of thousands around him.

It is useful to the christian, as well as the sinner, to become familiar with this subject. "If you cannot face the image, how will you endure the reality?" "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart."

The text leads us to contemplate death and its consequences.

1. It separates soul and body.

It is the soul which constitutes the man. It is that only which is worth an important thought. It dwells in a tenement which is subject to dissolution. "We dwell in houses of clay; our foundation is in the dust." "Our bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made."

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one be gone,
Strange that a harp of thousand strings,
Should keep in tune so long.

The body must die and return to dust. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war." The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the soul can no longer keep possession, but must return to God who gave it.

The soul and body do not part without a struggle. It is a

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solemn thing to die. Aside from its consequences, death is in itself solemn. Hence it is called the king of terrors. What it is to endure the pangs of death, we cannot tell. Some, in the hour of death, have told us that it is more solemn than they had ever before imagined—that they had ever considered it a very solemn thing to die—but now it appeared indescribably more solemn than ever. But although the dying have told us much, they have not told us all. No one has returned to describe the last struggle, the pang of separation.

Death is an untried scene to all the living. Notwithstanding so many have died in our world, and so many are daily and hourly dying around us, yet when our turn comes, it will be all new. We shall then feel as we never felt before. And so death will always continue to be new to all who shall die. It will be as new to the last who shall die on the earth, as it was to Abel, the first who gave up the ghost.

2. Death dissolves all earthly relations.

We have tender connections—near and dear relatives. But all these relations must be dissolved. No ties of kindred, or of affection are regarded by the king of terrors. When he calls, the nearest relatives must part. The dearest earthly ties are sundered.

The husband is a husband no more.

The wife is a wife no more.

The parent is a parent no more.

The child is a child no more.

The brother is a brother no more.

The sister is a sister no more.

The pastor and his people must part.

“The earthly shepherds dwell in dust,

The aged and the young,

The watchful eye in darkness closed

And mute the instructive tongue.”

3. Death strips us of all our possessions. Those who have large possessions—houses and lands, silver and gold, and merchandise—all who have much goods laid up for many years, and who are now laying up treasures on earth, must obey the

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loud summons of the king of terrors. Man is stripped of his possessions at once. He is reduced to a coffin and a grave. "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." Death strips all of their titles—disrobes kings and emperors. All must lay their honours in the dust.

"Princes, this clay must be your bed,
In spite of all your towers,
The tall, the wise, the reverend head,
Must lie as low as ours."

Visit the land of darkness, and on whom do you tread? "The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, and the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator." "The grave hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure, and the glory of nations, and their multitude, and their pomp have descended into it."

4. Death breaks up all our earthly plans. They are all blasted at once. The worlding, the covetous, and the man of pleasure, most stop in their career. Their purposes are broken off. The rich man says, "I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But death breaks up all his plans. God says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

The gay and thoughtless youth is flattering himself with the fair prospect of future scenes of happiness on earth, but suddenly the stroke of death dashes all his fond anticipations.

All our plans for doing good, however wise and benevolent, now come to an end. "Also their love and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun." "There is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou goest."

5. Death puts a period to our probation. This world is not our home. The great errand on which we were sent into the

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world, is that we may prepare for eternity. It is now the season of trial—the most important period of our being. Every act of ours will have some influence on us through interminable ages. To every soul God has assigned a great and important work. All things are now preparing for the day when God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing. The gates of heaven are now flung wide open to every sinner. Heaven with all its glories, is brought within his reach. At this critical moment, the world is presenting all its charms. The path to hell is broad and easy and of rapid descent. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and all the fascinating pleasures of sin, are now exerting their united influence to try this immortal soul, whether it will yield and go to hell, or whether it will resist, deny itself, and take up every cross, despising the shame. Every hour, and every moment is big with consequences. The season of trial is short. It is to be enjoyed but once. Eternity comes hastening on. Every sinner is now on trial *once for all*. He is now invited by all the love and compassion of a bleeding Saviour, and urged by all the horrors of the second death, to enter the ark of safety. He is now called upon to strive—to *agonise* to enter the straight gate. But death closes the scene for ever. At midnight the cry is made, “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” Then those that are ready enter heaven, and the door is shut. To the impenitent, death closes the door of heaven, and closes it for ever. The voice of the Saviour, and the sound of the gospel will be heard no more. Ministers will preach no more. No more will they warn every man night and day with tears. No Sabbath will again dawn upon the sinner. The doors of the sanctuary will never again be opened to him, and a voice from the mercy-seat inviting him to enter, will be heard no more.

“The sacred temple’s sounding roof
The voice of mercy and reproof
Regarded never,”

will be heard no more.

6. Death seals up our account for the judgement.

“It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the

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the judgement.” All the duties of religion neglected through life, will remain neglected. All the sins which are unpardoned at death, will remain

unpardoned. When death comes, our work for eternity is ended. The account is gone in. It is sealed up. It cannot be altered. At death, everything begins to put on eternity, and to wear the aspect of immutability. A voice from heaven proclaims, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

Thus I have attempted to lead your thoughts to the consideration of a few particulars connected with the closing scene of life.

Death separates soul and body.

It dissolves all earthly relations.

It strips us of all our possessions.

It breaks up all our earthly plans.

It puts a period to our probation.

It seals up our account to the judgement.

I have been preparing the way to address a few words to the bereaved mourners before me—the partner, the parents, the brothers and sisters of the deceased. My friends, you have been called to witness the solemn scene which I have but faintly described. E___R___ is no more. But a few days since, you saw her sprightly and active, blooming with health. But the fairest human form is like the fading flower. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he seeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." You followed her, and saw her enter the dark valley. There her spirit took its flight to the unseen world. Her eyes are now closed in the wakeless sleep of death. Till the heavens be no more, she shall not awake, nor be raised out of her sleep. Death hath dissolved the endearing relation which subsisted between her and you, forever. All your tears and sighs cannot bring her back. You must go to her, but she cannot come to you.

When our friends die, our duty to them is ended. It remains for the living to lay it to heart. Fail not to bring this warning

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home to your hearts. Now that the streams of earthly comfort begin to fail, "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then may ye also appear with him in glory. When I look around on this assembly I see none who must not die.

My fellow mortals, it is a solemn thing to die. Though death now appears solemn, yet ere long it will appear still more solemn. These

mortal bodies on which you fondly dote, will soon decay and die. Your friends will assemble around you, and taking you by the hand, tell you that you are dying. O, how will you then feel?

All earthly relations now subsisting among you, will soon be dissolved. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, must all bow to the king of terrors. As the nations which have gone before us, are all sleeping in the dust, and the living walk over them; so shortly our bodies will all lie in the grave, and the living will walk over us. This solemn sound, that E___R___ is dead, now strikes the ear of many a gay and thoughtless youth in this assembly. So will it shortly be said of each one of us. The living will call us all by name, one after another—he is dead—she is dead; and we shall all soon be forgotten among the living. “The places which now know us, will know us no more for ever.”

There is something solemn in the close of a day—of a week—of a month—of a year. The present is the last Sabbath, and the last day of the year. Here let us pause, and take a retrospect of the year that is gone. Let each one ask himself; what report has it borne to heaven? Thousands of millions of our fellow-travellers, have, during this period, gone to their long home. Many of them commenced the year with blooming health, and bright earthly prospects. And where are they now

“The fathers, where are they?”

“The mighty flood, that rolls along
Its torrents to the main,
The waters lost can ne'er recall
From that abyss again.

The days, the years, the ages dark,
Descending down to night,

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Can never, never be redeemed,
Back to the gates of light.

Where are our fathers? Whither gone
The mighty dead of old?
The patriarchs, prophets, princes, kings,
In sacred books enrolled!

Gone to the resting place of man,
His long, his silent home;

Where ages past have gone before,
Where future ages come.”

Had you been among that number, where would your souls have been now? Let me ask, have you repented of your sins, and made your peace with God?

One year more of your day of salvation is gone. One year more, you have enjoyed the privileges of the gospel. One year more, God has been waiting to be gracious. The sins of one year more, you have to answer for at the bar of God. You have one year less to live. You are one year nearer to the grave and the judgement of the great day. And where are you now? Have you one year more, stood as a barren fig tree in God's vineyard? The voice of mercy, spare it a little longer, has prevailed one year more. Her voice is waxing feebler and feebler, while the voice of justice is waxing louder and louder, “Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground.”

“To-day attend his gracious voice,
This is the summons that he sends,
Awake for on this transient hour,
Thy long eternity depends.”

SERMON XIV.

CHRIST'S COMING TO JUDGEMENT.

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him: then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations.”—Matthew 25:31–32.

The doctrine of a future general judgement, is a fundamental doctrine of the christian religion. It is inseparably connected with the idea of God's moral government. If he is the moral governor of the world, and if mankind are the subjects of his government, it is rational to suppose that he would appoint a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness. That he has done it, he has explicitly and repeatedly assured us in his word. The text and context contain a description of the scenes which will occur on that day. *“When the Son of man shall come in his glory,” &c.*

In discoursing from the text, I propose to consider—

- I. The certainty of Christ's coming to judgement.
- II. The time when he will come.
- III. The manner of his coming.

The certainty of a future general judgement appears—

- I. From the justice of God. This divine attribute is not fully displayed in the present world. Here we often see good men afflicted and bad men prosperous.

This inequality loudly proclaims a judgement to come. For we cannot suppose that God will fail to reward virtue and to punish vice “Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.”

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2. The certainty of a future judgement may be inferred from our relation to God as accountable creatures. God cannot suffer his law to be broken, and his authority to be contemned with impunity. If we are under law, we must be called to an account, and there must be a day of reckoning. ...

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3. The resurrection of Christ evinces the certainty of a general judgement. Thus the apostle reasoned. “Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the earth in righteousness, by that man whom he hath appointed, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

The argument stands thus. Christ, while on earth, declared himself to be the judge of the world. If he rose from the dead, he was beyond all question what he claimed to be. This miracle incontestibly established all his claims. That God will judge the world, therefore, by Jesus Christ, he hath given *assurance to all men*, in that he has raised him from the dead.

4. The certainty of Christ's coming to judgement appears from many express declarations of scripture. The text is explicit on this point. Other passages are equally decisive. “Christ was ordained of God to be judge of quick and dead.” “He shall judge the quick and dead at his appearing and kingdom.” “Enoch, also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon all.” The Psalmist predicted the coming of Christ in this sublime language: “Our God shall come and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me—and the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is judge himself.” “We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.”

These texts, with many others, establish the certainty of Christ's coming to judgement. The day of judgement, we are informed in the scriptures, will be “a great day”—“the day of the Lord”—“the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.” The apostle John has

given us a description of this great day, as exhibited to him in vision: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened,

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which was the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works."

I propose to consider—

II. The time when Christ will come.

The question was once put to our Saviour: "Tell us *when* shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

In respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, his answer was: "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." But in respect to the day of judgement, his answer was: "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven; but my Father only." The time of this great event is a profound secret. "It is not for us to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." When Christ shall come to judgement, he will come unexpectedly. Hence the exhortation: "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh." But of this we are certain, that the time is fixed in the purpose of God. For "he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." "Marvel not at this, the *hour* is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth." The *hour* is coming—the *appointed hour*. It is continually approaching. It draws nearer and nearer every day, and the intervening space will soon elapse.

But although we cannot know the time, yet there are many things respecting it which are revealed and which are certain.

It is certain that the day of judgement will not take place until the great work of redemption is completed. This world was created to subserve the divine purposes in relation to the work of redemption. It was created by Christ and for Christ; and it will be upheld in being, until it has fully answered the end of its creation. It is certain that Christ will finish the work which he came down from heaven to do. Not one whom he designs to save will be lost. The day of judgement will not

come, till all who were given to Christ shall be called in. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that

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sent me. And this is the Father's will that hath gent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." Because the judgement is thus delayed, some conclude, as the apostle informs us, that it will never begin, saying: "Where is the promise of his coming; for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

But why does not the judgement instantly set? And why are not the wicked summoned before the dread tribunal of Jehovah, to hear their doom? Why, indeed, have they not before this time been doomed to hell? If God is just, and ever intends to call his creatures to an account, why this long delay? The apostle Peter has given the answer. It is to subserve God's purposes of mercy. "And account that the long suffering of God is salvation." The day of judgement is deferred for the sole purpose of completing the great work of redemption. In the destruction of the old world, and the salvation of Noah—in the destruction of Sodom and the deliverance of Lot, it is evident, as the apostle informs us, that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished." Though judgement long delay, the wicked will not escape, for they are *reserved*, as in prison, unto the day of judgement to be punished. The fact that the day of judgement is deferred is evidence that the work of redemption is still going on. This work will continue until all the elect are gathered in, and until there is not another sinner to be converted on earth. To this time, and no longer, will the day of judgement be deferred. When the last sinner whom God designs to save shall be converted, there will then be nothing to hinder the day of judgement from taking place. The destruction of Sodom must be delayed till Lot was safe. "Haste thee—escape thither," saith the Lord, "for I cannot do any thing until thou be come thither." When he had escaped, there was nothing to prevent—and nothing could prevent the destruction of the wicked. So it will be when the last sinner shall be converted. That the day of judgement will not be delayed beyond this period, is evident from the following declaration: "Whom the heavens must receive

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until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Also from the revelation of the apostle John: "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things that are therein, that there should be time no longer. But in the days of the seventh angel, when he should begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."

Again—The day of judgement will not come till after the millennium. It is predicted that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Also that "the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." Satan, we are told, shall be bound a thousand years, and be cast into the bottomless pit, and he shall deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years shall be fulfilled. During this period, "all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." These predictions, it is evident, have not yet been fulfilled.

Again—It is evident that the day of judgement will take place shortly after the close of the millennium. How long a time will intervene, we are not informed. But we are given to understand that it will be short. After the thousand years shall have expired, "Satan will be loosed for a little season"—"and will go out to deceive the nations." A general apostasy will now take place. Here all predictions end. At this point, divine revelation closes. The Bible gives us no account of anything intervening between this apostasy and the final judgement.

Let us consider more particularly the state of the world when Christ shall come to judgement.

1. The number of inhabitants on the earth will be great. During the millennium, we have reason to believe, that the population of the globe will greatly increase. Many of the causes which have annually swept from the earth millions of its inhabitants,

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will have ceased to operate. To say nothing of the judgements of famine and pestilence, which are brought upon the world by the wickedness of men; and the numberless vices, which impair the constitutions of

men, and bring them to a premature grave;—the single fact that the nations shall learn war no more, will tend greatly to augment the population of the globe. And this happy period will continue a thousand years. The inhabitants of New England double once in twenty-five years. If, during the millennium, the inhabitants of the earth should double once in twice that time; that is, once in fifty years; at the close of that period, there would be as many millions of people, as there were individuals at its commencement. In other words, if the millennium were to commence to-day, at the end of a thousand years, it would be found that every individual had multiplied into more than a million, on the supposition that the number of inhabitants on the earth should double only once in fifty years.* Whatever may be thought of this calculation, it is certainly rational to conclude, that when Christ shall come to judgement, the number of inhabitants on the earth will be great.

2. The number of Christians will be comparatively small. A very general apostasy will have taken place. There will, however be some Christians on the earth; for Paul, speaking of the whole number of believers to the end of time, says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed." And again, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep."

3. When Christ shall come to judgement, it will be a time of great and abounding wickedness. The glorious millennial day will be succeeded by great moral darkness. The state of the world will be wonderfully changed. The great body of Christians will have passed off the stage. The Spirit of God will be in a great measure withdrawn, and few instances of conviction and conversion will occur. "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive

* It may admit of a question whether the earth is capable of sustaining so large a population as this calculation supposes.

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the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." The nations of the *four quarters of the Earth* shall be deceived—and the number of those who will be enemies to Christ, will be as the sand of the sea.

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They will make great opposition to the church of Christ. They are represented as taking up arms against the church. Satan shall gather them together to *battle*; the number of whom shall be as the sand of the sea. "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city." The whole multitude of apostate nations are represented as rising, and combining to exterminate Christianity from the earth. The church of God, called the *beloved City*, will be threatened and surrounded, like the house of Lot in Sodom. When Christ shall come to judgement, it will probably be a time of greater wickedness than was ever known.

It will be a time of great worldliness. "As it was in the days of Lot, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded."

It will be a time of great mirth and hilarity. "For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark;—so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

It will be a time of great scoffing at religion. The church will be in great affliction and distress. Christians will be so hated and ridiculed—so persecuted and tormented, that they will expect deliverance only from the immediate appearance of Christ, and they will be looking, and longing, and praying for the coming of Christ. These expectations being known to the wicked, will furnish matter for profane scoffing; and then will be fulfilled the prediction of the apostle Peter: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming; for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

It will be a time of great security. Such will be the unbelief of sinners, that every warning will serve only to harden their

hearts. The wicked will despise the long suffering of God, and take occasion from it to wax bold in sin. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." They will, as the prophet informs us, bid defiance to the Almighty. "Let him make speed and hasten his work, that we may see it." While the world is thus sunk in guilty repose, the awful scenes of the judgement will burst upon their view.

From certain passages of Scripture, some have been led to suppose that Christ's coming in the clouds of heaven would occur at midnight. "At midnight, there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh." "The day of the Lord will so come as a thief in the night." Others, reasoning from analogy, and from certain other texts, have supposed it would be in a clear, fair day, like that, when, for the last time, the sun rose on the cities of the plain. It is said, "the same *day* that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed." A little reflection will show that both opinions are correct; for the sun can never enlighten but one half of the globe at once. Day and night always exist at the same time on opposite sides of the globe.

We have thus far considered the state of the world at the coming of Christ, only as it respects the inhabitants then living. But in this great event, the dead and the living are all equally interested. "For to this end, Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living." He is styled the "judge of quick and dead." "Before him shall be gathered all nations"—not only those who shall be living at the time, but all who have ever lived on the earth. How vast will be the congregation of the dead! How often the earth changes its inhabitants! For nearly six thousand years this change has been going on. "The grave hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure, and all nations have descended into it." Of most of this vast multitude there is now no remembrance. They have long since been forgotten. They will all continue to sleep till the morning of the resurrection. "Man lieth down and riseth not; till the

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heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of sleep." As it has been in days past, so it will be in days to come. Death will continue its work. In a few years, all of the present generation will die—not one individual will remain. In a few years, we shall go the way whence we shall not return; and another generation will occupy our places. That generation too will die; and so it will continue till the millennium; and thence through all the successive generations down to the end of time. So that all the generations that ever *have* lived, or ever *shall* live on the earth, will return to dust, except one. That one, the last, will be living when Christ shall come to judgement. All the rest will be

sleeping in the dust. So many millions will have lived and died, that the earth will be like one vast graveyard.

Just cast your thoughts forward, my hearers, to the time when Christ will come to judgement, and think what will be the state of the dead.

Some will have just expired. Some, like Lazarus, will have been dead but a few days. Some will have lain in their graves a few months; others a few years. Some, whose monuments will still be standing, will have been dead fifty or a hundred years. Their bones, perhaps, may all be found.

But where will be the bodies of those who lived before the millennium? Where will be the bodies of that generation which lived in the beginning of the nineteenth century? Where will be the bodies which are this day in this house of prayer? They will have been dead more than a thousand years, and will have become undistinguishable from common dust. Where will be those which have fallen and remained on the field of battle, and whose bones have been scattered and lost? Where will be those which have been drowned and lost in the ocean; and those which have been devoured by beasts of prey?

Many human bodies have undergone a variety of changes, and have entered into the composition of other bodies, such as vegetables, and animals of various kinds. The celebrated Wickliffe, styled the morning star of the reformation, died and was buried. After forty years, his enemies, to gratify their malice, dug up his bones and burnt them; and to make an effectual end of the good man, they cast the ashes into a running

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brook. Where is his body now? What becomes of the particles of a body after it has been consumed in the flames? It cannot be annihilated; but, converted into smoke, it is taken and driven round the earth by the winds of heaven; and the little handful of ashes which remain, goes to fertilise the earth. And yet thousands of human bodies have been consumed in the flames. How many perished thus, when God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes? How many among the Jews passed through the fire unto Moloch? How many have been burnt to ashes on the funeral pile in India? "Ten thousand women annually," says Dr Carey, "are burnt with the dead bodies of their deceased husbands." In view of these facts, we are almost ready to ask, can these bodies ever be found? Can the particles of which they were composed ever be collected? Were we left without divine revelation, well might we ask, "How are the dead

raised? And with what bodies do they come?" But nothing is impossible with God. And what he has declared respecting a general resurrection, will certainly come to pass.

Such will be the state of the dead, as it respects their bodies. But where are the souls which once inhabited these bodies? The righteous, when they die, pass immediately into glory. Lazarus was "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." To the penitent thief our Saviour said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." "Write blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, *from henceforth*, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." It is evident therefore, that when the soul of the believer quits the tabernacle of clay, it immediately joins the general assembly above. On the other hand, when the impenitent sinner dies, his soul passes immediately into the world of despair. "The rich man died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment"—while his five brethren were yet living on the earth. The inhabitants of Sodom are "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." The antediluvians are now "spirits in prison."

Thus it appears that souls are continually ascending into heaven, and descending into hell. Thus it has been from the death of Abel down to the present time. Some have been in heaven, and some in hell, for hundreds, and others for thousands of

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years. And there they will continue till Christ shall come to judgement. At this period, the number of the saints in heaven will be great. They are thus spoken of in the Revelation: "I beheld and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they 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, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall

lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

This is a description of the state of the saints between death and the resurrection. But the souls of all unbelievers who have died, are shut up in the prison of hell, with devils, “whom God hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day.” Here their souls will remain in a state of separation from their bodies, in fearful expectation, until Christ shall come to judgement. Such will be the state of the dead, when that great day shall come.

Here I would pause—and ask what will then be the state of my hearers—of this whole assembly? If the day of judgement does not come until after the millennium, then these bodies will have lain in the grave more than a thousand years. During this whole period our souls will have dwelt with the general assembly and church of the first born, or with the devil and his angels. In one or both of these companies, all our souls will be found. Probably some in one, and some in the other. If so, some of us shall have been in heaven, and some of us in hell, more than a thousand years. Solemn thought! Who would not pray with David, “Gather not my soul with sinners?”

SERMON XV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

“When the son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations.”—Matthew 25:31, 32.

In discoursing from these words on a former occasion, I proposed to consider

- I. The certainty of Christ's coming to judgement.
- II. The time when he will come.
- III. The manner of his coming.

Having considered the first two heads, I proceed to consider

- III. The manner of Christ's coming to judgement.

1. He will come in his human nature. He will come in the same body in which he appeared in the days of his humiliation—the same body that was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, that was arraigned before the bar of Pilate, scourged, spit upon, and crowned with thorns—the same body that was nailed to the cross, and pierced with a soldier's spear; that yielded up the ghost, arose from the dead, and ascended to heaven. This same body, that was treated with such indignity, will again appear with all the scars of crucifixion.

“Now resplendent shine the nail-prints,
Every eye shall see the wound.”

When our Lord ascended to heaven, two angels appeared and spake thus to his gazing disciples: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." But how immensely different will be his appearance from what it was in the days of his humiliation. Once he was arraigned before a human tribunal as a criminal;—now he is the judge of the world.

2. He will come in his glory. A bright splendour will surround

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the body of the Saviour. Such a glory as to mortals is now inconceivable. Something of this glory was witnessed by the apostles Peter, James, and John, on the mount of transfiguration. They were eye witnesses of his Majesty, and they testify that "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." In something of this glory he appeared to Saul of Tarsus. His brightness put out the noon-day sun. "At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them that journeyed with me." So bright was his appearance, that Saul could not see for the glory of that light. The vision of this glory caused the beloved disciple to fall down at his feet, as dead. This can give us but a faint idea of the glory in which Christ will come. He will appear not only in his own glory, but in the glory of his Father. The Father will judge the world by him, having, committed all judgement unto the Son. He is now "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." His coming will be like the lightning, seen from one end of heaven to the other. "He shall come with power and great glory." It will be "the glorious appearing of the great God."

3. His coming will be in the most public manner. His first coming was unobserved. "He was in the world, and the world knew him not." When he appeared in his glory to the disciples on the holy mount, to Saul, and to the beloved disciple, this too was not generally known. But now, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds." "He maketh the clouds his chariot; he walketh upon the wings of the wind." He will be attended by a glorious retinue—by all the holy angels. Holy angels take a lively interest in the plan of redemption. They announced the Saviour's birth—strengthened him in his agony—rolled back the stone from the door of his sepulchre, and attended him back to heaven. "The

chariots of God are twenty thousand—even thousands of angels.” These are all ministering spirits, waiting upon him to do his pleasure. “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his words.”

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Now the sight of one angel is appalling to the stoutest heart. Of the angel who appeared at the Saviour's sepulchre, it is said, “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.*” But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, all the holy angels will be with him—all of every rank, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers”—“thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand round about him.” Thus will Christ “be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.”

He will be attended, also, by all the saints in heaven. All the spirits of just men made perfect—patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, and all who have died in the Lord, will now appear. On the mount of transfiguration, two of this number appeared—“Moses and Elias talking with him.” But now they shall all come from heaven at the call of Christ. Thus the Psalmist says, “Our God shall come and shall not keep silence. He shall call to the heavens from above, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me.” And “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.” All the souls of the redeemed will now descend with him, to be reunited to their glorified bodies. What an immense multitude! What a retinue of attendants! In the midst of this throng of attendants, he will be conspicuous; for he shall sit on the throne of his glory, and every eye shall see him.

4. The coming of Christ will be announced by the trump of God, and the acclamations of attending angels. The nations will have notice of his approach. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.”

“Hark! the archangel's voice proclaiming,
Thou, old time, shalt be no more.”

Now the trump of God will sound, and with such a blast as was never before heard by mortal ears—with a blast which will shake the earth to its centre, and wake the slumbers of the tomb. The sleeping millions will

rise from the dead, and obey the summons, "come to judgement." But here description fails.

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When the law was given by the disposition of angels on mount Sinai, notice was given by "the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken unto them any more; for they could not endure that which was commanded." "And the voice of the trumpet was exceeding loud, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled, and the whole mount quaked greatly." "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice"—"whose voice then shook the earth." The apostle John saw in vision, "a mighty angel, who cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices." But nothing can equal that thunder which will echo round the world, when the archangel shall swell the sound of the last trumpet.

5. Christ will come suddenly. God has declared in his word that the wicked shall "*suddenly* be destroyed," and that "they shall be brought into desolation as in a moment." The truth of these declarations will now be realised.

God has ever chosen to come on the wicked when they felt most secure. It was thus when he "brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." He had given them sufficient warning but they would not believe;—and he waited till they had become so hardened, that they "knew not until the flood came and took them all away." So when he "turned the cities of Sodom into ashes," the destruction came suddenly. It is true, God gave them sufficient warnings; but they were utterly disregarded. "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the 'Son of man shall be revealed.'" The destruction of the old world, of Sodom, and of Jerusalem, are only images and shadows of the day of judgement. In these events God has taught us what to expect at the end of the world.

It has never been God's manner to come out in judgement against the wicked when they were expecting it, and preparing for it. When he comes to punish men, he waits till

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their measure of iniquity is full, and then takes them by surprise.

If the good man of the house were expecting that his house would be broken open by a thief or an incendiary, he would choose to surprise and seize him in the very act. His crime would then be manifest, and his mouth would be stopped. So when sinners are talking and laughing, and scoffing and sporting in sin, all over the earth—when they are in the midst of their wickedness, and when they least expect it, Christ will come. As the lightning, his glory will suddenly break forth. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” The voice of laughter and singing; the sound of the timbrel, the harp, and the organ, shall be interrupted by the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. The mirthful, haughty countenance—the sneering, contemptuous look of those who can blush only at the name of Christ, will at once be changed. “All faces will gather blackness.” In an instant, the wicked all over the world will begin to “weep and gnash their teeth.” The sight of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven will compel them to cry to the rocks and mountains for shelter. O, the sight of his face!

But now the righteous will rejoice. “They shall lift up their heads, for behold, their redemption draweth nigh.” They “love his appearing.” And the sight of their Saviour will banish the fear of their enemies.

At the same time, the dead will be raised. “All that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth.” The bones of unnumbered millions, scattered over the face of the earth, shall come together, bone to his bone. The dust and ashes of the martyrs, and of all who once perished in the flames, shall come forth. The elements shall be made to deliver up every particle of human dust. The earth, the air, and sea, shall all deliver up their dead.

And now the whole race of Adam appears upon the earth at once—a multitude which no man can number, of all ages and nations and languages. But their bodies will be widely different. The bodies of the righteous will be glorious. “We look for the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it

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may be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.” In respect to the bodies of the wicked, very little is revealed. But they shall be *incorruptible*, *immortal*, and *inglorious*. They shall “awake to shame and everlasting

contempt." Their bodies will correspond with their character and condition.

Now the souls of the righteous—the spirits of just men made perfect, will return each to his former habitation. And what will be the reflection of a glorified spirit, about to take possession of its glorified body? "This is the body which I once inhabited, and from which I have long been separated. This is the body in which I sinned, and in which I enjoyed a day of salvation. This is that body in which I once heard the sound of the gospel, and felt such a weight of guilt as made me cry out, 'What must I do to be saved?' This is that body in which I repented of my sins, and cried, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' This is that body in which I first became acquainted with the Saviour, when old things passed away, and all things became new. This is that body which I presented to God, a living sacrifice, to be his for ever. This is that body in which I endured such temptations, and felt such struggles in my Christian warfare—in which I so often knelt in prayer, and found sweet communion with Christ. This is that body in which I suffered shame and reproach for the sake of Christ;—and now it is raised in his image to go and dwell in his presence for ever." Happy union!

Now the spirits in prison will come forth and take possession of their bodies; and with what bitter reflections may we suppose each will take possession of his former habitation. "This is the body in which I sinned, and in which I heard the sound of the gospel—the body which I fed and clothed with so much care, to the neglect of my soul—the body in which I was ashamed of Christ—the body which would not bend the knee in prayer to God. O that I had never seen it, or could never see it again. Must I again enter a dwelling so loathsome, fitted only to be tormented for ever." Miserable union!

And now the dead being raised, the living will be changed. This will be necessary to prepare them to endure the trial of

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the judgement. The sight of the judge, and the scenes of the last day, would be more than our present nature could endure. Sinners now under conviction of sin sometimes lose all their strength, and their rational faculties. And this, too, while they see but a part of their guilt and danger, and while they hear the sound of pardon, and the offers of salvation. How, then, could they endure the sight of all their sins, in the presence of their Judge? Sometimes the criminal before an earthly judge faints

and falls on hearing sentence pronounced upon him. How, then, could human nature sustain the scenes of the judgement? If sinners are overcome with the fear of those who have power only to kill the body, how could they endure the fear of him who has power to cast into hell? The living, therefore, must be changed to prepare them for the trial.

This change of the living will not be gradual. They will not die, and their souls depart for a season, and then return. The bodies of the Christians then living will become like the bodies of those who are raised from the dead. This mortal will put on immortality. It will be a mysterious—a wonderful change. It will take place suddenly, at the sound of the last trumpet, when the dead shall be raised. "Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed."

The bodies of sinners, too, will now be changed and fitted for their destiny. The dead being raised, and the living changed, the whole multitude will be assembled before Christ. "Before him shall be gathered all nations."

And now also the fallen angels shall be assembled. The prince, and the ruler of the darkness of this world, who has headed the grand rebellion, shall now be present with all his followers. These, though they now suffer in hell as do others, have yet had no public, formal trial. They are criminals in chains, reserved to the day of final account. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgement of the great day."...

Unfinished.

SERMON XVI.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores, And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou, in thy life time, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”—Luke 16:19–31

Our Saviour had been discoursing to his disciples on the right use of property. He illustrated his subject by the parable of the unjust steward, which teaches us that we must all soon give an account of our stewardship.

We are informed that the “pharisees” who were covetous, heard all these things and they “derided him.” The language in the original is striking. It expresses the greatest contempt. At length, our Saviour turned and addressed them in the language of the text.

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there

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was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores.”

This is sometimes denominated a parable. But though the language is in a measure figurative, it cannot be shown that our Saviour was not describing matters of fact, which had fallen under his own observation.

At all events, the passage was intended to give us a correct view of the invisible world. It was spoken by him of whom it is said, “hell is naked and open before him, and destruction hath no covering.”

Here is one who is rolling in splendour—faring sumptuously every day. Here is another, not only poor, but sick—covered with sores—laid at the rich man’s gate, that he might excite his compassion—desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. He was satisfied and thankful even for the crumbs. Whether he obtained his desire, we are not informed. He was not only poor and sick, but friendless. He had no one to dress his ulcers, and administer to his necessities. “Moreover the dogs,” as being more compassionate than the human beings with whom he was surrounded, “came and licked his sores.”

And it came to pass in process of time, that the beggar died. Doubtless death was welcome to him. He had long looked forward to it with joyful anticipation, as the end of sin and sorrow, and the introduction to that glorious rest which remaineth for the people of God. Nothing is said of his interment. Some poor people, probably, carried him to his grave, there to rest forgotten by the world until the morning of the resurrection. But his soul was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. He was a child of God and an heir of heaven. Angels attended him in his last moments, to receive his spirit, and to conduct it safely to the mansions of the blessed.

The joys of heaven are set forth under the emblem of a feast. Abraham is represented as seated at the head, and Lazarus leaning on his bosom. O, what a sudden and what a joyful transition. From being the companion of dogs he awakes surrounded by a guard of shining angels.

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“The rich man also died and was buried.” When it was told that he was dangerously sick, his numerous friends doubtless felt the greatest solicitude. The most distinguished physicians were employed, and exhausted their skill to restore him to health; but in vain. “Riches profit not in the day of wrath.” “No man hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war.” The rich and the poor alike must lie down in the grave.

He was buried. At the time appointed, his friends, far and near, doubtless assembled at the house of mourning, to conduct him to the land of darkness. And no doubt some orator pronounced his eulogy, and consoled the mourners with the idea that he had gone to a better world. In due time, in all probability, a stately monument was erected to his memory, that “he might rot in state.” His friends mourned for a season, consoling themselves with the thought that he was happy in heaven.

But the omniscient Saviour informs us, that “in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” And what does he see? He “seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

What follows is an interesting dialogue between heaven and hell.

“And he cried and said, father Abraham.” He pleaded his relation to the father of the faithful, and doubtless supposed that Abraham would acknowledge the relation. “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

He cried for mercy, whether he ever did before or not. The smallness of the request deserves our notice. He did not ask for a full draught of water; but that he might dip—not his hand—nor his finger—but the tip of his finger in water—barely a single drop—and cool his tongue. His torments were great beyond description. Whether the wicked in the future world will suffer in literal fire or not, their sufferings will certainly be equal to the description here given. He requested that Abraham

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would send Lazarus. He doubtless regarded him as a benevolent man, and ready to administer relief whenever it was in his power.

Now, what is the answer to this small request? You hear it from heaven. "Abraham said, Son, remember"—he addressed him in the kindest manner, although he was lost forever—"Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed"—fixed by the immutable purpose of God—"so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

The answer is two-fold.

1. It was improper that we should receive any mercy. He had received all his good things in his life-time.
2. It was impossible. Between them there was a great gulf fixed. A *great* gulf—an awful separation. There is no passage from heaven to hell, and none from hell to heaven.

And now he sends up another petition. "I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Despairing of obtaining mercy for himself, he turned his attention to his brethren on earth, who had doubtless consoled themselves with the thought that he had gone to a better world—not because he felt any benevolent regard for the salvation of his brethren: but because he was sensible that their presence in hell would add to his own torment. Sinners who are lost will not wish the society of their companions in hell. And what errand did he wish to send to his brethren? He knew their sentiments. They may have doubted the existence of such a place as hell. They may have thought that God is not such a being as to torment his creatures in the flames of hell. He did not ask the privilege of going himself, for he knew that that could not be granted, but his petition was: "Send Lazarus that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment"—that he may tell them there brother is not in heaven, but in hell—that no description which they had

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ever heard of the miseries of the wicked, equals the reality. Or perhaps his brethren may have believed that the wicked will be restored—that in process of time their sufferings will cancel the debt, and they will be

admitted to heaven—send Lazarus that he may tell them that there is no passage from hell to heaven—that a great gulf is fixed as firmly as the immutable decree of the eternal God can make it—that those who are once lost, are lost for ever. He felt confident that unless something more was done, his brethren would never be saved—that in their present state, and with their present sentiments, they would certainly be lost. This is clearly intimated in his request: “Lest they also come into this place of torment.”

And now what was the reply? You hear it from heaven.

“Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.” They have all the warnings contained in the Bible, and that is sufficient.

And what was the reply? You hear it from hell.

“Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.”

And what is the reply? You hear it from heaven.

“And he saith unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

REMARKS.

1. Those who die christians go immediately to heaven.

The soul of the believer does not sleep between death and the resurrection. This is evident from the case of Lazarus. He was in heaven while the five brethren of the rich man were living on the earth. It is evident also, from the promise of our Saviour to the penitent thief on the cross. “And Jesus said unto him, verily, I say unto you, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” And Paul says, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” And here to, we learn that it is no fancy, that angels invisible to mortal eyes surround the dying bed of the saint, to conduct him to the paradise above.

Christian, you may be nearer to heaven, than you are aware.

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This night you may wake up surrounded by an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

2. Those who die sinners go immediately to hell.

Their souls do not sleep between death and the resurrection. The moment the soul of the rich man left the body, he awoke in hell, surrounded by devils and damned spirits. And this was while his five

brethren were still living. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." "How are they brought into desolation as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors." "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape."

Sinner, you may be nearer to hell than you are aware. God may say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

How suddenly and how unexpectedly the sinner may be lost. "Hell," says one, "is a truth learned too late."

3. We learn from this subject that all sinners will pray, sooner or later.

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." They cast off fear and restrain prayer. They say: "What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" But when they are lost they will cry for mercy. The rich man in hell *cried*. He lifted up his voice in awful distress: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me." But it was too late. "Then," says Christ, "they shall call on me, but I will not answer." It will do no good. They may cry long and loud, but not one drop of the water of life shall descend to those in hell. Not a leaf from the tree of life shall be blown across the great gulf. This, my hearers, is the world where prayer is heard.

"Where are the living? On the ground
Where prayer is heard, and mercy found,
Where in the compass of a span,
The mortal makes the immortal man!

Soon it may be forever too late. Sinner, seek the Lord while he may be found.

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4. Those who lose their souls will remember what took place on earth.

"Son, remember." Memory and conscience will now perform their office well. They will remember all the joyful scenes through which they have passed. They will remember all the duties which they have neglected—the Sabbaths and precious privileges which they once enjoyed—all the sins which they have committed, and especially the sins of the tongue. Those who have trifled and made sport of the subject of religion—those who deny that there is any such place as hell—who labour to quiet their own fears, and the fears of others—who say that ministers wish to frighten their hearers—when they get to hell, will

wish to come back and unsay what they have said. A great many do before they die. It was thus with Voltaire.

“The Frenchman, first in literary fame,—
Mention him, if you please, Voltaire! The same:
With spirit, genius, eloquence supplied.
Lived long, wrote much, laughed heartily, and died.
The Bible was his jest-book whence he drew
Bon mots to gall the Christian and the Jew;
An infidel in health But what when sick?
O, then a text would touch him to the quick.”

When he became apprehensive that his death was approaching, he offered his physician, Dr Tronchin, one half of his property, if he would prolong his life six months. He informed him that he could not live so many days. He replied, “Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me.”

Thomas Paine, too, in his last moments, exclaimed: “O Lord, help me. O Lord, help me. O Christ, help me. O Christ, help me.”

All the warnings—all the kind invitations—and all the sermons which you have heard and slighted, you will then remember.

“The sacred temple’s sounding roof,
The voices of mercy and reproof,
Regarded never”—

“Till then be remembered. And this very discourse to which you are now listening, will hereafter be distinctly recollected, and can never be forgotten.

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5. We see what the damned would say, were they to come back to this world.

They could not state what they have seen and felt, better than in the language of the Bible. They could not describe the torments of the lost in better language than they are described in the text. They would call upon their companions to repent, lest they come to the place of torment. This, we know, is the substance of what they would say.

6. We learn that sinners in hell, are not yet entirely convinced of the awful depravity of the human heart. The rich man thought that moral suasion, if increased to a certain amount, would be sufficient to bring

sinners to repentance. "If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." But he laboured under a mistake.

Finally. We learn from this subject that our Saviour was a very plain preacher. Never man spake like this man. Some think they should like to hear Christ preach. But while, it is true, that he spoke in the most melting strains to the penitent, it is also true that none ever preached so much terror to the wicked. Who is it that says, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat?" Who is it that says, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it?" Who is it that says, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Who is it that speaks of the worm that shall never die, and of the fire that shall never be quenched? Who is it that describes in language inimitable, the solemnities of the last judgement, "Then shall the king say to them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" The discourse before us, of the rich man and Lazarus, is also a specimen. How solemn it would be, if a departed soul should come back from the invisible world, and enter this congregation. Do you wish to hear what such a soul would say? You shall be gratified. The Saviour holds him up, and makes him now speak to sinners in this congregation. He knows all the feelings of every damned soul in hell, and can

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tell us just what he would say. He holds him up to your view, and permits you to hear him speak. You hear him plead for one drop of water. You hear him beg that Lazarus, or some glorified saint may be sent to warn you. O with what importunity does he press upon you the duty of immediate repentance. "Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."

And now you hear a voice from heaven proclaim—and let it sound in every ear—let it ring in every conscience, "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*"

SERMON XVII.

**THE DUTY OF FASTING, AND
THE MANNER IN WHICH THE
DUTY SHOULD BE
PERFORMED.**

“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven”—Nehemiah 1:4.

Mourning and fasting are proper on certain occasions. Nehemiah was a good man, and a zealous and eminent reformer. The cause of God lay near his heart. He resided, at the time to which the text refers, with king Artaxerxes, in Shushan, the palace. On a certain occasion, he was visited by some of his brethren from Judah. He made inquiry of the welfare of Jerusalem. “I asked them,” he says, “concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province, are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.”

On learning this, Nehemiah was greatly afflicted, and “sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.”

I propose, in this discourse, to consider

I. The duty of fasting.

II. In what manner it ought to be performed.

I. Fasting in all ages, and among all nations, has been practised in times of calamity and affliction.

The Jews used often to fast when experiencing the judgements of heaven, and when about to engage in any important undertaking.

Some of their fasts were national. Some, less general, were confined to certain bodies of men, and others to single individuals.

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The Ninevites, terrified at the preaching of Jonah, proclaimed a national fast. "Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God. Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not."

Thus it was with the Jews in the time of Esther, when all were condemned to die. She proclaimed a fast. "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night nor day. I also, and my maidens, will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish."

No particular time is set apart by Christ or his apostles for the observance of this duty among Christians. Yet the duty is plainly revealed. It is clearly inculcated both by precept and example.

Our Saviour, in the sermon on the mount, gave his disciples directions on this subject.

"Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto

men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

Our Saviour, when reproached by the boasting Pharisees

because his disciples did not fast so often as they, replied, “Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”

We find that the apostles and primitive Christians were in the habit of practising this duty. Paul says, “Approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in labours, in watchings, in *fastings*.” Cornelius said, “Four days ago, I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold a noon stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” Anna, the prophetess, served God with fastings and prayers, night and day.

II. How ought this duty to be performed?

Persons may fast, and still not offer to God an acceptable sacrifice. This was the case in the time of Isaiah. They fasted, they afflicted their souls, they lifted up their voice on high, they bowed their heads like a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under them, and yet the Lord would not accept their services.

“Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?” The Lord answers, “Behold in the days of your fast, ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.”

Some may perhaps think that if they keep the day by abstinence from food, and afflict their souls for the time being, this is all that God requires. But this is a great mistake.

“Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, an acceptable day unto the Lord?” A bare outward observance of the day, however strict it may be, is not such a fast as God requires.

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Nor is the duty performed by inveighing against the sins of others. To spend our time in scanning the lives of others, and declaiming against their sins, is not what God requires. To talk, and complain of the wickedness of others, is very natural, and very common. It is doubtless our duty to oppose and discountenance sin, wherever we see it. But we must remember that this may be done by the vilest of men, without any desire to reclaim the offender. The good man weeps over the sins of others. He prays for the sinner, and labours to bring him to repentance and reformation.

But to talk and declaim against the sins of others, without feeling any grief or sorrow of heart, and without praying for their reformation, is not what God requires. This is done by the worst of men. To talk of the sins of others with a kind of satisfaction, or to buffet others for their faults, is highly criminal in the sight of God.

To accomplish her nefarious purposes, Jezebel proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people, falsely accused, and slew him.

To keep an acceptable fast, we are

1. To humble ourselves for our own sins. Each one must begin with himself, and inquire, What have I done? What sins have I committed? This, however illuminating and painful, is absolutely necessary. No one can repent of his sins, till he sees and feels that he is a sinner. Each one must look into his own case, and see what duties he has neglected, and in what sins he has indulged. He must take a retrospective view of his past life, and consider the number, and the aggravations of his offences. He must look into his own heart, and think how it must appear in the sight of a holy God.

When you reflect, my hearers, that every act and every thought of your past life is perfectly known to God, have you no reason to blush—no reason to humble yourselves in his sight? Not to blush and be ashamed at our past sins, is a mark that our iniquity is full. “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore shall they fall among them

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that fall.” But he that is truly humbled for his sins can adopt the language of the prophet, “O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee my God. for our iniquities have increased over our head, and our trespass has grown up unto the heavens.” “He that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

2. Confession of sin.

This is always humiliating; but without confession pardon cannot be obtained. Confession is as indispensable in order to obtain pardon, as repentance itself. God requires that we should confess, and that our confession should be according to the nature of our sins.

Some of our sins are of a public nature—some may be national—or we may have sinned as a public body, as a church, or parish, or town. These sins may be generally known; and hence it is proper to assemble, and with united hearts to confess them publicly to God. Thus Nehemiah, as we learn from the context, confessed the sins of the Jewish nation. “And it came to pass, when I heard these words? that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him, and observe his commandments. Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes be open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant which I pray before thee now day and night, for the children of Israel, thy servants, *and confess the sins of the children of Israel*, which we have sinned against thee; both I and my father’s house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgements which thou commandest thy servant Moses.”

Hear also the confession of the prophet Daniel. “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, *with fasting*, and sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and I made my confession, and said, O Lord. the

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great and dreadful God, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgements. Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us, confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass which they have trespassed

against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.”

This confession included the sins of the whole Jewish nation, kings, princes, and all.

And here I would remark, that it is highly proper, in times of spiritual declension, for the members of a particular church to assemble and make a public confession of the prevailing sins of that church, and to renew their covenant with God, and with one another. This should be done with prayer and fasting. Of this we have a striking example recorded in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah. “Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month, the children of Israel were assembled with fasting and with sackcloths, and earth upon them. *And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and, the iniquity of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God, one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God.*”

Some of our sins may be of a less public nature—as wrong feelings, or improper conduct between families, or single individuals, and known only to those. In such cases, the command of God is, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.”

Others may be known only to God and ourselves. Here is work for every sinner. It lies between God and your own conscience. Here no friend can follow you, to detect your secret sins, or to bring out your hidden iniquities. Secret sins,

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and sins of the heart, must all be brought out and slain before the Lord. These are the sins which damn the soul. “Out of the heart,” says our Saviour, “proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.”

Some there are, who may indeed appear beautiful without, whom Christ compares to whited sepulchres, which are within full of dead men’s bones, and all uncleanness. One single secret sin indulged, and cherished in the heart, unconfessed and unrepented of, will destroy the soul. “Thus saith the Lord, O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” “What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.”

That sinner who will not call his own heart to a strict account—who will not accuse and condemn himself, will be accused and condemned of God. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.” “If we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us.” “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Then “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, and he will abundantly pardon.” “He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy.”

The difficulty and pain of breaking off from sin may be great. The contest may be long and arduous. But by prayer and fasting the victory may be won. And it must be won, or the soul is lost.

3. A thorough reformation.

It is not that we appear to reform for a day, but that we do it effectually—that we not only repent for the time being, but that we bring forth fruit meet for repentance.

We must do all in our power to repair the injury done to our neighbour, and to the cause of God.

Have any of you been unjust in your dealings? Now is the time to make restitution. Have any of you neglected your duty to the poor? It is the appropriate business of this day to search out the objects of charity, and to supply their wants.

Do quarrels or unhappy divisions exist between families or

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individuals? Let them be settled. In obedience to the divine command, “Execute true judgement, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother.”

After reproving the Jews for their hypocritical fastings, and their complaints that the Lord would not hear them, God, by his prophet, proceeds to describe an acceptable fast.

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen?—to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

He then describes the happy effects which will follow.

“Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee, shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

SERMON XVIII.

MORTIFICATION OF SIN.

“And they that are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.”—Galatians 5:24.

Self-denial and mortification of sin are essential traits of Christian character.

Those Christian professors, who are deficient in these traits, will bring reproach on the Christian name. This was true of some of the Galatians. Paul deals with them plainly, and gives them to understand that they were in danger of making it evident that they had a name to live, while they were dead. He enumerates the works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, and then adds, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.”

The word flesh denotes human depravity. Of this there can be no doubt, for the apostle himself has explained it. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, revellings, and such like; of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” This is the apostle’s own explanation. These are the works of the flesh. The flesh with the affections and lusts, includes the whole body of sin. The text teaches us that something of great importance has taken place in every Christian. “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.” To crucify, and to mortify, are words used in the

same sense by the apostle. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." "If ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

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The subject of discourse presented in the text is the mortification of sin.

I propose to consider, I. What it implies.

II. Wherein it resembles crucifixion.

III. The means of promoting it.

I. What does mortification of sin imply?

It does not consist in the suppression of external acts *merely*. This may be done, and yet the heart be in love with sin. The impenitent, through pride of character, or fear of punishment, may abstain from overt acts of wickedness. They may sustain; a fair reputation among men; and yet sin may have dominion over them. This our Saviour has explicitly taught us. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." Nor does mortification of sin imply entire freedom from sin. "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." There is a warfare in the hearts of all Christians. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." But it implies,

1. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Christians are said to do that which is done through the agency of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. "If ye, *through the Spirit*, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." It implies a prevailing attachment to inward holiness and the things of the Spirit. "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." "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness." And so in the text, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh."

2. Mortification of sin implies the subversion of its dominion. Mortified sin is not reigning sin. It does not hold the throne in the heart. Christ has obtained dominion over the soul, and has the first place in the affections. "Let not sin, therefore, reign

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in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Sin was once a pleasure, and religion a burden. But now the reverse is true. Grace reigns. Sin has received its death wound. If it be not dead, it is dying.

II. Wherein does mortification of sin resemble crucifixion?

1. The death of the cross was a violent death. And so sin must suffer a violent death. It will not die of itself. If let alone, it will live and reign in the soul forever.

2. The death of the cross was a shameful death. It was considered the most ignominious punishment ever inflicted, and was reserved for the worst of criminals.

So the Christian who puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who mortifies the deeds of the body, will endure shame and reproach. Not only so: he condemns himself for all his sins, and is not infrequently found confessing them to God with shame and confusion of face. Thus Ezra prayed, "O, my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God." And so Daniel confessed his sins with *confusion of face*.

3. The death of the cross was a lingering death. So it is with sin. It does not die in an instant. It is gradually subdued. The Christian sometimes imagines that he has gained a complete victory over some particular sin. But the conflict returns. The sinful passion which has slept for months, or years, is roused again. Different circumstances present new and powerful temptations, and the believer is called to the same conflict again and again. The mortification of one sinful propensity may cost great labour, constant watchfulness, and much time. Thus in a lingering manner sin is crucified, and victory over it obtained.

4. Crucifixion is a painful death. Any one who considers a moment the manner in which the body is suspended on the cross, must be convinced that the pain must be excruciating. It is difficult to conceive of any way in which it could be put to greater torture.

So the mortification of sin is painful; and this may be a principal reason why it is compared to crucifixion. The process of mortification in the human body is often extremely painful.

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And so with the mortification of sin. It costs the believer many tears, and groans, and prayers. This may appear strange to those who maintain no conflict with their corruptions, and who know nothing of the

mortification of sin by experience. But Christ compares it to the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." It may be very hard and painful to break off old sins; but by the grace of God it can be done;—and it must be done, or the soul will be cast into hell.

The whole body of sin must be attacked The impenitent sinner, when driven from one sin, flies to another. Not so with the Christian. His warfare is with the whole body of sin. He puts off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." The work is so difficult and painful, that few only thoroughly engage in it. Hence it is said, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Thus the death of sin is compared to crucifixion, because it is a violent, shameful, lingering and painful death.

I proceed to consider

III. The means of promoting mortification of sin.

1. We must feel our absolute dependence on God—our need of the agency of the Holy Spirit to conquer our sins. Without this agency, nothing will be done, and we shall certainly wax worse and worse. If we feel our dependence, we shall be afraid to grieve the Holy Spirit, and to quench his blessed influences; and this will lead us to cry, "Cast me not away from thy presence; take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

2. We must avoid temptation. We must especially shun the society of those who would tempt us to speak or act in an unchristian manner. We must beware of the flattery of our friends. It will cause the corruptions of the heart to rise.

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Here we need the more caution, because the evil comes from a source which is unsuspected. However well meant it may be, it is a serious injury to the soul. We should never listen to flattery—we should shut our ears, and be unwilling to hear it. It can do us no good. Everything which gratifies the pride and corruption of the heart will make work for bitter repentance.

Let us realise our obligations to God—how much we are bound to do, and how little we have done, and let us be ashamed of every neglect of duty.

Let us resist the beginnings of evil. Let us banish sinful thoughts. We are in danger from a single evil thought. If we suffer it to lodge and rest in the heart, we rock a giant. It will soon arise and overpower us.

3. We must labour for a still deeper sense of the vanity of the world.

All its pleasures and honours in a few days will be gone forever. Let us moderate our desires for worldly good; and realise that vanity is inscribed on everything which this world can give. Let us be alarmed at an uninterrupted course of worldly prosperity. We are surrounded by temptations, and are in danger of neglecting our souls. Let us be afraid of receiving all our good things in this life.

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4. We must bring clearly before our minds the great things of eternity.

Let us remember that death, judgement, and eternity are but just before us. Let us frequently imagine ourselves to be upon a dying bed. Let us make it real. Let us realise the solemn truth, that the hour of death will soon be past, and that our souls will be in heaven or in hell.

Let us endeavour to realise that we are always in the presence of God. Whenever we are tempted to sin, let us remember that God sees us—that we can never flee from his presence—that our hearts are naked and open to his view.

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5. We must carefully attend to all the duties of religion, and to each duty in its season. We must never be idle. We must

maintain daily communion with God. We should let no day pass without entering our closets, and calling ourselves to an account, and humbling ourselves in the dust for our sins. If at any time we are conscious of having yielded to temptation, let not guilt drive us from our closets. Let us go immediately to the throne of grace, and spread our sin before God, in deep humiliation. Let us not tarry till we feel better, lest we obtain a false peace, and cover our sins to the ruin of our souls. However humiliating it may be, let us confess our sins just as they are, without the least attempt to excuse or palliate our guilt. Some Christians have found much benefit from particularising their sins, and confessing them one by one. Some sins may at times lie with weight on the conscience.

While secluded from the world, it may be proper and useful to name them in the presence of God—to dwell on their enormity until the heart is deeply affected, humbled, and broken.

If we would have our sins mortified, we must be willing to have others tell us our faults. This is one great object of Christian fellowship—to help on the work of mortification. It is a great privilege to the Christian to be associated with those that will be faithful to him—that will watch over him, warn him of his danger, and endeavour to bring him to repentance, when he has wandered from the path of duty. This, true Christians esteem an inestimable privilege. “Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.” Sin is blinding. Others can often discover it when we cannot; and to be warned of our danger is a great kindness. It was so esteemed by David. “Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head.”

If we would mortify our sins, we must be very careful, when reproved, not to take it amiss. If we cannot see the justice of the reproof, it is safest to suspect danger. If we are not guilty it can do us no harm; and if administered in a spirit of Christian faithfulness, we should receive it kindly, and be grateful to him who administers it. But if, on the contrary, we manifest displeasure, we do ourselves an irreparable injury. Our best friends, meeting with such a repulse, will be likely ever afterwards

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to let us alone. We may go on to ruin, and none will dare venture to help us. “Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.” And lest our brethren should neglect their duty in this respect, let each one select some Christian friend, and request him to be faithful, And always feel thankful for his admonitions, whether they are seen to be just at the time or not.

And to the same end let us improve the reproaches of enemies. When others speak evil of us, let us not retaliate. Let us be careful not to say too much in our own defence. It can do us no good, and the habit is injurious. “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do evil and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” Some faithful friend or some malicious foe must be helpful to us in this.

Let us bend all our efforts against our easily besetting sins. Here we must be always on our guard, and set a double watch.

Finally—We must cherish those thoughts which are most opposed to all sin.

Let us think of the evil of sin. It always makes us unhappy—It subjects us to the goadings of a guilty conscience—It sometimes fills the soul with awful forebodings of future punishment—It renders us odious in the sight of God—It unfits us for the society of friends—and renders us actually deserving of eternal damnation.

Above all, let us think what our sins cost the Saviour. Let our minds dwell much on the scene of his sufferings. “Now when the evening was come, he sat down with the twelve.” Hear him thus address them: “Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is broken for you; This do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

The scene changes.

“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the

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Mount of Olives.” Hear him declare to his disciples, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night.”

Again the scene changes.

And they go to the garden of Gethsemane. “Sit ye here,” saith he to his disciples, “while I go and pray yonder. And he taketh with him three of his disciples, and began to be sorrowful, and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.* Tarry ye here and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Behold his agony, and his sweat, as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. See the multitude with swords and staves, assembling to take him. See him betrayed with a kiss—forsaken by all his disciples—led forth to his trial condemned, scourged, and spit upon. See him taken by soldiers, and dragged into the common hall. See him stripped and covered with a scarlet robe, and crowned with thorns, with a reed in his hand. See the insulting mob bow the knee before him, and pay him mock homage. See him led forth bearing his cross, and fainting under its weight. See him stretched out, his hands and feet pierced through, and nailed to the accursed tree. See it raised from the ground, and his

body suspended between the heavens and the earth. There, my brethren, hangs our Redeemer—There we may see what our sins have done, and what we deserve. This is that Saviour whom we profess to love; and shall we crucify him afresh? Shall we not rather “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts?” Let us call to mind our solemn obligations. We have avouched the Lord Jehovah to be our God. This we have done before the world. And shall we take on us the name of Christ, and go out into the world and betray his cause? Shall we wound the Saviour in the house of his friends? Or shall we not rather “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts?”

SERMON XIX.

THE SAME SUBJECT
CONTINUED.

“And they that are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.” Galatians 5:24.

In a former discourse from these words, I considered what is implied in mortification of sin, wherein it resembles crucifixion, and the means of promoting it.

In further discussing the subject, I propose, in this discourse, to consider

I. The evidence that the work is begun and is in progress.

II. Inferences from the whole.

III. Motives to engage immediately in the duty.

I. By what may we know that the work is begun?

1. If the work is begun in us, we shall possess tenderness of conscience in regard to all sin.

2. We shall ardently desire to be delivered from sin. Sin will be our greatest burden—that from which above all things we shall long to be free. We shall pant after conformity to God—we shall hunger and thirst after righteousness. ...

3. We shall watch against temptation, and carefully avoid it. When a person is disposed to tamper with temptation, and to inquire if he may not safely do this or that, it indicates a bad state of heart—it shows that he loves sin, and would indulge in freely, if he could do it with safety.

4. Death will appear desirable, because it delivers from sin. Paul said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." ...

To ascertain whether this work is in progress, let us ask ourselves some such questions as these.

1. Are we more and more submissive under afflictive dispensations of Providence?
2. Are we more and more able to bear the reproaches of

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enemies? Do they cause us less and less uneasiness? Do we find it more and more easy to forgive?

When persons are disposed to make much of what they suffer, it indicates a low state of grace. The humble Christian thinks of his Master, and is ashamed. ...

3. Is it more and more easy to part with the comforts of life, at the call of God? Does the work of self-denial become easier—do we take more and more satisfaction in deeds of charity—have we evidence that the world is growing less in our esteem? ...

4. Do we find it easier to resist sin in its first motions?

5. Do we bear prosperity and adversity with greater equanimity? Are we less elated by the one, and less depressed by the other? ...

6. Are our hearts more steadily fixed on the duties of religion? Does our purpose to maintain a religious life become more and more steadfast?

Finally—do we discover things to be sinful which we formerly thought little of?

A person may feel that he is less sinful than he once was; and yet this may be no evidence of the fact. He may think he is growing better, when in fact he is waxing worse and worse. This is often the case with impenitent sinners. Bunyan informs us, that, before his conversion, he was for some time very strict and punctual in his religious duties, and thought that no man in England served God better than himself.

Nor is it decisive evidence either way, that a person feels that he is waxing worse and worse. This feeling may be the result of a clear conviction of a person's true character and condition. And it may be the result of growth in grace. The Christian may feel that he is growing worse, because he discovers new sources of wickedness in himself, while at the same time, things which have always appeared sinful, appear more and more sinful. This is true of all who are making progress in the

Christian life. This may appear a paradox to some. But it is a fact that the most holy men have always make the most complaints of their sinfulness. Job, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and Paul are examples

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II. Inferences.

1. The life of the Christian is not an idle life. We are exhorted to watch—to pray—to strive—to wrestle—to run—to fight. ...

2. If mortification of sin is the great business of the Christian, then those who give occasion for our corruptions to rise, do us a real injury. This is particularly true of those who flatter our pride and vanity. Yet we are apt to regard them as our best friends. But this is a sad mistake. They do us a serious injury. Those who in a serious, solemn, and affectionate manner warn us of our danger, and make us most uneasy with our sins, are our very best friends. They are the persons whose friendship it is our highest interest to cultivate. ...

3. If mortification of sin is the great business of the Christian, then we have reason to fear that the number of real Christians is small.

How few appear to possess the marks which the Bible gives us of the Christian. How few of whom it can be truly said, "they have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." How many there are, who, instead of wishing to be told their sins, secretly hate those who are faithful to them. These do not bear the marks of a Christian. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you." "Reprove a scorner, and he will hate you."

4. This subject teaches us the use of afflictions. They help on the work of mortification. Our hearts are such that we cannot bear prosperity. Hence the children of God are often found in the deepest affliction. God corrects them in mercy.

"We have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? They, for their pleasure, corrected us, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

5. The most desirable situation in life is that which is most free from temptation—that which affords the best advantages to gain the victory over our sins, and to grow in grace. And yet how prone we are to covet the riches, honours, and pleasures of this life, which raise mountains between us and heaven.

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6. We see the benefit of Christian fellowship. It aids in the great work of mortification. Here “two are better than one, for they have a good reward of their labour.”

III. I come now to offer some motives to induce my hearers to engage immediately in this duty.

1. Your present comfort and happiness demand it. There is a double satisfaction attending it—that of having performed a Christian duty, and that which results from clearer evidence of your interest in the promises. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live with him.” Would you then, on good ground, be delivered from distressing doubts, and painful suspense, respecting your interest in Christ, engage immediately in this duty. There is no other way in which your doubts can be removed.

Mortification of sin is also attended with inward peace—a calm serenity of soul. Sinful indulgence creates disquietude and alarm. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. But great peace have they that love God’s law. ...

2. Your usefulness in the cause of Christ depends on it. If you refuse to mortify your sins, you will have no heart to do good. Conscious guilt will hold you back. David prayed, “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.*”

3. Your safety in the hour of temptation depends on it. All are more or less exposed to temptation. If you have not been inured to mortification and self-denial, you will be an easy prey. You will be taken by surprise, and be in danger of falling into the snare of the devil.

4. The honour of religion requires it. Are you afraid of bringing reproach on the cause of religion? Then deal faithfully with your hearts. All the disgrace brought upon religion, by Christian professors, is owing to unmortified sin.

If you have fallen because you have suffered sin to take deep root, it will be difficult for others to reclaim you. The unhumiliated and unsanctified heart will be found unmanageable. You

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will be likely to persist in your evil course, and thus bring greater disgrace on the cause of religion. If all are found guilty of neglecting their own hearts, discipline will cease. So many being guilty, nothing

will be done. Those who are unfaithful to themselves will be unfaithful to others. In this manner churches have run down and become extinct. The candlestick has been removed out of its place. Brethren, the honour of religion requires that you engage in this duty.

.....

5. It is a necessary preparation for the day of adversity. There is nothing like it to fit you to bear affliction. If you are not dead to the world, it will be hard parting with it. If you are dead to the world, it will be easy parting with it.

6. When tempted to sin, think what will be gained or lost by indulgence. Set heaven on the one hand, and hell on the other. Weigh the matter well. Think again what it is for which you are about to barter away your soul. What is it for which you are willing to lose heaven, and endure the pains of hell forever? Think what the damned in hell now suffer for that very sin.

Finally. Let every sinner in this house take warning. The way to heaven lies directly opposite to every feeling of the natural heart. Sinner, you must part with your sins, or part with heaven. However painful, the work must be done. God requires it, on pain of eternal death. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." It is reduced to this single point. You must kill, or be killed. Now is the time to break off your sins. The longer the work is delayed, the greater is the difficulty. Sinful habits become stronger and stronger; and your case will soon become desperate. Let the awful warning of our Saviour sink deep into every heart. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

SERMON XX

**SINNERS ENTREATED TO BE
RECONCILED TO GOD.**

“Now, then, 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.”—2 Corinthians 5:20.

Were an ambassador sent from a foreign power with a message to this assembly, every ear would be attentive to hear it. But the message of an earthly sovereign is not what you are now called upon to hear, but a message from the court of heaven. It is addressed to every impenitent sinner. “Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead,” that you will listen to the message and comply with its demands, the sum of which is, “be ye reconciled to God.”

The text contains a summary of the apostle’s preaching, not only to the Corinthians, but to mankind generally. Wherever they went, this was their message to sinners, “we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

Let us consider the duty of an ambassador in delivering his message.

His great business is, to publish the treaty of peace, and to set before sinners the terms of reconciliation. In doing this, he is bound inviolably to adhere to the instructions of his divine Master. From these instructions he must not depart in the least degree. “He must justify the ways of God to man.” He must hold up the character of God as a holy and righteous sovereign, who claims the love and obedience of all his subjects. He

must hold up the character of the sinner as odious in the eyes of infinite purity, as a lost and guilty criminal under the condemning sentence of God's holy law. On the one hand, he must bring into view the glorious gospel, with all its melting invitations, and promises of eternal peace and joy. On the

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other, he must bring into view the broken law, and wrath of God as "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and point the sinner to the regions of despair, and never-ending torments in hell. By the mercies of God, he must beseech, and by the terrors of the Lord he must endeavour to persuade men to be reconciled to God.

"As though God did beseech you by us." Here mark the divine condescension. God beseeches. By whom? By his faithful ambassadors. Does God beseech? Then the ambassador is not to deliver his message in the name of a dying man, but in the name, and by the authority of the living God. And thus he must come in the name of God, and deliver his whole message, without regard to the love or hatred of men. Says the faithful ambassador who penned the words of the text, "Even so we preach, not as pleasing men, but God who trieth our hearts." "Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

"We pray you in Christ's stead." Here again you will mark the same condescension. Christ still retains his compassion for sinners. He still pleads with them by his ambassadors, who are to stand and plead—beseeching hard-hearted rebels to be reconciled to God. This is their great business. It is all that they can do.

It is proposed

I. To show what is implied in being reconciled to God?

The Scriptures have decided this point with great clearness. It involves whatever is essential to the Christian character.

1. It implies a change from the state of an enemy to that of a friend. All are by nature children of wrath, enemies, unreconciled to God. Hence it is asserted in the context, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." This is essential. Love is the distinguishing characteristic of friendship. Supreme love to God for what he is in himself, is indispensable. "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. But he that loveth not, knoweth not

God, for God is love." All, therefore, who have not been born of the Spirit, are unreconciled. They still possess the carnal mind which is enmity against God.

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2. Reconciliation to God implies love to his law. This is a perfect transcript of his moral character. Love to God, and love to his law, are, therefore, essentially the same. "O how love I thy law." "I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man." This is the language of a heart reconciled to God. And the person who is truly reconciled, not only delights in the precepts of the law, but he acquiesces in its penalty. Its condemning sentence appears to him to be right.

3. Reconciliation to God implies a willingness to accept salvation on the terms proposed in the gospel.

The satisfaction which Christ made on the cross, is called a reconciliation on the part of God. This, as committed to the apostles, is called the ministry and *word* of reconciliation. Now those, and those only, who are pleased with the plan of salvation, can be saved. The treaty of peace was formed in the counsels of eternity. God claims the right of prescribing the terms of reconciliation, without consulting the notions and feelings of men. That God should act in this manner is both just and merciful. It is just, because God is the offended party, and man the offending party. It is surely improper for the condemned criminal to prescribe to his judge the terms on which he shall be pardoned.

It is merciful, because man, being a sinner justly condemned, has no claims to salvation on any terms whatever.

Hence we find that the Scriptures speak of God's reconciling the world unto himself—not of his being reconciled to the world, or to their plans of salvation. But the fact that Christ has died, and that a way of salvation has been provided, does not settle the question whether the sinner will be saved. If he is displeased with the plan of salvation, and does not freely subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, instead of being saved, he will fall under an aggravated condemnation.

Mankind are naturally opposed to the gospel plan of salvation. Else why is there an enemy to God among all those who have once heard the gospel? Why do not all at once comply with the terms of salvation? Why is there so much opposition to the doctrines of the gospel? This subject explains the reason.

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Men are unreconciled to God. The fact that the carnal mind is enmity against God, accounts for all this opposition. That persons are opposed to the doctrines which they hear from the pulpit, is no evidence that those doctrines are not true. A previous question remains to be settled. Are these persons reconciled to God? Have they been born again? If not, opposition is to be expected. If the carnal heart is not opposed to the truth, the Bible is not true. Corrupt sentiment will be pleasing to a corrupt heart. Show me a scheme of doctrines with which mankind are naturally pleased, and I will show you one that never came from heaven. The very fact that sinners are unreconciled to God, implies that they are not pleased with the terms of reconciliation. If they were not opposed to these terms, there would be no necessity of beseeching them to be reconciled. They would be reconciled of course.

That mankind are not reconciled to the terms of salvation, is evident, not only from the conduct of thoughtless sinners, but of those who are awakened to a sense of their sin and danger. One would suppose that the gospel of reigning grace, and the glad tidings of a Saviour, would be embraced with the utmost readiness by such sinners—that they would at once individually exclaim, in transports of joy, “This is the Saviour I want. This is the salvation suited to my condition.” But alas! even the convicted sinner, however clearly he may see his lost condition, and however great may be his distress, will not come to Christ that he might have life. He continues to inquire, “What must I do to be saved?” and the gospel answer, repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, gives him no relief. His proud heart will not submit to these terms. But let such remember that the terms of salvation will never be altered. The sinner must repent or perish.

Having shown what is implied in being reconciled to God, I proceed,
II. To beseech my impenitent hearers to be thus reconciled.

My business now lies directly with the enemies of God: for they only need to be reconciled. An enemy to God! Where can the individual be found on whom God has fastened this

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charge? The text takes it for granted that *all* to whom the gospel is sent are in a state of enmity to God. The king of heaven would not send his ambassadors to his faithful subjects, to beseech them to be reconciled to their friend whom they supremely love. But multitudes, who yield

some general assent to the truths of the gospel, are not convinced that they are unreconciled to God. Many assert that they never were his enemies, that they were always reconciled to him. If this be so, they are not lost, and Christ has nothing to do with them; for he "came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Numbers who have long imagined themselves at peace with God, have only been at ease in Zion. This was the case of the great body of the Jewish nation, and of Paul himself, who after the strictest sect of their religion lived a pharisee, until he was awakened by the voice of the Son of God, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And of his brethren, the Israelites, he says, "I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." It was over the case of such that he wept. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and tell you now even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

And do you, my hearers, plead not guilty? No child of Adam can stand up before his Judge, and say, I am innocent. All the subjects of divine grace were once unreconciled to God, and "were by nature children of wrath even as others." "You who were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."

Have you become reconciled to God? You have seen what is implied in becoming reconciled.

It implies a change from the state of an enemy to that of a friend. Are you conscious of having experienced such a change? Do you now hate what you once loved, and love what you once hated? Do you delight in communion with God? Is it the language of your heart, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee?" Or is the thought of a present, holy, heart-searching God a terror to your minds? Do you cherish the secret wish

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that there were no God, that you might sin without restraint? Do you dismiss, as much as possible, serious thoughts from your minds, that you may enjoy the pleasures of sin undisturbed?

Love to the divine law is another evidence of reconciliation. "If a man love me," says Christ, "he will keep my words." "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." Do you love God's law and strive to obey it? Or do you live in the neglect of known duty? Do you murmur at the strictness of the law,

and find more delight in forbidden paths, than in walking in the strait and narrow way to life? Do you cast off fear and restrain prayer? Are you ashamed to confess Christ before men? Are you more anxious to secure the friendship of the world, than the approbation of God? If so, there can be no doubt as to your true character and condition. "Whosoever will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God."

Reconciliation to God, as we have seen, implies also a willingness to accept salvation on the terms which God proposes.

Are you pleased with the terms of salvation? If you are you have doubtless complied with them. Have you repented and believed in Christ? If not, why? No reason can be assigned but the opposition of your hearts. If you were pleased with the terms of salvation, you would not remain in impenitence and unbelief another moment.

Many, I am aware, express strong desires for salvation, and sometimes say they would give all the world, if they had it, for an interest in the divine favour, while they have never found in their hearts to feel the least degree of contrition for their sins, or the least degree of love and gratitude to the God who made them, and the Saviour who died for them. Whatever value such individuals may place on a heaven of eternal happiness, they do actually prefer sin to all things else; and in spite of the offers of eternal life, the calls of a bleeding Saviour, the invitations, commands, and threatenings of Almighty God, they are now forcing their way down to eternal perdition.

Let me ask again, have you become reconciled to God?

To all who do not love God supremely, delight in his law,

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and render cheerful obedience to his precepts, and who do not acknowledge the justice of its penalty, and weep over their unreasonable transgressions—to all who are not willing to be saved on the humbling terms of the gospel, and to enlist under the Redeemer's banner, and who do not rejoice that Jehovah reigns, I have a message from God. It is a case of life and death to your souls; and as such I beseech you to regard it.

What now is the cause of this enmity between you and God? Has God ever injured you? Has he ever dealt unkindly with you? What have you to allege against his character, against his law, or against this treaty of peace?

Do you ask what God requires of you? The answer is plain. "Be ye reconciled to God." This is what God claims. And from this we cannot depart without entering on forbidden ground. He claims the heart. And from this we cannot depart without disloyalty to God. Individuals and nations may negotiate a treaty of peace, though the heart be not engaged. An outward reconciliation may be effected, while the heart remains the same. But not so with God. He looketh on the heart. If that be withheld, "to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord?" If the heart be not engaged, however sinners may treat about a reconciliation, their insolence is met with this repulsive demand, "Who hath required this at your hand? "Without this, not a step can be taken towards settling your peace with God.

And now all things are ready; and God is inviting and beseeching you to accept his mercy. What is the reply of your heart? Do you not like the terms of this treaty? You are required only to be *reconciled to God*. What can be more reasonable than this? Is it hard that you should be required to love God?—to feel sorrow for sin?—to confess and forsake it? Is this hard? Or is sin so lovely, and so desirable, that it appears hard and unreasonable that you should be required to hate and oppose it with all your heart? Why then will you not renounce it? Is sin so noble a thing in itself, and so desirable in its consequences, that you cannot part with it—that you will lay down your life your eternal life—for its sake? Your love of sin is all the

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excuse you have, or can have. Or will you plead *your inability*? What! cannot be reconciled to God! Cannot feel sorrow for sin! Cannot cease to rebel against the king of heaven! What an acknowledgement is this! Out of thine own mouth wilt thou be condemned. If, indeed, you are so opposed to God that you cannot feel sorrow for sin, this is the very reason why you ought to be condemned. The harder it is for you to repent and love God, the more wicked you are, and the greater will be your condemnation.

God himself is beseeching you to be reconciled. And why do you not obey? Have your pride and stubbornness risen to such a pitch, that you will not do the most reasonable thing, though God beseeches you?

In the name of God I come to beseech you to *be reconciled*. Why will you stand out against the will of heaven? You are on the side of his enemies. The prince of darkness, ever since his first rebellion, has been

attempting to rear his kingdom within the limits of Jehovah's empire. But how feeble are all his attempts. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision." "For he hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." Why then will you continue this unequal contest with your God? He is the rightful Sovereign of the Universe, and claims a throne in every heart. You are under infinite obligations to him as your Creator and constant preserver, and are therefore bound to obey him.

God possesses all excellence in himself, and on this account he deserves the supreme love of all his rational creatures. It is the duty even of the fallen angels to love him, for their rebellion has not cancelled their obligations. While God is on the throne, all his enemies, whether on earth or in hell, will be forever criminal for not loving him, their torments notwithstanding. For on what principle, can the prince of darkness justify his conduct in maintaining eternal war with the king of heaven? But while you continue unreconciled to God, you virtually justify all the rebellion of wicked men and devils. And are you willing to be the apologists of the devil and his angels?

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Again—consider what God has done for your salvation. The gift of a Saviour was not an act of justice to our world. Sinners had no right to demand the blood of the Son of God to atone for their guilt. Why then should he come to our world with a message of peace? Why not take on him the nature of angels, and extend pardoning mercy to those of them who had fallen? Though this has not been done, they are not justified in continuing in rebellion against God. No more would man have been justified, if Christ had never died.

But let us suppose that Christ had left the race of Adam, and gone down to redeem the fallen angels; should we not have been astonished at the mercy of God to them? And had those rebels mocked and insulted the beloved Son of God, and in their hellish rage had stripped him, crowned him with thorns, nailed him to the cross, and put him to death, would you not have thought this to be heaven-daring wickedness? What depravity, think ye, would this conduct have manifested to the Universe?

Be astonished, O ye heavens! This Saviour has concluded a treaty of peace for rebellious man, and now sends his message to you, "*Be ye reconciled to God.*"

In his name I plead. You may now disregard the voice of a dying fellow-mortal. Let him be forgotten. But will you not hear the voice of God? "*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken?*" His commanding voice to every sinner present, is, "*Be ye reconciled to God.*" Have you not continued long enough in rebellion? Have you not long enough resisted his call? And will you now again turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? Will you not hearken to the voice of the heavenly charmer?—your bleeding Saviour? Have you no repentance—not a tear to shed for the sins which nailed him to the cross?

O what amazing love invites! "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person"—and is he unworthy of your love?

He is the delight of the Father—his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased—and is he unworthy of your love?

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He is the Lamb of God—the light of the heavenly world, and receives the homage of angels and glorified spirits—and is he unworthy of your love?

When from his exalted throne he beheld the miserable enemies of God, sitting in the region and shadow of death, he left the bosom of his Father, and with the keys of death and hell at his command, passed by the fallen angels, opened the prison doors of rebel man, and lighted up his dreary abode with rays of celestial hope—and is he unworthy of your love?

Admiring angels, eager to bear the news of his entrance into our world, announced to the shepherds the birth of their incarnate God, and sang "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will to man"—and is he unworthy of your love?

He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth—yet he was treated as a stranger and an outcast—as one unfit to live. The world knew him not. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests," but your Saviour "had not where to lay his head." He was esteemed as less worthy to live than the vilest robber. Barabbas may live, but he must die. He was stoned, and found no rest in his passage through this world. He was falsely accused, unrighteously condemned, scourged, arrayed in purple robe, crowned with thorns; a vast multitude of feeble worms hailed him with acclamations of mock homage, they spit upon him, smote him with the

palms of their hands, and nailed him to the cross. There he yielded up the ghost. But he arose from the dead, and ascended to his throne of glory, from which he now invites you to his arms, and beseeches you to accept the salvation which he has purchased with his blood—and is he unworthy of your love?

“If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.”

I must close my feeble entreaties, and leave the event with God. This is, perhaps, the last time that I shall speak to you, in the name of God, on this side of the eternal world.

Sinners, must I leave you where I found you, unreconciled to God? Your business is not with a fellow mortal. I have

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done; and the whole remains to be settled between God and your souls. However hard you may think of this message, it is not mine. God beseeches—God commands your compliance *now*. And will you raise your feeble arm to oppose? God is on the throne; and have you an arm like God? However opposed you may be, yet God is on the throne, and what can you do? God is on the throne, and will dash his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Before I close, I must remind you, that with some of you this may be the last call—the last offer of peace which God will ever send you. But a different message will soon arrive. You will shortly hear again from your offended Sovereign. Before the setting of the sun, the messenger of death may be despatched with a commission to drag some guilty soul to his dread tribunal. He may now be even at the door.

By the mercies of God, and by the terrors of his wrath—by the joys of heaven and the pains of hell—by the merits of a Saviour's blood, and by the worth of your immortal souls, I beseech you, lay down the arms of your rebellion; bow and submit to your rightful Sovereign. Oppose, and still he will reign. “*For God hath set his king upon his holy hill of Zion,*” and hath sworn by himself that unto him every knee shall bow.

Once he has descended with a message of peace and good will to men. But shortly he will be “*revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*”

SERMON XXI.

**THE CERTAIN RUIN OF ALL
WHO DO NOT SEEK
SALVATION ARIGHT.**

“For many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”—Luke 13:24.

The question was put to Christ, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” His reply to this question was, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; *for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*” Here is an interesting question, and a useful, though alarming answer.

To the question, “Are there few that be saved,” mankind have given different answers. It is a question above the reach of human reason. Whether few, or many, or none, will be saved, are questions which cannot be determined without a revelation from God.

Discarding the opinion of fallible mortals, we appeal to the omniscient Saviour. Whatever others may say, the Son of God has declared, “Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

What proportion of the human race will finally be saved, and what proportion will be lost, is not for me to say. But one thing is certain. “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

Let us contemplate the fact asserted in the text.

1. Many have sought, and have failed of salvation. All who pay any attention to the subject of religion, do, in some sense, seek to enter heaven. Even the heathen, who know nothing of a Saviour, are concerned

about a future state, and often do much to secure their eternal interests. They build temples, worship idols, offer sacrifices, and sometimes subject themselves to the most cruel tortures. And for what? To atone for their sins, and to obtain pardon and eternal life. all these efforts are demonstrations

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of anxiety and concern about a future state. Thousands and millions have sought in this manner to enter heaven, and have not been able. Of idolaters, it is expressly affirmed that "they shall not inherit the kingdom of God." "Without are murderers and *idolaters*, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

Cain, as well as Abel, offered sacrifice. "He brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." The Lord had respect to the offerings of one, and not of the other. Both sought, but both were not accepted.

The Jews, in the time of Isaiah, offered abundance of sacrifices. They appeared before the Lord in solemn assemblies, and made many prayers. And yet the Lord declared, "When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."

When Christ was on the earth, many were diligent in their observance of the externals of religion. They prayed, and fasted, and paid tithes of all that they possessed. In this manner they sought, and yet they were excluded. "For," says the Saviour, "I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The Jews, at the present day, although they denounce Christ as an impostor, are strict in the observance of the rites and forms of their religion. They are seeking to enter heaven; but while they reject Christ, they are in the way to hell. "If you believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Thus many have sought to enter heaven, and have not been able.

2. That many will seek to enter heaven and shall not be able, is evident from plain declarations of scripture.

At the day of judgement, there will be those who will plead for admittance into heaven on the ground of their religious duties. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work

iniquity." The text itself is sufficient proof of the fact. "Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

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My hearers will notice that the Saviour is not speaking of those who do not, and who will not think of religion. He is not speaking of those who sit down in stupid indifference, and who make no efforts to secure their immortal interests. But, what renders his language peculiarly alarming, he is speaking of those who seek to enter into heaven. They will seek to enter in, but shall not be able. Not be able! If they seek why shall they not be able? My hearers are doubtless ready to answer, they will not seek aright. It is even so. Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able, because they will not seek aright. Everything in this matter depends on the manner of seeking.

Let us then consider some of the ways in which sinners may, and do seek, and yet fail of salvation.

1. They do not seek salvation as a thing of the *first importance*. The divine direction is, "*Seek first* the kingdom of God." Let it be the first and leading object of your pursuit. Everything else must give way, and be made subordinate to this. Whatever may come in competition with it must be instantly renounced. "The kingdom of heaven is like to treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." But many who attend to the subject of religion, do not seek it in this manner. They do not seek it in earnest. They do not regard it as the one thing needful, in comparison with which all other things are vanity. They do not realise its overwhelming importance. The grand maxim of many is, seek first the world; then the kingdom of God. Although they do not altogether neglect the outward duties of religion, yet the world has the first place in their affections, and is the leading object of their pursuit. All who seek in this manner only, will fail of salvation. "No man can serve two masters; for he will either hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

2. Some seek to enter heaven by attempting to establish a

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righteousness of their own. They will not fail of salvation for want of zeal or engagedness in religion—because they do not do more—but because they trust in what they do, and do it in a wrong manner, or with wrong motives. This was the fatal mistake of some in the days of the apostles. “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Those who thus rely on their own righteousness, compass themselves about with sparks—but they shall lie down in sorrow. They may pride themselves on their abundant good works. They may flatter themselves that they are eminently pious, although strangers to conviction and conversion, and every feeling of the pious heart—they may thank God that they are not as other men are—but no man will enter heaven on the ground of his own righteousness. Those who will be saved, will be saved by grace through the merits of Christ. They will renounce all dependence on anything they have ever done, or expect to do, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord.

3. Many adopt sentiments which will effectually prevent the necessary preparation for heaven.

Some deny the necessity of regeneration. They intend to maintain what is called a good moral life, but they do not believe in the necessity of a change of heart. But all who expect to enter heaven without being born again, will be disappointed. However sincere a person may be in disbelieving the doctrine—however much he may do with an unrenewed heart, it will be in vain. The Saviour has explicitly declared that “except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Those who deny the necessity of regeneration may seek to enter heaven; but they do not seek to enter by the strait gate. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” The straitness of the gate is assigned as the reason why so many will be lost. “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth

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unto life, and few there be that find it.” Those who discard the doctrine of regeneration, instead of seeking to enter in at the strait gate, spend their time and waste their probation in vain attempts to widen the gate, that all may enter

4. Many will not be able to enter heaven, because they do not seek in season. They may make great exertions, but they are too late. "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not." "When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us,—he shall answer and say, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." Those who have been repeatedly awakened, and have resisted the strivings of God's Spirit, are in danger of being too late. "Because I have called, and ye have refused—then shall they call on me and I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Take heed lest any of you be like Esau, "who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right; for ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

"But hear the Saviour's word,
strive for the heavenly gate,
Many will call upon the Lord,
And find their cries too late."

5. Many who seek to enter heaven will not be able, because they are not willing to part with all for Christ. This was true of the young ruler who came to our Saviour with the question, "Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" He imagined that he was willing to do anything to obtain the salvation of his soul. Christ said to him, "Go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." This tried him, and showed him his heart. It sent him away *sad*. It is recorded of Herod, that when he heard John, he did many things. and heard him gladly; but he was not willing to give up his easily besetting sin. In the case of the sinner anxious for his soul, there is usually some one sin which prevents him from yielding

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to the terms of the gospel. Whatever it may be, the sinner must renounce it. He must break off from every sin. He is required to do it on pain of eternal death. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." The sinner must part with his sins, or he must part with heaven. If there is any beloved iniquity—any

darling lust which he refuses to mortify, he will seek in vain to enter heaven.

The sinner may have some friend with whom he is unwilling to part, or whom he cannot bear to offend; but if he loves any earthly friend more than he loves Christ, he cannot be his disciple.

Finally—Some seek for a time, and then drop the subject. This is often the case in the time of a revival. For a season they are alarmed. They read their Bibles and attempt to pray. They struggle with their convictions for a while; and they find their hearts so hard, and the duties of religion so irksome, that they give up the subject, and are lost forever.

Those who are about to give it up, usually do it by taking offence—and they will take offence at almost anything. Thus it was in the days of Christ. Many who followed him for a while took offence at his preaching, and from that time walked no more with him.

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INFERENCES.

1. We see the danger of loose sentiments on the subject of religion.

If “strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth to life,” let us beware how we attempt to widen them. We may succeed in quieting our fears and silencing our consciences, but we shall do it at the peril of our souls. ... Every man’s character will correspond with the sentiments which he embraces. There is an intimate connection between principle and practice. If a man is an atheist in principle, he will be an atheist in practice. If he believes in no God, he will worship

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no God. If he is a libertine or latitudinarian in principle, he will be such in practice. If he believes there is no wrath to come, he will not flee from the wrath to come. What some men call liberality, the Bible would pronounce infidelity.

No preacher ever made the way to heaven more difficult than the Son of God. Who was it that said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven?” Who was it that said, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat? “And who uttered the words of the text? If any preacher attempts to show an easier way to heaven than by the strait gate of regeneration, and the

narrow way of self-denial, you may know that he does not preach the gospel.

2. If many shall seek to enter heaven, and shall not be able, then those who are now anxious for their souls may be of the number.

My friends, do you fear that you shall be lost? I must tell you that your fears are not without foundation. Many whose souls are as precious as yours, have been lost. Many who have been as anxious as you now are, and even more anxious. Many who have cried as earnestly for mercy as you have ever done, have finally perished. It is altogether uncertain how your present convictions will terminate. There is no safety here. You have not yet repented of your sins—you have not yet believed in Christ, and there is not a promise in the Bible which you can call your own. You are yet under condemnation, and the wrath of God abideth on you. It is altogether uncertain how long the spirit may strive. You may yet lose your concern, and your last state be worse than the first.

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3. If many will seek to enter heaven, and shall not be able, it will not be surprising if some who are considered subjects of this revival should ere long turn back to the world, and finally perish.

A revival of religion is well described in the parable of the sower. There are four kinds of hearers, represented by the

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seed which fell by the wayside—among thorns—in stony places and on good ground.

Should a number of those who think they have experienced religion, turn back, it will not disprove the reality of religion. Because there was a Judas among the apostles, does it prove that Christ had no true disciples? Because some seed fell on stony places, does it prove that none fell on good ground?

When those who profess to have experienced religion, apostatise, how common it is for the wicked to triumph. But what does it prove?

1. That those who thus triumph have no religion, and that they are glad others are going to hell with them.

2. That they are in very great danger. If others have been deceived, they may well imagine that the danger of being lost is imminent,

3. It proves the truth of the text.

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4. If many shall seek to enter heaven and shall not be able, what will become of those who do not ever seek?—those who sit down in careless indifference, and make no effort to secure their salvation? If those who are anxious for their souls may fail of salvation, what will become of the stupid? If those who cry earnestly for mercy may never receive a gracious answer, what will become of those who never pray? If those who have started to flee to the city of refuge may be overtaken by the avenger of blood, and be slain, what will become of those who make no effort to escape? If some who have taken the alarm, and set out to escape for their lives, may after all look back and become pillars of salt, what will become of those who are still sleeping in Sodom? ...

SERMON XXII

SOME WHO ARE LIVING, GREATER SINNERS THAN SOME WHO ARE IN HELL.

There were present, at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them; think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—Luke 13:1-5

It is extremely natural for mankind to talk and complain of the sins of others. This we have all had occasion to witness. The same propensity existed in the days of our Saviour. “There were present, at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.” The fact to which they alluded was this. A number of Galileans refused subjection to the Roman government. And on a certain occasion, while they were assembled for religious worship, Pilate sent a company of armed soldiers, who slew them, and mingled their blood with their sacrifices. The persons who related this fact to our Saviour, did it, doubtless, with feelings of self-complacency. This led him to address them in the language of the text, which suggests the following thoughts:

1. Some sinners have already perished.

2. They perished through their own fault.

3. The greatness of their sufferings is proof of the greatness of their criminality. But

4. The greatness of their sufferings is no evidence that they were greater sinners than those who are spared.

1. Some have already perished. Of this, the text is sufficient proof "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." What a vast multitude perished in the time of the general deluge!

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And they were not only drowned, but they were damned. They are now spirits in prison. The inhabitants of Sodom perished. And they were not only destroyed from off the earth, but were cast into hell, and are now "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." That some have perished, is evident from the story of the rich man and Lazarus. This was intended to give us a correct view of the invisible world. "The rich man died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." "Are there few that be saved?" "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." Compare the character and conduct of multitudes who have died, with the declarations of scripture, and we shall be compelled to admit the truth of the proposition we are considering. The fact, indeed, is acknowledged by all who believe the Bible, that some sinners have already perished.

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2. They perished through their own fault.

God never inflicts undeserved punishment. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The very fact that they suffer is proof that they were sinners, and deserved to die. "Who ever perished, being innocent?" The fact that all are sinners shows that all deserve death. But this is not all. Even after they had sinned, and deserved death, they might have been saved, if they would. That they were not, was peculiarly their own fault. They had the offer of pardon. They were invited, entreated, and warned. The inhabitants of the old world were warned by the preaching of Noah, and by the strivings of the Spirit. The inhabitants of Sodom were warned by Lot. But they perished through their own neglect. *They did not repent.* The sinner sometimes says, what have I done that I should deserve death? It is not merely for *doing*, but for *not doing*, that the sinner must die. It is on the ground of neglect, that gospel sinners perish. They did not

repent. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." "He that believeth not, shall be damned." "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha." The Bible does not say, how

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shall we escape, if we lie, and swear, and cheat, and steal—but "how shall we escape if we *neglect so* great salvation? "It places the sinner's condemnation on the ground of neglect.

Nor can the sinner plead that he would repent if he could. He is as really criminal for not repenting, as for his overt acts of wickedness. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not."

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3. The greatness of their sufferings is proof of the greatness of their criminality.

They suffer only for their crimes. In this world, God often, and indeed always, inflicts punishment for less than the sinner's real desert. But in inflicting punishment, either in this world, or the world to come, he never exceeds the measure of the sinner's desert.

God has selected and set forth some sinners of the human race, as "examples to those who should thereafter live ungodly." The old world, and Sodom, are specimens. Their punishment was awful. But awful as it was, it did not exceed the greatness of their iniquity. In the greatness of their punishment, we may read the greatness of their guilt.

4. The greatness of their sufferings is no evidence that they were greater sinners than those that are spared.

When God inflicts heavy judgements upon a people, we are apt to conclude that it is because they are greater sinners than others; and some seem to suppose that if any are sent to hell, it must be only sinners of the worst kind—such as all would pronounce monsters in wickedness. This was the opinion of those whom our Lord addressed in the text. They supposed that the Galileans, on whom God permitted Pilate to inflict such signal vengeance, must have been greater sinners than others who escaped these sufferings. But this conclusion was erroneous. "Suppose ye," said our Lord, "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you nay." There were sinners then living in Galilee, whose crimes were as great as the crimes of those who had suffered

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the wrath of heaven. Sinners who had gone to hell from Galilee, were no worse than sinners then living there.

The same was true of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. "Or those eighteen, on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them; think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. "Sinners who had gone to hell from Jerusalem were no worse than some who were then living in that city.

Again—Sinners to whom our Saviour preached in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were as great sinners, as some who were then in hell. This our Lord explicitly told them. "But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement, than for you." This sentiment was then true in our Saviour's day. Sinners of other countries, and of other times, who had gone to hell before them, were no worse sinners than many of the Jews then living. Indeed, our Saviour gave them to understand that a more fearful doom awaited them, than that which had overtaken the inhabitants of Sodom, although they "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Let us bring the warning home to this congregation. Suppose ye that sinners who have died and gone to hell from other places, were sinners above all the sinners dwelling in this place? "I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

To all of you who have not repented, this subject speaks a solemn warning. What think ye of sinners now in hell? Suppose ye that they were greater sinners than yourselves? They, no doubt, were great sinners, and deserved to perish. But for what crimes are they punished? Will it be said that their hearts were totally depraved? This is true. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." But the same is true of sinners now living. The eye of God is on every sinner's heart. He takes cognisance of every thought, and every imagination. These are all evil,

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only evil continually. Thousands of thoughts and imaginations which persons think little of, may be awfully wicked in the sight of God.

Sinners who are now in hell had no love to God, and no love to the duties of religion. The same is true of all impenitent sinners now living.

Will it be said that they resisted the strivings of the Spirit? And may not the same be said of you, my impenitent hearers? When the Spirit of God has moved upon your hearts, and conscience has begun to awake, have you not laboured to silence your fears?

Will it be said that they lived long in sin? The same may be said of many now living. How many years have gone out of your probation? Thousands and millions have died younger than some of you. There are those here whose day of salvation has been prolonged beyond that of most of the human race. Many in this house are doubtless older, and have lived longer in sin than many who are now in hell.

Will it be said that they sinned against great light? The same may be said of sinners now living. Sinners in this house have enjoyed far greater light than many sinners now in hell. The inhabitants of the old world, and of Sodom, never enjoyed such light as sinners now living under the gospel. They never enjoyed such privileges as are enjoyed by sinners of this assembly. Their light, when compared with yours, was like that of a taper compared with the noon-day sun. The guilt and punishment of sinners are to be measured by the light rejected. "He that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Many in this house have known their Lord's will for years, and have not yet done it.

Were they stupid and thoughtless? So are you. Were they warned of God, and did they slight these warnings? Did they put far off the evil day, and vainly presume that there is time enough yet to secure their immortal interests? The same is true of you. Suppose ye, that they were greater sinners than yourselves? "I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

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INFERENCES.

1. Sinners often talk and complain of the sins of others, when they have not repented of their own sins, and when they are greater sinners than those of whom they complain, and are every moment in danger of perishing forever.

2. God does exercise sovereign mercy. When our Saviour delivered this discourse, there were some of his hearers who were greater sinners than some in hell. These very persons were indebted to sovereign mercy. Nothing but sovereign mercy kept them from the world of woe.

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3. There may be redeemed sinners in heaven, who were greater sinners than some who are now in hell.

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4. The chief of sinners may be saved if they will repent.

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5. The least of sinners will be lost except they repent.

6. There may be sinners now in this house, who are more guilty than some who are in the world of despair.

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SERMON XXIII.

THE FOLLY OF MAKING A HYPOCRITICAL PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

*“And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”—Matthew
25:2.*

The parable from which the text is taken was designed to illustrate the state of the visible church on earth.

All professors of religion are divided into two classes, which our Saviour denominates the *wise* and the *foolish*.

It is proposed to inquire,

- I. What is required in a wise profession of religion?
- II. Why some profess religion without possessing it.
- III. Why they are called foolish?

I. That something is required is evident from the distinction made by our Saviour. Though various shades of character may be found among professors of religion, yet all are included in these two classes, the wise and the foolish.

There is peculiar propriety in the employment of these terms. Proper attention to the concerns of the soul is a mark of superior wisdom, because an interest in Christ is of the highest importance. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” So, on the other hand, a neglect of the concerns of the soul, is a mark of supreme folly. Sinners, in the Scriptures, are denominated fools. And religion is denominated *wisdom*, and sin, *folly*. The distinction between the wise and the foolish may, to our limited view, appear small; and, in some instances, it may not appear

at all in this world; but in the sight of God, there is a distinction as wide as that between light and darkness.

The distinction does not consist in the fact that one has been baptized, and the other not. Nor

In the fact that one belongs to the true church, and the other not, for the characters described in the parable, are all represented as belonging to the true church—"the kingdom of heaven." Nor

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In the fact, that the foolish had been once wise and had become foolish. They were foolish from the beginning.

In a wise profession of religion is implied

1. A strong attachment to the cause of Christ.

Supreme love is required. "For he that is not with me," says Christ, "is against me." God requires the heart, and without that, no offering can be accepted.

2. A willingness to leave all for Christ.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," &c.

"If any man come after me, and hate not his father," &c.

He must be willing to make any sacrifices, which the cause of Christ may demand.

3. A willingness to suffer in the cause of Christ.

"If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus he shall suffer persecution."

He must be willing to endure shame and reproach, &c.

4. A willingness to engage in all the duties of religion.

Without this there can be no evidence of love to Christ, or attachment to his cause.

5. Faith in Christ.

Not a mere empty, speculative faith.

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "Faith worketh by love, and purifieth the heart."

It follows

6. That regeneration is required. For without regeneration there can be no evangelical faith. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Hence it is evident that without regeneration there can be no wise profession of religion; because without it there can be no evangelical faith. Nor can there be any love to God. For "every one that loveth is born of God." Those only who are born again, are children of

God, and heirs of God;—and they only can do anything which is acceptable to him. For “they that are in the flesh, cannot please God.”

Those whose hearts are renewed; in whom “old things are passed away, and all things are become new,” may be said to take oil in their vessels. Their hearts are established with grace.

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They are children of light, and are prepared to shine as lights in the world.

Let us inquire

II. Why many profess religion without possessing it?

The reasons by which persons are influenced to make a profession of religion may be various. In the primitive ages of Christianity, persecution operated powerfully to guard against a hypocritical profession of religion. But even then the church was not exempt from false professors. Much less can we expect it will be at the present day.

The judgements and consciences of men are on the side of religion, even while the heart is opposed. It was thus in the time of Christ. “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Had it not been for the fear of being put out of the synagogue, it is intimated, many would have professed Christ, although they “loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Though such a speculative belief as theirs, with such hearts, would avail nothing, yet for the sake of quieting conscience, many with the same belief, and the same hearts, will profess religion.

One reason why many profess religion without possessing it, may be the influence of example. In churches where experimental religion is not required, many make a profession because it is fashionable. The form of godliness is assumed, without even a thought of its power.

Some have been influenced by the advice of injudicious friends.

Some have made a profession through entire ignorance, not realising the import of the vows which they have taken upon themselves.

Some have denied the necessity of a change of heart, and have gone so far as to ridicule the idea of any such change; and yet have taken the vows of God upon them.

Some who believe in the necessity of regeneration, having long been under concern for their souls, and finding no relief, begin to inquire whether this change may not take place, and

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yet they be ignorant of it. Being informed that the thing is possible, they flatter themselves that it is so in their case, and are induced to make a profession of religion, although they are conscious of no important change in their views and feelings in relation to divine objects.

Some mistake spurious religious affections for those which are genuine, and presume that they have been converted while they are still in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. Like the stony-ground hearers, they receive the word with joy, and for a season are very active and zealous; and in this state make a profession of religion.

Sometimes the sinner having long been anxious, and finding no relief, is prevailed on to believe that the most probable method to find relief is to profess religion. But the relief which is obtained in this way, is usually that which results from being given over to a hard heart, and a reprobate mind.

“The wise,” it is said, “took oil in their vessels with their lamps.” This was their wisdom. The state of the heart was the great thing to which they looked. They were convinced that there must be something in the heart which was not there by nature. They dared not go forth to meet their Lord, unless their hearts were replenished with the Christian graces. Like the wise man who built his house on a rock, they dug deep, that their foundation might be sure. They searched their own hearts, and were willing to be searched, that they might not be deceived in a matter of such infinite moment.

Not so with the foolish. When they professed religion, they never attended thoroughly to their hearts. They flattered themselves, and were willing to be flattered by others, and commenced their journey without any grace in their hearts. “They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them.”

III. Why are they called foolish?

Because they are wicked and not essentially different from other sinners. And they are both foolish and wicked for professing religion without possessing it.

They are both foolish and wicked, because unto the wicked

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God says, "What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, and that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth."

"Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

"An empty profession is both foolish and wicked, because God hath commanded, "When thou vowest a vow unto the Lord, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou vowest." He hath also said, "Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay."

It is foolish and wicked to make a profession of religion without possessing it, because those who do so, usually settle down into a state of great security and hardness of heart. There is an awful familiarity contracted with the most solemn subjects. Repetition hardens, and it proves a savour of death unto death. They are far less likely to become Christians than others under the same means.

But these means will not be used. Ministers who are set to watch for souls, find it difficult to converse with them in the most profitable manner. They do not like to call in question the piety of their brethren. They choose to receive them *as becometh saints*. And this tends greatly to strengthen their delusion.

The warnings from the pulpit, too, are all evaded. Their profession is a shield which the arrows of the Almighty seldom penetrate.

"What think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not. But afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go sir, and went not. Whether of the twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, the first. Jesus saith unto them, verily I say unto you, publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

Such a profession is both foolish and wicked, because it is offensive to God.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

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Such a profession is foolish, because the person has begun to build without a foundation, and all his labour is lost.

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon his house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

It is both foolish and wicked, because, though the person has entered the church on earth, he cannot, without a change of character, enter heaven.

“Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, open unto us. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” “Afterward came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, verily I say unto you I know you not.”

Therefore, my brethren, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

SERMON XXIV.

**THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD,
MATTER OF REJOICING.**

“The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.”—Psalm 97:1.

The simple truth contained in these words is, that it is matter of rejoicing that God governs the Universe. I shall not spend time, at present, in showing what is implied in the government of God. I shall barely state that he exercises absolute control over both the natural and moral world—that he “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” and that no event, great or small, ever takes place which is not included in his eternal purpose, and which is not made to subserve his ultimate designs.

My present object is to show that it is a matter of rejoicing that the Lord thus reigns.

I am aware that it is not thus regarded by wicked men. There is no doctrine to which the natural heart is more bitterly opposed than that of the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah.

Wicked men are willing that God should govern the natural world—that he should regulate the motions of the planets, order the vicissitudes of day and night,—of summer and winter—of seed-time and harvest, and perform his pleasure in the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. They do not object to the doctrine of God’s decrees, so far as it relates to the natural world merely. But when we speak of the government of God over the moral world, the enmity of the heart is roused. “What! does God reign over moral agents?”

All the objections which I have ever heard against the doctrine of decrees, or election, may be reduced to this one. If God operates on the hearts of men, and determines their actions, how can they be free? Though the objection is stated in different forms, yet the whole difficulty is resolved into this. My hearers, am I bound to obviate this difficulty? Does it lie against none but those who hold the doctrine of God's decrees? We will drop the doctrine of decrees—How is it then? Does

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God operate on the hearts of men, or does he not? If not, then we must not pray that he would do it. ...

No person can pray for himself without admitting that God can operate on his heart, and yet he be free. "*Turn thou me, and shall be turned*"—"*Turn us, O God of our salvation*"—"*Draw us and we will run after thee*"—"*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*" These prayers are found in the Bible. But persons ought not to have prayed in this manner, if God could not answer their prayers without destroying their free agency. Ought we to pray that God would destroy our freedom?—that he would make us machines? This no one will pretend. How, then, can we pray that God would work in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, if as the objection supposes, he cannot operate on our hearts without destroying our freedom? I would ask the objector, how he can pray for himself consistently with the views which he maintains? Can he deem it right to pray that God would do what he believes God has no power to do?

No person can pray for others without admitting that God may operate on their hearts, and yet they be free.

It is a doctrine clearly taught in the scriptures, that a change of heart is absolutely necessary to prepare sinners for heaven. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We are also taught that God is the author of this change. "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." But if God cannot operate on the hearts of men without destroying their freedom, then we ought not to pray that God would renew the hearts of sinners. Surely we ought not to pray that God would convert men into machines. However wicked mankind may be, we cannot pray that God would stop them in their career of sin, because he cannot do it without destroying their freedom. When sinners have proud, stubborn, and rebellious hearts,

we cannot pray that God would make them humble, submissive, and obedient; because he cannot do it without converting them into machines.

When sinners are invited to Christ, they all with one consent begin to make excuse. And Christ declared, "Ye will not

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come to me, that ye might have life." Sinners are then in awful condition. They will not come to Christ, and God cannot make them willing without destroying their freedom. What shall be done? It will be of no use to pray for them. Nor is it proper to pray for them; for surely we ought not to pray that God would do what he is unable to do.

We have dropped the doctrine of decrees, and the same difficulty still remains. The grand objection which is urged against the decrees of God, lies with equal force against the duty of prayer. If it be true that those who hold the doctrine of decrees make men machines, it is equally true of those who pray. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost the same things."

Now whether we can see *how* God operates upon the hearts of free agents, or not, it makes no difference. We know but very little of the *mode* of divine operation. The question is, does God govern "all his creatures and all their actions?" "Does he govern the actions of wicked men and devils?"

No, says one—he cannot do it without destroying their freedom.

No, says another—he cannot do it without becoming the author of sin.

My present object is *not* to prove the doctrine that God does reign over all his creatures, but to show that it is a desirable thing—and that if he *can and does* thus reign, it is matter of rejoicing—and that if he does not thus reign, it is matter of mourning and lamentation.

If indeed God cannot govern human beings without destroying their freedom, or becoming the author of sin, and if he must resign his dominion over them, or let them alone, the Universe is truly in a melancholy condition. Let us for a moment contemplate the condition we are in. Cast your eyes abroad, and see how the wickedness of men prevails. The adversary of souls goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. What then shall be done? God cannot govern these beings, it is said, without becoming the author of sin. The church of Christ is truly

in a lamentable condition. What will become of the church we know not, for the devil has

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come down with great wrath. He will do all he can to destroy the kingdom of Christ on earth. He will do all he can to destroy heaven itself. What shall be done? We live under a government which can afford us no protection. Wicked men and devils are let loose upon us. They have entered the dominions of Jehovah, and are fast subverting his kingdom. Nothing can be done. The work of desolation must go on through eternity, for God cannot control the actions of his creatures without destroying their freedom, or becoming the author of sin. Thus, my hearers, you see the condition we are in. It is gloomy and awful beyond description. And is it so? Must God for ever look with regret and grief upon his creation, because he cannot stay the work of ruin carried on by his rebellious creatures?

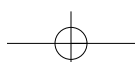
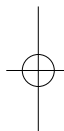
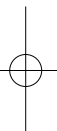
That wicked men and devils very much need a governor one who can control them at pleasure, you must, I think, be convinced. And why then do you object to the absolute supremacy of Jehovah? Is not God qualified to reign?

He is infinitely wise. He knows perfectly what is for the best. There can be no objection to his government on this ground.

He is infinitely good. He is disposed to do everything in the best possible manner. In this respect he is qualified to reign.

The only question relates to his power. But his power is as infinite as his wisdom and goodness. All things are possible with him. All his creatures are the workmanship of his hands—and has he made creatures whom he cannot govern? No, my hearers, the Lord reigneth. “He sits on no precarious throne.” “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou?”

“Rejoice, the Lord is king;
Your God and king adore.
Mortals give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.
Lift up the heart,
Lift up the voice.
Rejoice aloud,
Ye saints, rejoice.”



SERMON XXV.

CHRIST STANDING AT THE DOOR.

“Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.”—Revelation 3:20.

The text is the language of Christ. The methods which he adopts to secure attention to what he has to say, are many and interesting. He condescends to adapt himself to the language and practice of mortals.

“Behold I stand at the door and knock.” This language is suited to rouse and attract attention. Who is he?—Where is he? At what door does he stand?—At the door of thy heart, O sinner! Though invisible to mortal eyes, he is here, whether you regard it or not.

He knocks. But how?

By his word—by a preached gospel—by the admonitions of conscience—and by the strivings of his Spirit. Nor is this all.

He *calls*. “Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men.” He calls by all the invitations of mercy contained in the Bible, “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life, freely.” “Come, for all things are now ready.” Open unto me—open unto me, is the language of Christ.

He threatens. “Because I have called, and ye refused—I also will laugh at your calamity.” “Woe unto them when I depart from them.”

“If any man hear his voice”—What is it to hear his voice? To pay a respectful attention to his word—to listen to a preached gospel; but this is not all. Hearing in the language of the text implies obedience. “Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live.”

“And open the door”—And what does this imply? Alas?

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it implies that the hearts of sinners are closed against Christ. They are closed

By prejudice.

By pride.

By unwillingness to receive the Saviour.

By excuses.

By unwillingness to see their lost condition.

An effort to prevent conviction, is an effort to exclude Christ from the heart. Thus sinners fortify their hearts, and make them as strong and stout against Christ as possible.

To open the door to Christ, my hearers, implies a willingness to see and feel what sinners you are. Painful as may be the sight, you must be willing to see it.

Again—to open the door to Christ, implies a willingness to turn out every opposing enemy. There are many idols lodged in the sinner's heart. With none of these will Christ consent to dwell. If you love any object more than you love him, you are none of his. Search, then, every corner of your heart, and turn out every opposing enemy.

Again—to open the door to Christ, implies a willingness to confess the very worst of your sins, and to forsake them. "He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

"I will come in to him"—And what does this mean? It is a glorious promise that he will set up his kingdom in the heart of the sinner. And will God in very deed, dwell with men on earth? It is even so. Said one to our Saviour, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not unto the world?" He said, "If any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." Thus the strong man armed is overcome, and Christ sets up his kingdom in the heart of the sinner, who is translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

"And I will sup with him, and he with me."

It is with the sinner a joyful time. As when the prodigal returned, there was great rejoicing.

REFLECTIONS.

The text is introduced by a note of admiration. "Behold!"

Behold then, 1. The greatness of our Redeemer. He is everywhere present. And is it so?—that he knocks at the door of a sinner's heart here—of another's there—and of another's there? And is it true that he meets with two or three of his disciples assembled here—and with others assembled there, and in different and distant parts of the world at the same time? And is that true which he said on earth, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven?" He must then fill heaven and earth at the same time. And O, what can those do who deny the omnipresence of the Saviour? He calls, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" but if he is not omniscient, where shall they find him? They have no Saviour to go to. But, my friend, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend unto heaven to bring him down—or descend into the deep to bring him up—He is nigh thee—He is everywhere present. Sinners need not leave their seats, but only open their hearts, and he will take possession.

2. Behold the depth of Christ's condescension. The high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, dwelling in the high and holy place, condescends to take up his abode in the hearts of men. He comes not to the palace;—but to poverty and wretchedness—to sinners, and to those who have long rejected him—to those who have been ashamed of him. He does not knock at the door of his friends merely, but at the door of his enemies. He knocks at the door of the vilest of sinners.

"When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn divine he turns his eyes,
From towers of lofty kings.
He bids his awful chariot roll,
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul,
With pleasure in his eyes."

O, the depth of his condescension! Is it possible! And will he stoop so low, as to take such vile sinners—heirs of hell—and make them the sons of God—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ to an eternal inheritance?

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3. Behold the extent of his willingness to receive sinners. The sinner sometimes says, I am willing to receive Christ, but he is not willing to receive me. But what says the text? "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Does not this imply his readiness and willingness to come in? Nor is this all—He calls, open unto me—open unto me. Nor is this all—He says, "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in." He positively declares that he is willing. Nor is this all—you may say, I am such a great sinner—I have rejected him so long, that he will not receive me now. But what says the Saviour? "If any man hear my voice"—vile as he may be, if he is on this side of hell—"if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

If you are not now a Christian, permit me to say that you have never yet heard his voice, nor opened the door, nor been willing to receive him. You have never complied with the invitation in the text. The Saviour is ready and willing, but you will not come to him that you might have life.

4. Behold your danger. The Saviour *stands* at your door. He does not sit. He stands ready to enter or ready to depart. How long would you stand at the door of your neighbour, asking for admittance, if he should bar and bolt you out. And how long has Christ stood knocking? Even till his head is filled with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. But he will not stand long. There will be a last knock. The Saviour can do without you; but you cannot do without him. He may say, as he once said to the Jews, "I go my way. Ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins." How often "I would," and "ye would not." "Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

I repeat, sinner, there will be a last knock at the door of your heart.

"Behold a stranger at the door,
He gently knocks, has knock'd before,
Hath waited long, is waiting still,
You treat no other friend so ill.

O lovely attitude, he stands,
With melting heart and loaded hands,

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O matchless kindness, and he shows
This matchless kindness to his foes.

But will he prove a friend indeed?
He will, the very friend you need;
The friend of sinners—yes, 'tis he,
With garments dy'd on Calvary.

Rise, touched with gratitude divine,
Turn out his enemy and thine,
That soul-destroying monster sin,
And let the heavenly stranger in.

Admit him ere his anger burn,
His feet departed ne'er return;
Admit him, or the hour's at hand,
You'll at his door rejected stand."

SERMON XXVI.

RELIGION, THE ONLY SOURCE
OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

(ADDRESSED TO YOUTH.)

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom."—Proverbs 3:13.

All mankind desire and seek happiness. The great inquiry is, "Who will show us any good?" But happiness keeps at a distance, and they are subject to continual disappointment. My young friends, if you have not yet found happiness in the enjoyment of the world, you are to late—you have lost your chance—you may give up the pursuit.

But try once more, and in another way.

"I tried each earthly charm,
In pleasure's haunts I stray'd,
I sought its soothing balm,
I asked the world its aid.
But ah! no balm it had,
To heal a wounded breast,
And I forlorn and sad
Must seek another rest:
My days of happiness are gone,
And I am left to weep alone."

There is one source of true happiness. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom."

True religion is denominated wisdom. And why? Because mankind despise it. The proud and haughty sinner looks down upon it with contempt, as a thing beneath his notice. But God regards it as the height of wisdom; and he would rescue it from this degradation by pronouncing it wisdom.

It is also called wisdom, because it is the highest wisdom of men to attend to the concerns of the soul. Wisdom in a worldly sense consists in selecting the most important object, and adopting the best means to secure it—in laying a plan for time, which there will be no reason to regret. But wisdom in the text, is

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laying a plan for eternity, which will never be regretted. Sin is called folly, because although sinners affect to be wise, they will hereafter be constrained to alter their opinion, and to curse their folly to all eternity. The time will never come when those who secure an interest in Christ will regret it. They will not regret it on a dying bed. They will not regret it at the day of judgement. They will not regret it to all eternity. No one was ever heard to say, and no one ever will be heard to say, at the close of life, I am sorry that I have attended to the subject of religion. Let me die the death of the sinner, and let my last end be like his. This was never said. But directly the reverse has always been matter of fact. The sinner who now despises the subject of religion will, on a dying bed, and at the judgement day, curse his own folly for having neglected the concerns of his soul; and thus the sober judgement and conscience of all in heaven, and all in hell, will declare that sin is the greatest folly, and that religion is the highest wisdom. Hence it is calling things by their right names.

Or if, in the text, wisdom means Christ, as some suppose, it amounts to the same thing. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom; and happy is the man that findeth Christ. One cannot be found without the other.

“Happy the man who wisdom gains,
 In whose obedient heart she reigns;
 He owns, and will forever own,
 Wisdom and Christ, and heaven are one.”

I have selected this topic because the young often regard religion as a gloomy subject. But the reverse is true. Religion is not gloomy; but it is gloomy to be without it. This subject may be presented to advantage by contrast.

How gloomy must be the state of those who delight in nothing but what God forbids. All their pleasures are forbidden pleasures. With what stings of remorse they must be accompanied. What a miserable portion this And how gloomy the condition of those who have no other.

Sickness, and sorrow, and pain are the common lot of all, and

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no feeling heart could wish to interrupt the little joys of the present life, if there were no other.

How gloomy the state of those whose sins are all unpardoned. They are like prisoners under sentence of death, and every moment liable to be called forth to execution. "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." O what miserable sport. They know not but the next moment they shall be hurried into eternity.

How gloomy the state of those who receive all their good things in this life. They have no title to heaven—no Saviour to go to. How gloomy the state of such an one on a dying bed. He has spent all his life in sin, and the day of salvation is now drawing to a close.

"The work, the mighty work
Of life, so long delayed,
Repentance yet to be begun,
Upon a dying bed."

On the other hand, how happy the man who delights in those things which God commands—who can say, "O how love I thy holy law." Religion is his amusement. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." He is pleased with the Bible—with its doctrines and precepts. He is pleased with the people of God. They are the excellent of the earth. He is pleased with the Sabbath, and with the ordinances of God's house. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord."

How happy the state of those whose sins are pardoned. "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

How happy the man who has God for his friend. Let all the world be against him, if God be for him, it is enough.

How happy the man who suffers all his evil things in this life. A few more pains, and his sufferings will be over. He may say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day."

“What matter whether pain or pleasures fill
 The swelling heart one little moment here;
 From both alike how vain is every thrill,
 While an untried eternity is near.
 Think not of rest, fond man, in life's career,
 The joys and griefs that meet thee, dash aside
 Like bubbles; and thy bank right onward steer,
 Through calm and tempest, till it cross the tide,
 Shoot into port in triumph, or serenely glide.”

The last enemy is about to be slain. “O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? “

“E'en now before we rise
 To that immortal state,
 The thoughts of such amazing bliss,
 Should constant joys create.

The men of grace have found
 Glory begun below,
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground,
 From faith and hope may grow.

Then let our songs abound,
 And every tear be dry,
 We're marching through Immanuel's ground,
 To fairer worlds on high.”

We come then to the conclusion that religion is not a gloomy subject, and that the reason why it appears gloomy to you, is a consciousness that you do not possess it; and that if you were to die in this state, you must be lost forever. This is proved from the experience of all under conviction of sin. The distress of those who were pricked in the heart on the day of Pentecost, was not owing to their religion, but to the fact that they had no religion. But when their hearts were changed, and they found the Saviour, O how happy they were. They *gladly* received the word. And so it was with the trembling jailor. He *rejoiced* in God. And so when Philip preached in Samaria, “there was great joy in that city.” And so it is in our day. We have the testimony of thousands of youth,

that religion is not a gloomy subject, but that it is awfully gloomy to be without it.

But suppose it were not so. It is absolutely necessary to the salvation of the soul; and what are the trials of a short life compared with a miserable eternity?

SERMON XXVII.

THE BACKSLIDER RESTORED.

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”—Psalm 2:12,13.

This passage of Scripture reveals to us the method which God usually employs in commencing a revival of religion. He first revives his work in the hearts of his people, and thus prepares them to pray, and to labour successfully for the salvation of their fellowmen.

This prayer of David carries back our thoughts to that period in his history, when? after having seen his lost condition, he was brought up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and his feet were set upon a rock, and a new song was put into his mouth, even praise unto our God. It was then that he first experienced the joy of God's salvation; and having lost it by falling into sin, he penitently and earnestly prays that it may be restored.

In treating of this subject it is important to discriminate between that joy which is spiritual, and that which is natural. All religious joy is not the joy of God's salvation. There is the joy of the hypocrite, which is but for a moment. Job 20:5.

The stony ground hearers received the word with joy. They rejoiced prematurely, and having no root in themselves, they endured only for a time.

Sinners may flatter themselves without any good reason, that their sins are pardoned, and be filled with joy. Their joy may arise to a high degree, and be accompanied by the warmest expressions of gratitude, and by great zeal in the external duties of religion. Thus a criminal under sentence of death, understanding, through mistake, that he is pardoned, is filled with transports of joy, and cannot find words to express his gratitude to his sovereign for his kindness and mercy. But when he discovers his mistake, his joy vanishes, and all his love and gratitude

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to his supposed benefactor disappear at once. In like manner, the self-deceived sinner, who rejoices only in his own fancied safety, has no love to the character of God, no delight in holiness, and no joy in the contemplation of divine objects. All his regard centres in self. If he only can be safe, he cares not what becomes of God, or his glory, or the interests of his kingdom. But the joy of God's salvation is not a selfish joy. It results from the exercise of the Christian graces, and consists in the delight which the renewed soul takes in contemplating the objects of holy affection, without reference to self or self-interest.

God's salvation is not a salvation from punishment merely; but a salvation from the power and dominion of sin. Christ was called a Jesus, because he should *save his people from their sins*. "Out of Zion shall come a deliverer, *who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*." "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son, Jesus, sent him to bless you, *in turning away every one of you from his iniquities*."

The first joy of the new-born soul does not arise from the belief that his sins are pardoned; for his sins are not pardoned until the love of God is shed abroad in his heart. He can, of course, have no evidence that he is pardoned, until he finds himself rejoicing in the contemplation of the divine character. The joy of God's salvation may be realised, when the individual has no idea that his sins are pardoned. The renewed soul, while contemplating the loveliness of Christ, and other divine objects, forgets himself, and his mind is absorbed in the delightful contemplation of these objects.

This joy of God's salvation, may for a season, be lost; not only by falling into open and scandalous sins, as in the case of David; but by the indulgence of secret sins; or by becoming cold, formal, or negligent in the performance of duty.

When the Christian loses the joy of God's salvation, all his spiritual consolation departs, and he is filled with sore distress. It was so with David. The pains of hell get hold upon him, and he found trouble and sorrow.

And what must the backslidden Christian do, that the joy of God's salvation may be restored? He must consider from whence he has fallen, and repent, and do his first works. Like

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the Psalmist, he must confess his sins, and turn from them unto God. He must obtain this joy as he did at first, by repentance and faith in Christ. God is ready to forgive those who come unto him with broken and contrite hearts. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord." "I will heal their backslidings. I will love them freely."

When the Christian is thus restored, he will be like one converted anew; and he will be more humble and watchful than he was before. He will also be more sensible of his dependence on divine grace, and will look to God to keep him from falling. Thus David prayed that God would not only restore unto him the joy of his salvation, but that he would uphold him with his *free Spirit*—*free* in two senses.

1. Because the gift of the Spirit is gratuitous. And
2. Because, by the operations of the Spirit, the sinner is liberated from the bondage of corruption.

"Then," the Psalmist says, "will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." The best preparation for usefulness in ministers, and in Christians, is the possession of a right state of heart. The spirit which they manifest, they will be likely to diffuse around them.

To teach transgressors God's ways, is to teach them not only their duty and their sinfulness, but the ways in which God deals with his sinful creatures, in bringing them into a state of favour with him. Thus David could say, "when I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day"—"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

This whole subject is strikingly illustrated in the history of Peter. Think of the warning which Christ gave him, and of his confident assurance that he should not deny his Master.

Think of his unhappy fall, and of his deep and bitter repentance. Now witness his preaching on the day of Pentecost, and the remarkable success which attended his labours. God had restored unto him the joy of his

salvation, and upheld him by his free Spirit; and he taught transgressors
God's ways, and sinners were converted unto him.

SERMON XXVIII

TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”—Genesis 6:5.

The object of this discourse will be to illustrate and establish the doctrine of *Total Depravity*.

The doctrine does not imply that all men are equally wicked. There are evidently degrees of wickedness. It shall be more tolerable for the inhabitants of Sodom than for those who reject the gospel. The servant that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he who knew not his Lord's will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. In hell all will be totally depraved, and yet all will not be equally bad.

This doctrine does not imply that men are as bad as they can be. “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” And all the finally impenitent will wax worse and worse forever. The longer sinners suffer in hell, the more will they deserve to continue there.

This doctrine does not imply that men are not free moral agents. They possess all the faculties which are essential to moral agency—reason, judgement, memory, will, and affections. If they were not free moral agents, they could not be the subjects of moral depravity. To say, therefore, that total depravity is inconsistent with free agency is absurd. If it is, there can be no such thing as sin or blame in the Universe. For if total depravity annihilates free agency, then partial depravity destroys it in some degree. So far as an individual is depraved, so far he is not free, and of course not blame-worthy.

This doctrine does not imply that men are destitute of conscience.

The question is sometimes asked, Is there not something in man which tells him what is right and what is wrong? Undoubtedly there is. If man

had not a conscience, he could not be a sinner. But it is one thing to know our duty, and another to love it, and to do it. The more clearly a person sees his duty, the greater is his guilt if he does not perform it. Conscience will exist in hell. It is the worm which never dies. And who doubts that the lost spirits in hell are totally depraved?

But positively—by the doctrine of Total Depravity is meant, that all men, by nature, are destitute of love to God, and consequently wholly sinful—or, to adopt the language of the text, that every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is only evil continually. The truth of this doctrine appears

1. From direct passages of scripture. The text is decisive. The language is very striking. Suppose it were affirmed of Gabriel that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only holy continually. Could any one doubt that this language was intended to affirm that Gabriel was perfectly holy.

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2. From the doctrine of regeneration. Men must be born again—they must pass from death to life—“You hath he quickened, who were dead.” If the heart were not entirely depraved, this change would not be necessary.

3. From the distinction which the scriptures make between the saint and the sinner. “Every one that loveth, is born of God.” This declaration implies that all unrenewed men are destitute of love to God, and of course totally depraved.

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Should the sinner say, There certainly is some goodness in myself, I would answer, Your testimony cannot be admitted. You are a party concerned. Suppose that it does not seem to you that you are totally depraved. You may be blinded by self-flattery. Your character may appear very differently to the omniscient God. “That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.” Mark the words of the text. “And *God saw* that the wickedness of men was great,”

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&c. Psalm 14; Romans 2:9–12...

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4. From the experience of every Christian. Look back, my brethren, to the time when you were under conviction of sin. Were you not brought to see that there was no good thing in you? Did not God treat

you as if you were totally depraved, by refusing to hear and answer your prayers? Did you not find that you were not only destitute of love to God, but that your hearts were enmity against him? When others were taken and you were left, how did you feel? And when you began to love God, were you not conscious that you had never loved him before?...

If this doctrine is true, conviction and conversion are necessary; and when persons begin to love God, it will be all new. And so we find it in revivals. So it was with Paul. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing."

Thus, the experience of Christians perfectly harmonises with this doctrine. But if the doctrine were not true, the young convert might say, I have indeed experienced a great change, but it is nothing new. I always felt so. I always loved God.

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Finally. From the experience of every sinner. When Adam had sinned, he was afraid, and hid himself from the presence of the Lord. So children, when they first learn that God is present, are afraid, and disposed to hide themselves. This shows that they are totally depraved. If there was any love to God in their hearts, they would be pleased with the idea of God's presence. They would love to pray to him and to converse about him.

Let me appeal to the experience of impenitent sinners. Do you love to pray? Do you love to meditate and converse on the subject of religion? Why is it that all the motives which are presented to your minds are insufficient to induce you to comply with the terms of the gospel? Why do you not repent? Do you say you cannot? Then certainly you are totally depraved. If you had the least love to God, you could not help repenting. Think against who you have sinned. What a

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heart must that be that can feel no contrition for sin committed against such a glorious being. Think of the love of Christ in dying for your sins, and in offering you salvation without money and without price. Surely,

if this is not sufficient to melt your hearts, they must be harder than adamant.

Think of the threatenings of eternal death. If you can venture on in sin in view of these threatenings, how amazingly obdurate must be your hearts...

Perhaps some one will say, If these things are so, it will do no good for me to attempt the service of God, and I will do nothing. To such an one let me say, You express the very feeling of a totally depraved heart. If you had any love to God, you would not stop to inquire whether it would do you any good to serve him. You would delight in his service, and esteem it a privilege to serve him.

If any of you, my hearers, do not believe that you are totally depraved, let me put your feelings to the test. You know that it will be your duty to enter into your closets to pray this night. If you love God, you will esteem it a privilege to do so. If you find your hearts opposed to this duty, and neglect it, or attempt it with great reluctance, you will know tomorrow that you possess just such hearts as have been described.

SERMON XXIX

THE WAYS IN WHICH SINNERS COVER THEIR SINS.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy,”—Proverbs 28:13.

It is natural to all men to attempt to cover their sins—as natural as it is to commit sin. When Adam was called to an account for eating the forbidden fruit, he attempted to throw off the blame from himself, by saying, “the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat.” And when the woman was called to an account, she said, “the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” And it is remarkable, that children sometimes show the ingenuity of the serpent, in attempting to cover their sins.

The first thing, if possible, is to deny the fact. But when the fact cannot be denied, the next thing is to excuse and palliate their sin.

I will mention some ways in which sinners attempt to cover their sins. I shall confine my remarks to some of the ways in which they excuse themselves for neglecting the subject of religion.

One pleads that he has no time to attend to the subject.

Another says, I would become a Christian if I could, but I cannot.

Another cloaks his sin under the failings of professors of religion. He will not become a Christian, because there are so many hypocrites in the world.

Another says, I did not make my own heart, and how can I be to blame.

In these and many other ways, the sinner attempts to cover his sins.

But he shall not prosper. He shall not succeed. He shall fail of the object which he has in view.

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If his object is to appear well for the time being, he will fail. It would have been better for him to have said nothing.

Does he plead want of time. How must such an excuse appear? Cannot find time to attend to the concerns of his immortal soul! He can find time to attend to other things infinitely less important. And he must find time to die.

Does he plead that he would be a Christian if he could but cannot? What an excuse is this? Do you, O sinner, really believe what you say? Is it so? Can you not repent of your sins? Can you not feel sorrow that you have sinned against God, and against Christ? What a heart must yours be! If your heart so hard and obdurate, what, then, are your prospects? Can you go to heaven with such a heart? After thy hardness and impenitent heart, "*treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath.*"

Again. Do you believe that God is such a being, that he will condemn you for not doing what you have no power to do? He has declared, that except you repent you must perish. And if it true that you cannot repent? Then your state must be dreadful.

But would you be pleased if others should tell you the same? Would you not be offended if ministers should tell you that you are condemned to eternal death for not doing impossibilities?

Does the sinner excuse himself for neglecting religion, because there are so many hypocrites in the world? What an excuse is this! Suppose, my hearers, there are hypocrites who are going down to hell. Is this a reason why you should neglect religion, and destroy your own souls? I am aware, that the failings of professors of religion, give great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. But remember, that those who take occasion to blaspheme, are the enemies of the Lord. If you excuse yourselves and reproach religion because Christian professors disgrace their profession, remember that you proclaim to all the world that you are the enemies of the Lord.

Does the sinner plead that he did not make his own heart? What an excuse is this! Suppose your neighbour should injure you, and should plead in his justification, that he did not make

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his own heart, would you be satisfied with such an excuse? Are you the only being who did not make his own heart?

The principle involved in this excuse, if true, will exculpate every sinner in the universe. All the fallen angels may plead that they did not make their own hearts.

Suppose a number of men in a boat. By some means one of them gets overboard. He exclaims, how came I here? No matter, says one of his friends, let us help you into the boat. No, says he, there is an important question first to be settled; how came I here? We cannot tell, says his friend. There are different ways in which you may have got where you are. You may have jumped overboard—or you may have been thrown overboard—or you may have fallen overboard in your sleep. But take hold of this rope. No, he replies, if you will not tell me how I came here, I am determined to drown.

Is it the sinner's object to become a Christian; he will fail. No one ever did, or ever will, become a Christian by covering his sins. One reason why persons are sometimes long distressed, and obtain no relief is, that some secret sin is covered. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day."

Is it the sinner's object to quiet his conscience, he *may* not succeed. Sinners often plead excuses which their consciences tell them are not valid. If they succeed in quieting their consciences, they will certainly destroy their souls. "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

But if those who cover their sins will not prosper now, what will they do on the day of judgement, when "God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil!"

The sinner who covers his sins, is only attempting to conceal one crime by the commission of another, and is thus continually making his condemnation more and more just.

But "whoso confesseth and forsaketh them." Here is a term of pardon. Confession of sin is as much a term of pardon, as faith and repentance, and has the same promise. Psalm 32:5;

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1 Kings 8:47; Jeremiah 3:12,13; Job 33:27, 28; 1 John 1:9.

But it is not sufficient for the sinner to confess his sin in words. The text says, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them." The sinner has to deal with the heart-searching God. If he does not break off his sins by righteousness, he cannot be saved. He must bring forth fruit meet for repentance.

"Shall have mercy"—who does not need mercy? What a sweet and joyful sound! O, how reasonable the condition. If the sinner had one right feeling in his heart, he would esteem it a privilege to confess and forsake his sins, whether he was ever to receive mercy or not.

The language of the penitent is,

 "Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer,
 Welcome to this heart of mine,
 Lord, I make a full surrender,
 Every power and thought be thine—
 Thine entirely,
 Through eternal ages thine."

SERMON XXX.

THE EXAMPLE OF ESAU, A WARNING TO SINNERS.

“Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat hold his birthright.”—Hebrews 12:16

The conduct of Esau is adduced by the apostle to illustrate the danger of sinners who reject the gospel of Christ. The story is this. “Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birth-right. And Esau said, Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?” We cannot believe that he was on the point of starvation in his father’s house. The meaning is, that he would forego no worldly gratification for the sake of spiritual blessings. Life is short, and I am determined to make the most of it. “And Jacob said, Sware unto me this day; and he sware unto him; and he sold his birth-right unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread, and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birth-right.”

The birth-right included a double portion of his father’s substance, together with supreme authority in the family. But this was not the most important part. It included a prophetic blessing, with which were connected great spiritual privileges. These were the things which Esau despised—and on this account he is denominated by the apostle, a profane person. And this is what gives the passage so much point in illustrating the conduct of sinners in selling the blessings of the gospel.

What do they sell?—How?—For what?—The consequences.

1. What do they sell? All the blessings purchased by the blood of Christ, and offered to men in the gospel—pardon of

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sin—peace of conscience—joy in the Holy Ghost—and a title to an eternal inheritance among the saints.

“The Lord said unto Abraham, lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.” This was only a type of those blessings which are presented to the sinner in the gospel—a crown—a kingdom—an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. All these things are offered in the gospel.

2. How?—By resisting the strivings of the Spirit. All these blessings are intimately connected with the strivings of the Spirit, by whose influence alone, the sinner is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now the sinner, like Esau, may be unwilling to forego the pleasures of sense. He may set a higher value upon them than upon the salvation of his soul; and for the sake of securing these pleasures, he may resist the Holy Ghost, and seal his everlasting doom. “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.”

3. For what does the sinner sell the blessings of the gospel? Not for value received;—but for mere trifles—one morsel of meat—a momentary gratification, he parts with the joys of heaven. It may be for the sake of present ease—or for a title of worldly honour—a puff of noisy breath—or perhaps for the sake of obliging a companion, who is the enemy of God—or for the sake of indulging some beloved lust.

In the indulgence of these pleasures, the conduct of the sinner may be attended by the stings of conscience. It is true, no one expects to complete the bargain. But many do it. Temptation comes, and conviction goes.

Now I would ask the sinner to consider well *for what* he is about to part with heaven. Count the cost. “Thus saith the Lord, ye have sold yourselves for nought.” O, for what trifles sinners sell their souls. Lysimachus, king of Thrace, suffering under extreme thirst, offered his

kingdom to the Getæ, for the means of quenching it. His exclamation, when he had drunk, is very striking. "Ah! wretched me, who for such a momentary

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gratification, have lost so great a kingdom." How applicable this to the case of him, who, for the momentary pleasures of sin, parts with the kingdom of heaven.

4. The consequences. "Afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing"—My hearers, there is an afterwards. O, if there was not, we would not trouble the sinner. Forty-five years *afterwards*, when Esau would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected. How different now are his feelings. The story is related in the 27th chapter of Genesis. When he found that God in his providence had given the blessing to Jacob, though it was in accordance with his own voluntary conduct, how did he then feel? When he heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry. O, how great, and exceeding bitter will the cry of the sinner be, when it is forever too late to retrieve his loss. He said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O, my father." But he found no place of repentance. He could not induce his father to change his mind, though he sought it carefully with tears. So it will be with the sinner. On the judgement of the great day, he will cry, Lord, Lord, open unto me, but the door will be shut.

REFLECTIONS.

1. What great consequences are sometimes connected with little circumstances. For one morsel of meat—for the indulgence of one sinful appetite or passion, under certain circumstances, heaven is bartered away.

When the sinner is anxious for his soul, one word of contempt dropped in his ear—one sneering look, may occasion the loss of his soul—his absence from one interesting meeting of inquiry, may terminate in the loss of his conviction, and the loss of salvation. How great the danger of the sinner! "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

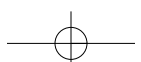
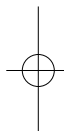
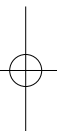
2. What a solemn thing it is to live. The sinner is on trial once for all.

"Let us not lose the living God,
For one short dream of joy,
With fond embrace cling to a clod,
And fling all heaven away."



FIRST PROOF READING DRAFT

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SERMON XXXI.

THE SINNER SLAIN BY THE LAW.

“For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”—Romans 7:9.

The time to which Paul alludes in the text, is doubtless the time when he was on the way from Jerusalem to Damascus—when he was struck to the earth and remained three days without sight.

We will consider

I. The life which Paul lived.

II. The death which he died.

I. He lived what many regard as a very moral life. “My manner of life from my youth, which was first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the straitest sect of our religion, I lived a pharisee.” This was regarded very much to his credit.

He appears to have been very conscientious.

“And Paul earnestly beholding the counsel, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience until this day.”

He was also sincere. “I verily thought,” he says, “that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”

He was very zealous. “I am,” he says, “verily a man who am a Jew—brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was *zealous* toward God, as ye all are this day.”

"I profited in the Jew's religion above many mine equals, being more *exceeding zealous* of the traditions of the fathers."

If any man could assert a claim to heaven on the ground of his own righteousness, Paul could do it. "If any man haven

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whereof to glory, I more—as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless." So far as external conduct was concerned, he regarded himself, and was regarded by others as blameless.

But notwithstanding his zeal and activity in religion, he had no true knowledge of his own heart, and no right principle of action. He was alive without the law. The law of God reveals the great principles of right moral action. Of these, he was perfectly ignorant.

When he says that he was without the law, the meaning cannot be, that he had no Bible. He was doubtless better acquainted with the contents of the Bible than most of his brethren; for he was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers. He had the best of advantages. But although he was acquainted with the letter of the law, and could probably repeat from memory much of the Bible; yet he was totally ignorant of the spirituality and extent of the law.

II. The death which he died.

Of course he did not mean that he died a natural death, for he was then alive.

The language implies that he found himself under sentence of death; for, he says, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. He found himself under the curse of the law. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

Again—He found himself destitute of all spiritual life. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The language which he so often uses in his epistles on this subject he knew to be true from his own experience. "Dead in trespasses and sins."

Again—All his self-righteous hopes were slain, and he felt that he was utterly lost.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Many think themselves to be Christians when they are not. They have not been under conviction of sin. They have not seen and felt that they were condemned, and that they were dead in trespasses and sins.

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2. We see the importance of preaching the law. No sinner can see and feel his need of pardon and salvation, until he sees that he is lost—none are convicted of sin without a knowledge of the law—“By the law is the knowledge of sin.” I had not known sin but by the law.” None can feel their need of Christ till they feel that they are condemned. It is true that sinners may be greatly distressed, and have great fears of hell without conviction. Hence the need of preaching the law that sinners may see their need of pardon and salvation.

3. Sinners that are under conviction, realize that they are waxing worse and worse. Thus it was with Paul while under conviction of sin. He doubtless, at that time, saw more of his heart than ever before. Had there been any good thing in his heart, he doubtless would have discovered it. But he does not say, when the commandment came, the good principle revived, and I lived; but sin revived, and I died.

And thus sinners now under conviction complain that they are waxing worse and worse. We need not contradict them, for it is true, whether they realize it or not.

4. Gospel preaching will distress sinners more and more, while unreconciled to God.

They often complain that ministers destroy all that they have been doing. Painful as it is, it must be done. Should a sinner find relief under any sermon, without a change of heart, he may know either that he has not understood the preacher, or that the preacher has not done his duty.

5. The sooner sinners die in the sense of the text, the better.

Sinners under conviction sometimes say, it seems as if you would kill me. They must be killed. They must be slain by the law, before they will be made alive by the gospel.

SERMON XXXII.

**CAUSES OF ALARM TO
AWAKENED SINNERS.**

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”—Acts 2:37.

What ailed these men? This was the language of distress.

After the resurrection of Christ, he continued forty days with his disciples, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Among other things, he gave commission to his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; at the same time enjoining them to begin at Jerusalem. Obedient to their Lord, they retired to an upper chamber, where abode the apostles, and held a meeting for prayer. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” The number of the disciples was about one hundred and twenty. This prayer-meeting could not have been established more than about ten days; for Christ ascended on the fortieth day, and the day of Pentecost was on the fiftieth day after his crucifixion. The feast of Pentecost was appointed to celebrate the giving of the law on mount Sinai; and it is remarkable that it occurred on our present Sabbath morning.

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place”—with united hearts, praying for the descent of the Holy Spirit. “And suddenly, there was a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind.” This mighty agent is an emblem of the Spirit of God. Invisible to mortal eyes, we hear the sound as it sweeps over fields and forests, and lays all prostrate before it. Though we may not be under its influence, we can hear the sound, and witness the effects. And so it is when the Spirit of God is sent to subdue the hearts of

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rebels. The effects in the latter case can no more be doubted than in the former. "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 born of the Spirit."

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them"—a parting flame in the shape of tongues—a fit emblem of that flaming zeal with which the gospel was to be preached in different languages through the world. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." It being the feast of Pentecost, Jerusalem was filled with people. There were dwelling there, devout men from every nation, speaking not less than seven or eight different languages, besides different dialects of the same language. Now when these strange appearances were noised abroad, a great multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

These strangers, not the apostles, proclaimed the miracle. "They were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying, What meaneth this?"

"But others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."

At this interesting crisis, "Peter standing, up with the eleven, lifted up his voice," and preached the first gospel sermon under the new commission of our Saviour. He, in the first place, repelled the insinuation that they were drunken. In the next place, he referred them to an ancient prediction of the very events which were transpiring before them. He then applied the subject. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up," &c.

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In all which they did to the Saviour, they only fulfilled some ancient prediction, and did it with wicked hands. They did not strike a stroke which did not fulfil the determinate counsel of God.

“And while by Satan’s rage he fell,
He dashed the rising hopes of hell.”

Peter, in his sermon, connects the counsel of God and the free agency of man. And if his hearers could not understand that they might with wicked hands fulfil the counsel of God, there was no way in which he could prove to them that Christ was the true Messiah.

To prove that God had raised Christ from the dead, he next quotes the 16th Psalm, and comments upon it, showing that it refers to the resurrection of Christ. He then presses home the argument. “Therefore let the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

At this point, the Spirit of God sent home the word with power upon the consciences of the hearers. “Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? “They saw and felt their danger. The phraseology is peculiar—“They were pricked in their heart”—the effect corresponding with the instrument used. “The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword.” This is the sword of the Spirit. A stab in the heart is fatal. “The letter killeth.” “When the commandment came, sin revived, *and I died.*”

I would here remark, that in genuine conviction there is something peculiar. It is not simply alarm, or fear of hell. The word of God comes with power to the conscience, and shows sinners their true character and condition. It was so with Peter’s hearers. This was what ailed them.

I propose to state some of the principal grounds of alarm to the awakened sinner.

1. He realises that he is condemned by the divine law. He knows that he has broken the law in times and ways to him

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innumerable, and that not a single sin is pardoned. He knows that he has no interest in the atonement of Christ, and that there is no other way of escape from the curse of the law. “He that believeth not the Son is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Again—he realises that the punishment to which he is exposed is eternal. Not until the sinner sees himself condemned, does he realise how he shall feel at the hour of execution. Now he is convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. Now he dwells with awful solemnity

on the eternity of hell torments. The more he reflects, the more rational he becomes, and the more he is alarmed.

Again—he realises the awful uncertainty of human life. He knows that he has no security of a single day. He is aware that the God in whose hand his breath is, he has not glorified, and that he has a right to cut him down at any moment. He perceives that his soul is in jeopardy every hour. When he lies down at night, he knows not but before morning he shall awake in hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Again—he realises that pardon is uncertain.

Again—he realises that it is altogether uncertain how long the Spirit will strive. He knows that he has resisted his strivings, and that God may justly at any moment take his Spirit from him. He may, perhaps, be conscious of having resisted the Spirit in former years. He knows that many have been given up of God, and that some younger than himself have been cut down in their sins, and called to their last account.

Again—he is convinced that he shall never do anything to better his condition short of repentance. The sinner, partly awakened, often flatters himself that he shall do something to recommend him to God. But when his self-righteousness is demolished, he sees the sinfulness of all that he has done. He sees that the motive, the principle of action, is wrong; and he is persuaded that he never shall do anything, with his present feelings, acceptable to God.

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Again—he realises that he is altogether without excuse for not repenting and believing in Christ now. This is generally the last stage of conviction. When *He*, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall convince the world of sin, because they *believe not on me*.

Finally—he is convinced that if he does not repent now, he never shall. Those who are not brought to this state of mind, will, in all probability, drop the subject, and, like Felix, look for a more convenient season. But those who are under thorough conviction do not expect to find a more convenient season. They conclude that this is their last call. And until the sinner is brought to this conviction, there is no hope of his conversion.

But, my hearers, it is one thing to hear the account of those who are pricked in the heart, and under conviction, and quite another thing to feel it.

“I saw the opening gates of hell,
 With endless pains and sorrows there
 Which none but they that feel can tell
 While I was hurried to despair.”

I do not pretend that every awakened sinner goes over precisely the same ground. But these are the common grounds of alarm to awakened sinners. Have you, my hearers, felt that out of Christ, you were justly condemned by the divine law? Have you felt that you were altogether without excuse for not repenting and believing in Christ immediately?—that there was no difficulty in your way but a criminal difficulty? If you have not felt these things, you have not come to Christ.

And now, I have no occasion to ask my hearers, how do you like this statement? For I have only been stating matters of fact. It is what hundreds and thousands have felt.

We see from this subject,

1. That it is no new thing for persons to be under conviction. It was so on the day of Pentecost, under the preaching of Peter. But some one will say, we are not to expect such things now. The age of miracles is past. True, the age of miracles is past; but the age of preaching the gospel is not past. It was not the

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miracle, but the preaching of Peter, which was the means of awakening his hearers. “*When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.*” And this is the genuine effect of a preached gospel. It must be the same in all ages; and the more nearly the effects resemble those on the day of Pentecost, the greater is the evidence that they are genuine.

2. It is no surprising thing that sinners should be under conviction. If what has been said is true, that the sinner is condemned to eternal death, and every moment in danger of being lost forever, it is not surprising that he should be alarmed. It is amazing that any sinner should remain stupid. And here permit me to ask, are there any who are listening to my voice, who begin to feel that they are condemned, and that not

one of their sins is pardoned? If out of Christ, let me tell you, your fears are not without foundation. You are condemned; and O that you might realise it more and more.

Again—do any of you begin to fear that you are exposed to eternal punishment? If out of Christ, your fears are not without foundation. It is even so; and O that you might realise it more and more.

Again—do any of you begin to realise the uncertainty of life? Do you tremble lest you should be suddenly cut down by the stroke of death, and hurried into a miserable eternity? If out of Christ, your fears are not without foundation. You are in just such danger. You know not what a day may bring forth. And O that you might realise it more and more.

Again—do any of you begin to fear that you never shall be pardoned? Let me tell you, your fears are not without foundation. It is yet an awful uncertainty whether your sins will ever be pardoned. And O that you might realise it more and more.

Again—do any of you fear that the Spirit of God may cease to strive with you? Your fears are not without foundation. There is great danger that the Spirit will cease to strive. Many who were as anxious as you are, have gone back to stupidity, and have lost their souls.

Do any of you begin to realise that you shall never do anything

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to better your condition short of repentance? It is a correct conclusion. You never will. If you have anything to do before you repent, I beg that you will make haste, and do it soon; for, after all, you must repent or perish.

Do any of you begin to realise that you are altogether without excuse for not repenting now? It is even so. Hardness and impenitency of heart are awful sins in the sight of God.

Do any of you begin to feel that if you do not repent now, you never shall? This, in all probability, is a correct conclusion. If you now resist the Spirit, and turn back to stupidity, there is the greatest reason to fear that you will slumber on in impenitence, till you perish.

I perceive that all my hearers are going to be under conviction of sin. It may not be to-day—or to-morrow. Perhaps it will not be in this life. O, that it might be. How much better to be awakened now, while pardon is offered, than when the day of grace is past.

But those who are not convinced of sin now, will be hereafter. They will be convinced of all their sins; and it will be conviction that will be

succeeded by no conversion, but will last for ever. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgement upon all, and to *convince* all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against them."

"Sinners, awake betimes, ye fools, be wise,
Awake before this dreadful morning rise,
Change your vain thoughts, your crooked works amend,
Fly to the Saviour, make the judge your friend;
Lest, like a lion, his last vengeance fear
Your trembling souls, and no deliverer near."

SERMON XXXIII.

THE BURDENED SINNER INVITED TO CHRIST FOR REST.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matthew 11:28–30.

After our Saviour had been preaching in different places for some time, very few seemed to take much interest in his preaching. At length he lifted up his voice in a strain of awful solemnity, Wo, wo, wo—and it broke like a peal of thunder over the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because they repented not. He then raised his eyes, and thanked his Father in heaven, that this was not true of all. There was another class to whom he now turned with a voice of welcome, like that on the judgement of the great day; “Come, ye blessed of my Father,” &c. He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

I propose to consider,

I. The characters here addressed.

They *labour* and are *heavy laden*. In some sense all men labour, but not in the sense of the text. They seem to care little about their souls; but they labour to obtain the pleasures of sin, and vanities of this world. They are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. Persons of this description are thus addressed in the Bible, “Wherefore do ye spend your 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.”

Those who are addressed in the text, are of a different class. They have lost all their interest in the objects of time and sense. All their anxiety respects the salvation of the soul. They are

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said to labour. Those who are under deep concern for their souls will not be idle. They feel that something must be done. They generally commence by labouring to build up a righteousness of their own. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness," as the most probable method of securing their salvation. And thus they often continue for a long time, labouring and toiling, but without success.

They are said to be heavy laden—borne down under a sense of their sins, which are like a heavy burden. They find no rest, day nor night. And their burden often increases continually. These are the characters particularly addressed in the text.

And who is the person that speaks? Not a mere man—not an angel. No created being can save the sinner. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from heaven to earth, and shed his own precious blood.

"Neither is there salvation in any other." This is the great errand on which he came from heaven to earth. Here in the text, he seems to fulfil the prediction uttered by the evangelical prophet. "In that day there shall be a root out of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious."

"I will give you rest"—rest from all your self-righteous efforts—rest from the burden of sin. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul."

Rest to the body after toil, after labouring under a heavy burden, is sweet; but rest to the heavy laden soul, is infinitely more desirable.

Rest implies cessation from warfare—from the fruitless contest in which the sinner is engaged. He lays down the weapons of his rebellion. "Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We who believe do enter into rest."

“*And I will give you rest.*” The singer will never do any thing by which to purchase pardon and salvation. He has nothing to give in exchange—nothing but a poor sinful soul.

“Lo, glad I come, and thou blest Lamb,
Shall take me to thee as I am;

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Nothing but sin I thee can give,
Nothing but love shall I receive.”

But the sinner lingers, hoping that he shall grow better—that he shall do something to recommend him to favour. But this can never be, for so long as he refuses to come to Christ, he will surely wax worse and worse.

“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him.
This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall,
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.
Not the righteous,
Sinners, Jesus came to call.”

“*Take my yoke upon you.*” What does this imply? It implies that the sinner must be henceforth employed in the service of Christ. He has heretofore been employed in the service of sin; henceforth he is to yield himself unto God, as one that is alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness.

“*And learn of me.*” He must abandon all his self-righteous plans, and carnal wisdom, and learn at the feet of Christ all the doctrines and duties of religion. He must also imitate the example of Christ, and possess his spirit.

“*For I am meek and lowly in heart.*” This is the character of the Saviour who knew no sin, and the character which all who will enter heaven

must finally possess. How directly opposite to the character of proud, stubborn, rebellious sinners.

"Meek and lowly in heart." Thus the sinner is required to come to Christ. We have sometimes heard of sinners coming up to the terms of salvation. In the text they are called upon to come down to the terms of salvation—to be meek and lowly in heart.

"And ye shall find rest to your souls." The sinner will no longer be like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. He finds peace. The exercise of the christian graces is pleasant and delightful.

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"For my yoke is easy." The service of Christ, when contrasted with the service of sin, is easy. The sinner often refuses to come to Christ for fear he shall have to be employed in his service; and, indeed, it would be irksome and galling, with an unrenewed heart; for "no man can serve two masters." But all who have tried the service of Christ, can testify that it is easy—that wisdom's, ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are paths of peace.

"And my burden is light." Christ has a burden to place upon the sinner who comes to him. It may be a burden of affliction. He may be called to part with father or mother, or he may be called to suffer shame and reproach in the cause of Christ. "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus he shall suffer persecution." But the burden will be light—light in comparison with the burden of sin—light in comparison with what those endure who have lost their souls, and whose consciences will torment them forever for rejecting Christ.

I know not how better to illustrate this subject than by a comparison which I have seen in the work of an ancient author. "I look around creation for an illustration of this text. I see a bird walking with folded wings, which he carries as a little burden on his back. But he is not willing to part with his burden. For the burden which he carries, often carries him. 'So they that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.'"

SERMON XXXIV.

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION NO MATTER OF WONDER.

*“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”—
John 3:7.*

It will be the object of this discourse to show that it is no marvellous thing that sinners must be born again.

If there is any cause of wonder in this, it must arise from the fact, that sinners now love God so well, that it appears strange and marvellous, that they should need to love him any better.

It has sometimes been said that sinners would not be happy, if taken to heaven without a change of heart. My object will be to prove the truth of this declaration. This may be done, by ascertaining the nature of the happiness of heaven, and that in which the sinner now delights.

What then is heaven?

1. It is a holy place—a place of spotless purity. There is no sin there. There shall in no wise enter into the new Jerusalem, anything that defileth, neither whatsoever “worketh abomination or maketh a lie.” The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom *all things that offend, and them that do iniquity.*

2. Heaven is a place of ineffable glory.

It is the place where God in a special manner manifests himself. It is represented by the apostle John under the figure of a most beautiful and magnificent city. There is no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And it hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

3. The inhabitants of heaven are holy.

There is an innumerable company of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. There are Abraham, and Isaac, and

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Jacob, and all the patriarchs and prophets, and apostles, and all the saints who have finished their earthly pilgrimage, now made perfect in the image of their Saviour—clothed in white robes and palms in their hands. And there, too, is God the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.

4. The employments of heaven are holy.

Angels and glorified saints are constantly employed in the service of God. "They serve him day and night in his temple." "I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousand of thousands, saying, 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." "The four and twenty elders fell down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." In such employments the happiness of heaven consists.

Now are sinners prepared without a change of heart to enter upon the holy employments and enjoyments of the heavenly state? Are they conformed in the temper of their hearts to the character of God? Do they delight in his service? Is it their meat and drink to do his will? What saith the scripture? "The wickedness of man is great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." "The hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." "The carnal mind is enmity against God." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

In what do wicked men delight? They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should

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serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?"

But let me appeal directly to the consciences of my impenitent hearers. What are the employments in which you delight? Do you delight in the service of God? Do you love to study his character, and to contemplate his perfections? Do you love to search the scriptures, and to offer up prayer and praise to your great Creator? Do you love to converse on the things of the kingdom of God, to labour to promote the interests of Zion? What employment would you prefer, if you could have your heart's desire? And what company do you choose? The disciples of Christ? Or those who take no interest in the things of religion? Do you esteem the saints, the excellent of the earth, in whom is all your delight?—Or are the precious sons of Zion, who are comparable to fine gold, esteemed by you as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter? Is there anything in heaven suited to your present taste? Suppose heaven were now opened on your view, and you were permitted to look in. What would you see there to attract your hearts? Or suppose that this night your souls should be released from their clay tenements, and should be conducted by some guardian angel into the immediate presence of God and the Lamb. Suppose you should see the saints, clothed in white robes, surrounding the Redeemer's throne, and crying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty;—Would you not be ready to exclaim, Is this heaven?—Is this that place of happiness of which I have so often heard? There is nothing here which suits my taste. My companions are not here. There are no employments here such as I delight in. I cannot live here. Let me go back to earth whence I came. After such a sight, you would forever despair of entering heaven without a great change of heart. I ask you now my impenitent hearers, are you not convinced that with your present feelings, you could not be happy in heaven? Marvel not, then, that Christ has said unto you, Ye must be born again.

This subject furnishes a criterion by which to test our hopes of heaven.

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All men hope to go to heaven when they die. But all have not a well grounded hope. Hope implies the desire and expectation of some future

good. To be well grounded, there must be a correspondence between the state of the heart and the object of hope.

Do you hope to go to heaven simply because it is a place of happiness? If this is all, you have no good reason to hope. The wicked as well as the righteous desire to be happy. Do you see anything in heaven suited to make you happy?

Do you hope to go to heaven because it is a refuge from the ills of time, and from the pains of hell? If this is all, you have no reason to hope. It is true, heaven may be endeared to the saints, as a refuge from the miseries of the present and the future world; but this is not a distinguishing characteristic of the Christian hope.

Again—Do you hope to go to heaven, on account of the company which is there? Do you desire to join the society of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect? If so, your hope is well founded. Heaven is yours. But be not too hasty. If you really desire to join the society of heaven, you will delight in the society of God's people now. You will feel a peculiar attachment to the saints. You will esteem them the excellent of the earth. Is it so? Are they your chosen companions?

Again—Do you hope to go to heaven, because Christ is there? If so your hope is well founded. This was the hope of Paul. He had a desire to depart and be with Christ. But be not too hasty. If you really desire to dwell with Christ in his kingdom, one thing is true. You love him now. He is precious to you, and you count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. If you can say, whom have I in *heaven* but thee, you can add, there is none upon *earth* that I desire beside thee. Is it so?

Again—Do you hope to go to heaven on account of the employments of the heavenly world? If so, your hope is well founded. But be not too hasty. If you are prepared to enter on the employments of heaven, you love God's service now. You are able to say, "O how I love thy holy law." "I delight

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in the law of the Lord, after the inward man." "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." Is it so with you?

Again—Do you hope to go to heaven because it is a holy place—because there is no sin there? If so, your hope is well founded; but then remember, if this is really so, you hate sin now and long to be free from it. It is your ardent desire to be perfectly conformed to the image of

your Saviour. If this is your real desire, it will eventually be gratified; and you may say,

“O glorious hour, O blest abode,
I shall be near and like my God,
And flesh and sin no more control,
The sacred pleasures of the soul.”

SERMON XXXV.

**THE NATURE AND
REASONABLENESS OF
EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE.**

*“And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now
commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”—Acts 17:30.*

The text is a part of Paul's discourse before the Athenian philosophers. The times of ignorance to which he alludes, were the times of heathen idolatry. The phrase “winked at,” does not mean that God, of course, overlooks the sin of ignorance. It is not the meaning of this, or of any other text in the Bible. The servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; and the servant who knew not his Lord's will, and who committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. They that sin without law, are not saved, but perish without law. It was not their sin, but their ignorance, or the times of this ignorance that God overlooked. Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them up—be made no further efforts by raising up prophets to warn them. No commission had been given to preach the gospel to all nations. Even our Saviour, when he first commissioned the twelve apostles, said, “Go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans, enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But now a new commission had been given. The antithetic form of expression shows this. The times of this ignorance God winked at, but the times have altered. God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

“No more the sovereign eye of God
O'erlooks the crimes of men
His heralds are despatched abroad
To warn the world of sin.”

Paul now appears at Athens, acting, under this high commission. The text is the application of this discourse.

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The great object of gospel preaching is to bring sinners to repentance. The subject, though common, is very important; for without repentance there is no pardon or salvation. So long, therefore, as there is one sinner out of Christ, so long it will be necessary for ministers to preach repentance.

I propose to consider,

I. The nature.

II. The reasonableness of evangelical repentance.

I. The nature.

Repentance implies that we are sinners. The gospel without ceremony addresses all men as sinners. The command to all now to repent, is proof positive that all are sinners. This is generally admitted. But something more is necessary. Repentance implies conviction of sin. Without conviction no sinner ever did, or ever will repent. But conviction itself is not repentance; nor is it necessarily connected with it. Conviction may rise to the highest degree—the sinner may see and feel that he is lost—he may be for a long time in this state, and still his heart be as proud and stubborn as ever. This hundreds and thousands have felt. It was so with Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost. Although pricked in the heart, Peter did not say, "poor mourning souls"—taking it for granted that they were penitent. But he presumed the contrary; and urged upon them the duty of immediate repentance.

Repentance implies confession of sin. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid." The sinner, who has long refused to retire to confess his sins to God, will now be constrained by the power of conscience to cry for mercy. And those who do not confess their sins, may know that they have never repented. "He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper." But the sinner may be constrained by the power of conscience to confess his sins—he may do it often, by day and by night—he may cry long and loud for mercy, and after all, never repent. His heart may be as proud and stubborn as ever. This hundreds and thousands have felt. They have lost their concern and have shown that their hearts were never broken for sin. All that I have stated the sinner may experience, and yet never repent. What then is repentance.

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It implies not only conviction and confession, but forsaking of sin. "Whoso confesseth and *forsaketh* his sins, shall have mercy." Unless the sinner breaks off his sins by righteousness, however much he may confess them—however much he may be distressed on account of them, he is not sincere, and God will not accept him.

Repentance implies loathing of sin. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." "And then ye shall remember your ways, and all your doings wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall loathe yourselves, in your own sight, for all your evils, that ye have committed."

Repentance implies sorrow for sin, because it is committed against God. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned." "Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee." And against Christ. "And they shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only child; and shall be in bitterness, as one is in bitterness for his firstborn. Repentance is godly sorrow—or sorrow arising from love to God. The penitent feels a sweet pleasure mingled with his sorrow.

"Let humble, penitential woe,
With painful, pleasing anguish flow,
And thy forgiving smiles impart
Life, hope, and joy to every heart."

II. The reasonableness of evangelical repentance.

Are there any present who have not repented? What I have here to say, will be addressed to you.

That repentance is your most reasonable duty, is evident from the fact that the law which you have broken is most reasonable. Also

From the fact, that sin is odious in itself How reasonable that you should feel sorrow for that which is so odious in the sight of all holy beings. If you were required to feel sorrow for some good conduct, it might seem hard; but it is only because you have done wrong, that you are required to repent. Your sins have been committed against God, whose character

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is infinitely lovely, and is it not reasonable that you should repent.

Your sins have been committed against Christ who died for sinners—and is it hard that you should be required to feel sorrow for sins which have contributed to nail the Saviour to the cross? What a heart must that be which does not melt in view of a Saviour's dying love?

It is no more than you require of others—parents of children—you of your neighbours. When they injure, you, you feel that they ought to repent. And how is this? Are you of more consequence than your Maker?

Christ and his apostles preached that men should repent; and God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Remember this is not my command, but God's; and whether we urge it or not, it will be binding upon you.

Whose duty is it to repent? The text answers. *All men, everywhere*—the high and the low—the rich and the poor—the learned and the ignorant. The king must come down from his throne, and sit in sackcloth—the anxious sinner, however distressed—the thoughtless sinner, however hard and stubborn may be his heart, all are commanded to repent.

When is it their duty to repent? Doubtless it is their duty to repent when God commands them to do it. And what says the, text? *God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.* If it is not the duty of the sinner to repent now, it never has been his duty, and it never will be. If we cannot urge immediate repentance, we cannot urge it at all. If the sinner finds it hard to repent to-day, it will be harder to-morrow. The longer he delays, the greater will be the number of his sins, and the harder will be his heart. And, my hearers, if you cannot repent now, you never can. Do not misunderstand me. I do not say you never will. But you have no good reason to think you ever shall.

Paul preached the duty of immediate repentance; and has thus set an example for all other preachers of the gospel. Surrounded by rows of Athenian philosophers, with wonderful adroitness he says, "As I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown God.'" *To the unknown God.*"

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Having selected his text, he begins, "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you,"—"God who made the world, and all things therein"—It was as though he had shot ten thousand suns into chaos.

With awful solemnity, he pressed home the subject, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given *assurance* unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Just as surely as Christ was raised from the dead, so surely, "all who are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation."

Mark the effect of Paul's discourse. It divided his audience into three parts.

Some mocked.

Others said we will hear thee again of this matter.

But some clave unto him.

Here were the scoffers—the doubters—and the believers. A number believed, among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris. To the honour of divine grace their names are recorded.

O, what a preacher was Paul!

"There stands the messenger of truth—there stands
The legate of the skies—his theme divine,
His office sacred his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace."

By all the solemnity of the judgement day, I entreat you, my hearers, immediately to repent.

"Together in his presence bow
And all your guilt confess
Accept the offered Saviour now,
Nor trifle with his grace.

Bow, ere the awful trumpet sound
And call you to his bar,

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THE LIFE AND LABOURS OF ASAHEL NETTLETON

For mercy knows the appointed bound
And turns to judgement there.”

SERMON XXXVI.

GOD'S SPIRIT WILL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE

"And the Lord said, my Spirit shall not always strive with man."—Genesis 6:3.

That God should give his Son to die for this rebellious world—that Christ should consent to assume our nature, and suffer in our stead—and that salvation should be freely offered to the children of men, is an exhibition of astonishing mercy. And that all, with one consent, should begin to make excuse, and refuse to accept of offered mercy, is proof of astonishing depravity. We should naturally expect that God would do no more for such ungrateful creatures. But he has given his Holy Spirit to strive with them. This may properly be styled God's last effort with sinners.

On this blessed influence, every preacher of the gospel must depend entirely for his success. Without this influence, no sinner will ever be brought to embrace the Saviour. Though he may listen to a preached gospel, he will listen in vain. He will continue to reject the counsel of God against himself, till the day of grace is past.

We will consider

- I. The fact that the Spirit does strive with men.
- II. The fact that he will not always strive.
- III. The consequences of his ceasing to strive.

I. That the Spirit does strive with men is evident from the whole tenor of the gospel. Every one who prays, admits the fact, that the Spirit has access to the minds of men.

But what is the object of the Spirit's strivings? Not to make men flee moral agents; nor to make it their duty to repent and believe the gospel. If they were not moral agents, they would not be sinners, and would not need the strivings of the Spirit.

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But he strives with men to convince them of sin. It is just as natural for men to conceal and cover their sins, as it is to commit sin. They love darkness rather than light. Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, and will not come to the light, lest he should be brought under conviction.

The Spirit comes to demolish the excuses of sinners—to destroy their self-flattery, and to show them their lost condition. He commonly commences by troubling the conscience in view of some overt act of sin. Then he lays open to the sinner the plague of his own heart.

The Spirit strives with men, not merely to show them their guilt and danger; but to show them their need of a Saviour, and to incline them to come to Christ. When they see their need of Christ, they are unwilling to come to him. “Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” “No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.” Now the Spirit comes to draw reluctant hearts. If it were not for this awful reluctance of the sinner to come to Christ, this drawing would not be necessary.

The language of the Bible, in relation to this subject, is very striking. It is martial language. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” All this is the work of the Spirit, and without his agency none will be saved.

Some may, perhaps, think they shall come to Christ, if the Spirit ceases to strive with them. But this is a delusion. They will certainly persist in sin, as they have heretofore done, till they awake in the world of despair.

I will mention some tokens of the Spirit's strivings.

When the Spirit strives, the sinner loses all interest in the concerns of time. The world is seen to be vanity. He has no relish for its pleasures. The noise of mirth fills him with distress. A dreadful sound is in his ears. Every thing is shrouded in gloom. As the poet expresses it:

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“Darker and darker still the darkness grew,
His interest in life,
 In being ceased.....
 The blue heavens withered; and the moon, and sun,
 And all the stars, and the green earth, and morn

And evening withered; and the eyes and smiles
 And fears of all men and women withered;
 Withered to him, and all the universe
 Like something that had been, appeared; but now
 Was dead, and mouldering fast away,"

When the Spirit strives, the sinner is filled with fear and trembling. However courageous he may have been, he is now afraid to be alone. He is afraid of God, and is ready to say, in the language of the psalmist, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

When the Spirit strives, the sinner is troubled about that great change of heart which the Scriptures teach him he must experience, or he cannot be saved. He is troubled about beginning to pray. He knows it is his duty to worship God, and yet his proud heart resists the conviction. When the Spirit strives with the sinner, there is an awful struggle between his conscience and his heart. His conscience pleads for God, but his heart still cleaves to sin.

Let us consider,

II. The fact that God's Spirit will not always strive with man. This is clearly asserted in the text. Some have tried to flatter the sinner that there is little or no danger of the Spirit's ceasing to strive. But the text speaks a different language: "And the Lord said, my Spirit shall not always strive with man."

How long the Spirit will strive with any individual we cannot tell. With some he strives longer than with others. Some *live* longer than others. In this God acts as a holy Sovereign. He has a right to cut off the sinner at any moment, and put a period to his day of salvation. And though the sinner may continue to live, it is by no means certain that the Spirit will continue to strive with him.

The Bible speaks of some who were given up of God. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." Our Saviour addressed his hearers as if some of them were given over of

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God. "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this day, the things which belong to thy peace—but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Many are given up because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved. "For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion that they might believe a lie, that they all might be damned, because they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." "Woe unto them, when I depart from them."

The sinner may be given up while young. He may have done such despite unto the Spirit of grace, as even in youth, to be given over to a hard heart and a reprobate mind. "Turn you at my reproof," said Christ. "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you" "Then he adds, with awful solemnity, "Because I have called, and *ye refused*—then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

But how do sinners resist the strivings of the Spirit?

Sometimes by rushing into thoughtless company, and into scenes of amusement. This they may do through ignorance, not knowing that the Spirit is striving with them. They are, not unfrequently, advised to this course by ministers and parents who do not believe in conviction and conversion. In this way, they sometimes succeed in banishing their religious impressions;—and sometimes these things only increase their distress. Not unfrequently they are advised to journey, to divert their minds, and in some instances medical aid has been sought. So it was in former times. The celebrated Dr Darwin was often called to prescribe in such cases, but he could do nothing for the relief of his patients. He called the disease "Timor orci"—the fear of hell; and although he was an infidel, he acknowledged that he could prescribe nothing better than the gospel of Christ. For although the patient had lost all his interest in the concerns of this world, he said he might be cheered by the prospect of a happy immortality. Poor Darwin—O that he could have known from experience the value of his own prescription.

Sinners resist the Spirit by postponing the subject of religion,

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like Felix, to a more convenient season—by self-righteousness—by an unwillingness to see the worst of their case—by refusing to retire from the world to confess their sins to God—and by being ashamed of the subject of religion.

Let us consider,

III. The consequences of the Spirit's ceasing to strive.

When the Spirit has departed, the sinner may be cheerful. ... He may feel little concern for the salvation of his soul ... He may even laugh, and make sport of the subject of religion ... He may listen to a preached gospel—to the most solemn warnings, and to the most melting invitations; but it will be all in vain. He will slumber on in impenitence till he awakes in hell, and his soul is lost for ever.

SERMON XXXVII.

SALVATION FOR THE LOST.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”—Luke 19:10,

The incarnation of Christ, his doctrine, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, are topics familiar to you all. What astonishing truths? And yet heard, O with what indifference!

Suppose, my hearers, that you had never heard this until this evening—that you were now assembled for the first time to hear this interesting story, that “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost;” with what interest would you listen? Here I am reminded of a fact related by one of our early missionaries.

“As I sat in my window,” he says, “I saw the heathen assembling from all quarters—each one running with all his might, and taking the shortest course to the place of worship, to hear the wonderful story how that “the Son of man had come to seek and to save that which was lost.” As I entered the place of worship, I found it crowded with the young, who had outstripped the aged and decrepid, that were lingering about the doors and windows. As I commenced reading the trial of our Saviour before the bar of Pilate, every eye was fixed and every ear intent. As I advanced, the interest increased until I arrived at the passage, ‘It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.’ At this point every individual involuntarily dropped upon his knees.”

Or suppose that it was not true that Christ had come, and that you had now assembled for the first time to learn that the whole Christian world had been under a mistake—that he had not come to our world, but had gone to some other world—that the

Bible by some means had been dropped into our world—that its contents were true, but not in application to us—that Christ had gone

to some other world to seek and to save that which was lost. How would you now feel?

Some would doubtless cry out, Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings? It would indeed be solemn, you say; but it is not so. Christ has come to our world, and we may set our hearts at rest. But remember although Christ has come, all out of Christ are lost.

My object will be to show in what sense sinners are lost.

A thing may be lost past recovery;—or it may be lost, and afterwards found.

1. The sinner is condemned by the law. He is under sentence of death—as really so as the criminal who has heard his sentence from the lips of his judge. “Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” Should the sinner die and go to judgement as he now is, he would find himself condemned for every failure of perfect obedience to the divine law. Thus he is lost—or dead in point of law.

“The sinner needs pardon. This is implied in what has been said under the last head; but I name it distinctly, because every sinner who needs pardon, is of course condemned already; and no sinner ever did, or ever will, in earnest plead for pardon, who does not see and feel that he is lost. All those passages in the Bible which show the sinner’s need of pardon, imply that he is lost.

3. The sinner is invited to Christ for life. “I am come,” said Christ, “that they might have life.” “He that believeth in the Son, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Sinners are invited to Christ that they may receive life. And Christ says, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life?” Now it is clear, that none but those who are under sentence of death, and are destitute of spiritual life, are invited to Christ for life. The offer of life is proof positive that all to whom the offer is made are lost. The gospel offer, “Whosoever will, let him take the

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water of life freely,” is made to those, and those only, who are spiritually dead.

4. That the sinner is lost is evident from the inquiry, “What must I do to be saved?” Every sinner who makes this inquiry sincerely, feels that he is lost. And when the sinner comes to Christ, from that very moment

he is saved. When the prodigal returned, his father said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again;—was lost, and is found."

The occasion on which our Saviour uttered the text, reveals the same truth. He entered and passed through Jericho. And Zaccheus sought to see him, and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him. When Jesus came to the place, he said to him, "Make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste and came down and received him joyfully."

Others seeing what had taken place, murmured. But Zaccheus gave evidence of supreme attachment to Christ. He received the Saviour joyfully, and made ample restitution to all whom he defrauded. "And Jesus said unto him, *this day is salvation come to this house*, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Then follow the words of the text: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." We here learn what our Saviour means by this declaration. He sought and found Zaccheus. And whenever a sinner comes to Christ, with equal propriety it may be said, "This day is salvation come to this house,"—"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Every time a sinner comes down and receives the Saviour joyfully the text is fulfilled.

But there are some who have never felt that they were lost. And what does this prove? "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Their case is truly deplorable. They are lost and know it not.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We see why it is that sinners say so little about the Saviour. They do not feel that they are lost. "They that are

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whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. And Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

2. We learn from this subject why ministers preach the gospel. Although Christ has come and laid down his life for sinners, they all, with one

consent, refuse to come to him for pardon and eternal life. The business of ministers is to show them their lost condition, and to urge them to come to Christ for life. This is the reason why Paul and the other apostles preached the gospel to sinners;—and this is the reason why missionaries are sent into all parts of the world to proclaim the gospel.

3. We learn what is the genuine effect of a preached gospel. Sinners begin to feel that they are lost, and to inquire what they must do to be saved. Until this is the case, no sinner will come to Christ. So it was under the preaching of Peter. His hearers were first pricked in the heart, and then, like Zaccheus, they received the word gladly. And thus it is now wherever the gospel is preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

4. Were sinners in this house to realize their true condition, they would immediately begin to inquire what they must do to be saved.

There is one other sense in which the sinner is lost. He is wandering farther and farther from God. Were you lost in a natural sense, would you not cry for help? I will here mention a fact related by Burder.

“It was in the dead of a cold winter’s night, when the snow fell thick and heavy, that a gentleman was awakened by the sound of a human voice. He arose and lifted the window, and heard distinctly uttered, in a piteous tone, these words, lost, lost, lost. It was a child who had been sent on an errand and lost his way. He discovered his danger, and cried for help, and happy for him, he was found.” But this is nothing in comparison with the state of the sinner. He is lost in a sense infinitely more solemn; and God has sent his messengers to call, “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die.”

Let it ring in your ears when you go from this place, and through the silent watches of the night, when you awake in the

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morning, and through the day at every turn, lost—lost—lost until you come to Christ

But should you not wake to see the light of the morning, where are you? You will then feel what was intimated at the commencement of this discourse. You will wake up, in that world where Christ never died for sinners, in awful despair. Alas! you will say, this is the world of despair, where the gospel was never proclaimed. Christ never came to this world to seek and to save that which was lost; but to yonder world whence I

came. You may feel all this before to-morrow's light shall dawn. O how solemn!

“In vain for mercy now they cry,
In lakes of liquid fire they lie;
There on the flaming billows tost,
Forever, O forever lost.”

PLANS OF SERMONS, AND BRIEF OBSERVATIONS ON TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

“Sir, we remember that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.”—Matthew 27:63.

NOTICE

1. The prediction. The chief priests and pharisees remembered it, talked of it, and told it to Pilate. Hence Christ must have declared it openly. The most unlikely event on which to practise deceit.

2. What a happy circumstance that they did remember it. Now they had an important object before them. If they could retain him three days in the tomb, a complete triumph would have been gained. The stone must be *sealed*, and be guarded by a band of soldiers. They no doubt expected to assemble on the fourth day and to examine the seal in triumph. They expected to break it, and to show that the body was there. If they had not *remembered*, they might have said, after Christ's resurrection, strange that we did not think of his prediction. Then we might have guarded the sepulchre. But this they could not say, for they had taken every precaution to prevent the possibility of fraud. But he could not be kept in the grave. How striking that text, “Whom God raised from the dead, because it was not *possible* for him to be holden of it.”

REFLECTIONS.

1. The enemies of religion will be sure to remember, and to tell every thing which they think will work injury to the cause of Christ.

2. God will make even the wrath of man to praise him.
3. All Christ's predictions will certainly be fulfilled.

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“And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12.

1. Some errors are damnable. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” What errors? Generally such as prevent conviction of sin, and a sense of the justice of God—such as deny the necessity of regeneration, and such as break the force of the divine threatenings.

Objection. Cannot God convert those who embrace these errors?

Answer. Yes, if he has not declared the contrary. But does he? God can cause a crop to grow without seed. But does he? “God cannot lie.”

2. Speak of the delusion.

It is strong delusion—not to be removed by argument, or any means which man can employ. God sends it.

Objection. God will not send delusion upon his creatures.

Answer. He says he will. And we know he has done it. “He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts.”

How? By sending them false teachers, and giving them opportunity to hear smooth things.

Why? There may be many reasons. The text specifies one. *For this cause*, “God shall send them strong delusion”—because they “*believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*” When sinners try to believe against the convictions of conscience—when, because they do not love the truth, they labour continually to find arguments against it, they are in peculiar danger of being given up to judicial blindness.

3. The punishment. Those who are sincere in fatal error, are in a most fearful condition.

INFERENCES.

1. We see the equity of the punishment. Sinners choose to be deceived, and God gives them their choice.

2. We see the danger of the sentiment, that it is no matter what a man believes, provided he is sincere. A man may be sincerely wrong, as well as sincerely right. He may be in the road to hell, and sincerely believe that he is in the road to

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heaven. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.”

3. Persons may *firmly* believe a lie. They may trust in it, and even venture their souls upon it. This is evident, both from the word of God and from observation. The fact that persons die in the full belief of certain doctrines, is no conclusive proof that those doctrines are true.

4. We see the danger of entertaining loose sentiments. A man is as much accountable for his belief on moral subjects, as he is for his practice. No man's character is better than the sentiments which he embraces. It is sometimes said, a man has a right to think as he pleases. But he has no more right, in the sight of God, to think as he pleases, than he has to act as he pleases.

5. Let the subject be applied in a way of self-examination. Let me ask you, my hearers, how came you by your present sentiments? Were you obedient to first suggestions of conscience? If there has been a struggle in your minds, was it with conscience against sin, or with inclination and sin against conscience? If you have in your minds a doubt whether the principles which you have adopted will stand in the hour of trial, I entreat you to pause and reflect. If you wish to be safe, dare to be faithful to your souls, and shun with horror that treachery to your best interests, which would impel you to sacrifice the peace of eternity to the quiet of a moment. Let the light of truth, however painful for the present, be admitted in its full force, and whatever secrets it may discover "in the chamber of imagery," while it unveils "still greater and greater abominations," shrink not from the view, but entreat God to search you and try you.

If you do not like the duties of religion, and if you wish to believe a lie, you may take the following course. Labour to obtain arguments on one side, and stop your ears to arguments on the other side—refuse to hear everything which crosses your prejudices—disbelieve the warning in the text; and there is no doubt you will succeed in blinding your minds and hardening your hearts. God will help on the work. He will send upon you a strong delusion that you may believe a lie

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"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."—Romans 9:16.

DOCTRINE.

The conversion and salvation of sinners is owing entirely to the sovereign mercy of God.

I. Establish the truth of the doctrine.

II. Inquire why it is so.

The truth of the doctrine appears,

1. From what the Bible says of the character of sinners. Carnal—none seek God—will not come to Christ—hate the light—dead in trespasses and sins.

2. From what the Bible says of the author of regeneration. “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness”—“of his own will begat he us”—“born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,” &c.—“not by works of righteousness which we have done,” &c.—“we are his workmanship.”

3. From what the Bible says of the inefficacy of means. “Who then is Paul?”—“I have planted and Apollos watered.”

II. Why is it so?

Not because the atonement is not sufficient for all men.

Not because salvation is not offered to all.

But it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, because sinners always will run wrong, and always run wrong.

REFLECTION.

The state of sinners is worse than they are apt to imagine.

“The case of the two thieves.”—Luke 23:39-43.

CONSIDER,

I. In what respects they were alike.

II. In what respects they differed.

III. What made the difference.

They were alike,

By nature—both descended from Adam.

They were both Jews.

They lived under the same laws.

They were both thieves.

They were detected in their crimes.

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They were condemned.

They were crucified.

They both saw the Saviour.

They both reviled him. Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:32.

They were both condemned by God's law.

They both deserved eternal death.

They were both about to be launched into eternity.

II. In what respects were they unlike? One differed from the other in the following things:

He was convinced of sin.

He felt the justice of his condemnation.

He feared God.

He declared the Lord's innocence.

He prayed.

He believed God.

He was not ashamed to confess his faith in Christ.

He was submissive.

He loved the soul of his fellow-sufferer.

He reproved his sin.

He was an heir of heaven.

III. What made him to differ from his companion? Nothing that he had done—not morality—no acts of charity. But

Grace—wondrous grace. He might have said, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

REMARKS.

1. This subject exhibits strikingly the sovereignty of God. One taken and another left.

2. Let none take encouragement from this subject to postpone religion to a dying hour. Of all the cases of conversion recorded in the Scriptures, this is the only instance mentioned of repentance at so late an hour.

3. How interesting the thought, that our Saviour, in his dying agonies, should be dispensing pardon, and fixing the destinies of immortal beings:

"He that distributes crowns and thorns,
Hangs on a tree and bleeds and groans,
The Prince of life, resigns his breath,
The King of glory bows to death."

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"Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did."—John 4:29.

1. The duty of preachers. It is to tell sinners their hearts. "He told me," &c.

2. Preaching which discloses the hearts of sinners is likely to be remembered. It will be remembered and conversed upon, while other preaching and other things are forgotten. "She saith to the men of the city, He told me," &c.

3. The preacher who tells sinners their hearts is not likely to want for hearers. The invitation will be given, "Come, see a man," &c.

4. The conversion of one sinner is likely to be followed by the conversion of others. The invitation, "Come," &c., was complied with, and a great spiritual harvest followed.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain."—Psalm 73:10,

All kinds of wrath—

That God will cause the wrath of man to praise him is evident,

1. From the perfections of God. The wisdom, goodness, and power of God will all lead him to do it.

2. From facts recorded in the Bible—e. g. the story of Joseph and the crucifixion of Christ. David was kept back by Abigail, but attributes it to God. It is an important and desirable truth, that God should cause the wrath of man to praise him, &c.

INFERENCES.

1. The doctrine of decrees is true. If God overrules and restrains the wrath of men and devils, so as ultimately to praise him, then he has determined to do it, and all objections against the doctrine of decrees fall to the ground.

2. The safety of God's friends. Esther 6:13. "Begun to fall," &c.

3. The folly of opposing God. "Who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?" "No wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord."

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"If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Matthew 23:30.

1. Sinners may mistake the character of their own feelings. [The Jews] at the foot of Sinai, said, would do so—soon made a calf. Peter—I will not deny thee—disciples—command fire—"Ye know not what manner

of spirit ye art of" Hazael—dog. 2 Kings 8:13. Heart deceitful—who can know it? Herod said he had been desirous to see Jesus, &c.

2. Sinners may think that they are better than others, when they are in heart opposed to true religion. Text.

3. Sinners may do much, and profess great respect for religion, when they are totally opposed to true religion. Text—Build the prophets' tombs, and hate the prophets' doctrine.

4. When sinners say they were never opposed to God, it is no evidence against the doctrine of total depravity.

5. If they never have seen that they were totally depraved, they have reason to fear they are still ignorant of their hearts, and have never yet been thoroughly awakened. Text.

Words betray hearts—when they most seek to cover their hearts, they most expose them—what they did.

1. Built anew, at their own expense, the tombs, &c.

2. Protested against the murder of the prophets.

"If we had been in the days of our fathers," &c.—we had never consented to the silencing of Amos—the imprisonment of Micah—the putting of Hananiah into the stocks, and of Jeremiah into the dungeon—the stoning of Zechariah, and the mocking of the messengers of the Lord—no—not they. They would sooner have lost their hands or their lives. What, is thy servant a dog? And yet at this very time, they were plotting against Christ, to put him to death, to whom all the prophets gave witness. They would have heard them gladly—and yet were filled with wrath against Christ See their enmity—"Ye are witnesses against yourselves" Verse 31. Their own words and works prove what they are—so now.

INFERENCES.

1. If mankind may mistake their own character, then the

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doctrine of total depravity may be true, though they universally deny it. Jews no love to Christ.

2. We see a reason why sinners, when awakened, find themselves to be much worse than they had ever imagined themselves to be.

3. We see why sinners act worse in certain circumstances than they ever imagined they should.

“For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord,”—James 1:7.

What man? The man who does not ask in faith.

1. Mankind are prone to think they shall receive answers to their prayers, though they do not ask in faith.

2. This is a mistake.

3. We are bound to correct the mistake. We must not let them think so. If they do, they will act accordingly.

“And they all with one consent began to make excuse.”—Luke 14:18.

Much as unrenewed men may differ in other respects, there is one thing in which they are all agreed. When invited to come to Christ, they all, with *one consent*, begin to make excuse. They do not say in plain terms that they will not come. But they plead some reason to justify themselves in refusing to come.

That we may view this matter in a clear point of light, let us look at the parable of which the text is a part.

A certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servant at supper time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.

The servant, faithful to his orders, delivered his message to one. He said to the servant, *I have bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it. You know it is our duty to take care of our worldly interests. This I am bound to do; and this, I trust, is a sufficient reason for declining the invitation I pray thee have me excused.*

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The servant goes to another, and receives a similar answer. *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee have me excused.* He goes to a third. He pleads a different excuse. *I have married a wife, and therefore, I cannot come.*

At length the servant begins to expostulate with them. He speaks of the expensive entertainment which his master has made. He tells them that there is sufficient for all who will come, and that everything is prepared in the best possible manner. *All things are now ready.* My master is liberal. The invitation is free. Whosoever will, may come and take without money and without price. Thus he attempts to allure them.

Finding no success, he tries a different method. He attempts to alarm their fears, by pointing them to the consequences of a refusal. He informs them that his master will be displeased, and that fearful consequences

will follow. This also proves ineffectual. Perceiving that no considerations which he can present to their minds have any influence to persuade them, the servant at length speaks in plain terms—you are all so opposed to my master, that not one of you ever will come, unless my master comes and brings you. On hearing this, one of the persons invited becomes angry, and begins to dispute with the servant. Did you not tell us, says he, that we are freely invited, and that whosoever will, may come?

I did, replies the servant; and so it is. You are all freely invited. Nay, you are commanded to come, and threatened with a fearful punishment if you do not come. But since my master has made such large provision, he is determined that it shall not be lost. And as all my arguments prove ineffectual, and I cannot persuade one of you to come, he has determined to exert his own power on a certain number, and make them willing.

Then your master is partial, and does not give us all an equal opportunity to come to the feast.

The servant replies, you just now acknowledged that all were freely invited, and that whosoever will, may come. Have you any reason to find fault, because you are left to your own choice? Will you find fault even if my master has not determined to make you willing to come?

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The other replies, I do not believe your master has determined to make any willing. I believe that all are left to their own choice.

Why then, replies the servant, do you not come? If no special power is necessary to make you willing, why do you stand making excuses? Why do you not come now? I tell you again, you are so opposed, that you never will come, unless my master exerts his power to make you willing. And there is but one way for you to prove my declaration false; and that is to come. Now contradict what I say, by coming of your own accord. I call upon you to do it; and again repeat the assertion that you never will do it unless my master makes you willing.

But instead of coming to the feast, he stands disputing with the servant. How discouragingly you talk. You tell us, if your master has not determined to make us willing, we never shall be willing. Is not this a discouraging doctrine?

If it is discouraging, the servant replies, to hear that my master has determined to make some willing, and to leave others to their own choice, let us suppose that he has not determined to make any willing, but to leave all to their own choice. Is this more encouraging?

He now pleads another excuse. He says, if your master has not determined to make me willing to come to the feast, I cannot come. How can I?

This, replies the servant, is giving up the point. If you cannot come, unless my master makes you willing, then what I said is true; that you never will come unless he makes you willing. And remember, your opposition is all that hinders. You labour under no other inability.

But, says the other, if your master has not determined that I shall come, I cannot, and I am not to blame.

It is your duty to come, says the servant, whether he has determined to make you willing or not. Thousands who have been invited, have never come; nor has my master made them willing; and he has punished them for not coming. And thus he will deal with you, and I leave you to settle the matter with him.

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“And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”—Luke 9:54–55.

What a lesson of instruction is this to all the disciples of Christ. If the warm-hearted disciples, James and John, in vindicating the cause of their divine Master, might lose a good temper, and indulge a bad one, how does it become others to take heed. James and John were certainly on the right side—on the side of religion, and the side of Christ. In this they were right. Well might they feel a holy indignation. But with this they unwittingly suffered a bad spirit to be intermingled, for which they received a solemn rebuke. What a lesson of instruction is this to the ministers of Christ, who are sent to cities, towns, and villages, as messengers before his face to call upon the people to open their houses and their hearts to receive him. Should they meet with a repulse, through prejudice and pride and unwillingness, to receive the Saviour, this may well grieve their hearts; but in vindicating the cause of Christ, and urging sinners to receive him, they must not forget the solemn caution, “Take heed to thyself.” The example of the two ardent disciples is recorded for their instruction and warning. In the ardour of their zeal, there may be something noble, but still they may lack the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The case before us is truly affecting. That which many have commended as bold and heroic in the cause of religion, met with the divine rebuke, “Ye know not what spirit ye are of.” While ministers are

faithful to deliver their whole message, whether men will hear, or forbear, let then look well to the spirit by which they are actuated.

“And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord suffer me first to go and bury my father.”—Luke 9:59.

The circumstances of this case seem to have been peculiar. The person who was called upon to follow Christ was in deep affliction. His father was dead. Lord, I will follow thee, but suffer me *first* to pay the last tribute of respect to a deceased parent

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How many, in similar circumstances, resolve to attend to the subject of religion? How many, when called to stand by the sick and dying bed of another, a mother, a brother, a sister, or some dear friend, resolve that they will attend to the subject of religion. They sigh, and are ready to exclaim, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” Or, it may be they are summoned to hear the warning voice of such as have neglected the concerns of their souls, and slighted all the calls and melting invitations of the Saviour, while in health. The very sight itself, or even the tidings of the death of kindred and friends, checks the spirit of worldliness and vanity, and says impressively, “Be ye also ready.” Thousands, under these circumstances, have felt the littleness of earth, with all its concerns, and have resolved that they will attend to the great concerns of the soul. But, unhappily, as the case before us, their very afflictions prevent an *immediate* attention to the subject, and thus the call of infinite mercy is neglected to their eternal undoing.

“And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” 1 Corinthians 12:6,

Religion is the same everywhere, but there is a diversity of manner in which persons are brought to experience religion. Diversities of operations, but the same result—all are brought to possess the same spirit—all children of God—all members of Christ—all possess his image, and of course resemble each other.

Difference in the following respects:

1. As to time of life when converted.

Some old—some young—third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour.

2. As to means of conviction.

Some by hearing a sermon—reading the Bible—some other book—alarming providences—word dropped by a friend—by seeing others anxious—seeing others joyful—hearing of the conversion of others—by their own wickedness—a thought suggested by the Spirit without any apparent means.

3. As to the clearness of evidence of conversion.

Some sudden and very clear—others less clear and gradual—like the rising light of the morning.

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6. As to growth in grace.

Some bring forth a hundred-fold—some sixty—some thirty.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Others not a perfect standard of trial for us
Word of God.

2. There is in the church a beautiful vanity.

Like flowers in a garden.

“Let us get up early to the vineyards.”

Let us all be careful to possess the graces of the Spirit—and to grow in grace.

“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.”—Psalm 119: 59–60.

The Psalmist here gives an account of his conversion.

Apply it to sinners.

1. Think on your ways. Duties neglected—sins committed—their number and aggravation—thousands of sins have been forgotten—God remembers all.

3. Think of the end of your ways.

How short your course—increased velocity—near to death—end of these things is death—how solemn!—how will thine heart endure?—O that you were wise.

4. Think on your ways—not be forever thinking and talking about the sins of others. This is very common—what folly to be thus employed.

5. Turn your feet. No use to think unless you turn—turn to God—all by nature travelling the wrong way. Turn ye, turn ye—turn your affections from the love of sin.

6. You must haste and delay not.
 Say not, Suffer me first to go and bury my father—or to bid farewell.
 If you delay—
 Business will crowd in.
 Temptations will increase.
 Sins will become more numerous.
 Heart will become more hard.
 By becoming familiar with awful subjects they will lose their effect upon you.

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The Spirit will cease to strive.
 And death may come. Lose no time. Zaccheus, make haste. Felix, escape for thy life.

“Who will rise up for me against the evil doers? Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?”—Psalm 94:16.

This is the language of Christ.

I. The grounds of this appeal.

II. What can be done.

III. Reasons for compliance.

I. Grounds, &c.

1. Christ has a moral kingdom in this world.
2. In building up his kingdom, he makes use of human instrumentality.
3. Much yet remains to be done. But a small part of the world yet belongs to the kingdom of Christ.

II. What can be done?

1. Give up yourself.

2. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

3. Make personal efforts for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

4. Contribute of your substance.

III. Reasons for so doing.

1. Christ claims your service.

2. He has a right to it.

3. If you do not render it, you will be ranked among the workers of iniquity, and will be destroyed.

APPLICATION.

“Who will rise up?” Who?

“When once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door “Matthew 13:25.

The house heaven.

I. The door of heaven is opened.

By whom? Revelation 3:7, 8. “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that *openeth* and no man shutteth,” &c.

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How? By his sufferings and death.

For whom? “Who gave himself a ransom for all.” “Tasted death for every man.” “We thus judge if one died for all.

II. The door will be shut.

When? At death—when the Spirit ceases to strive.

By whom? By Christ, the master of the house

How long will it be shut?

Forever. He that is holy—holy still. He that is filthy—filthy still.

When the door is shut some will be shut out, and some will be shut in.

If it should now be shut, where should we be found?

REFLECTIONS.

1. How happy those who will be shut in.
2. How wretched those who will be shut out.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison; verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.” Matthew 5:25

1. God is the sinner’s adversary—adversary at law.
2. Sinners are now on the way to judgement.

3. The sinner is called upon to agree with his adversary—but two ways of settling a controversy—by compromise, or by the yielding of one of the parties. In this controversy, the sinner must yield.

4. What sinners do, must be done quickly.

Motives to agree quickly.

1. God is a powerful adversary. “What king going to make war.” “Let the potsherd”—“Who ever hardened himself against God and prospered?” “Can thine heart endure, or thy head be strong.”

2. The cause will certainly come to trial, “We must all stand before the judgement-seat of Christ.”

3. The sinner dying unreconciled to God will certainly be lost.

4. Once lost, he will be lost forever. Uttermost farthing.

5. “Lest at *any time*—in health—in youth—while anxious or

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stupid—in the midst of wickedness—awake or asleep—at *any*, time the sinner is liable to be arrested.”

“Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?”—Ezekiel 33:11.

Death what? Not natural death, or the death of the body—God never asks sinners why they will die in this sense—and in this sense they will die, whether they turn or not.

There is a death beyond the grave.

Turn—Implies that sinners are departing from God. To turn is to repent—to turn the affections to God.

Why will ye die?

Not because God delights in your death. “As I live, saith the Lord,” &c.

There is usually some one sin which occasions the sinner’s death—that is, some one sin which he is unwilling to give up.

The young ruler was *sad* when Christ told him *to sell all*. Herod could not part with Herodias. There is generally some *right eye* which the sinner is unwilling to pluck out.

1. One will be because his heart is engrossed with worldly cares.

2. Another, because he is ashamed to have it known that he is anxious.

3. Another, because he is unwilling to give up some sinful companion.

4. Another, because he is unwilling to leave his profession.

5. Another, because he is unwilling to pray in his family.

6. Another, because he is unwilling to confess Christ before men.

7. Another will lose his soul by talking about others.

8. Pride of consistency will keep some out of heaven. They fear that if they commence a religious life they will not hold out, and so will not begin.

9. Some will lose their souls by spending their time in cavilling at divine truth.

10. Others will perish in consequence of cherishing some secret sin, known only to God, and their own consciences.

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MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS.**WHAT ANSWER WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE QUESTION, HOW CAN I
REpent, OR BELIEVE, OR LOVE GOD, OR BECOME A CHRISTIAN?**

I would answer according to the character of the querist. If he does not believe the doctrines of grace, I would take occasion from his inquiry, to endeavour to convince him. I would say to him, your question, if sincere, implies that you would repent if you could. If you cannot, then there is no hope in your case, unless the doctrine of election is true.

If he does believe the doctrines of grace, I would endeavour to show him the justice of his condemnation. I would say, if you cannot repent of sin, and love God, what a desperately wicked heart you must have. Out of your own mouth you will be condemned.

I would also endeavour to show him his insincerity. I would ask him, will you do what I tell you? Will you break off your sins, and perform the duties of religion? If not, you would not become a Christian if you could.

SPECIAL GRACE.

It is sometimes affirmed that the Spirit of God operates equally at all times.

To this I have the following objections:—

1. It destroys all encouragement to prayer; for it supposes that the Spirit of God operates just as much where there is no prayer, as where there is.

2. It places on a level a faithful and unfaithful ministry; for

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it takes it for granted that those who preach error, or who do not preach at all, will be equally successful with those who take heed to themselves and to their doctrine, and who are abundant in their labours.

3. It admits that there is just as much religion where the gospel was never heard, as where it is faithfully preached; as much in Hindostan as any where else.

4. It is contrary to the experience of every Christian. He knows that the Spirit has striven more with himself at some times than at others.

5. It supposes that all men are equally sinful, or equally holy; or that if there is a difference, man makes it.

6. It is contradicted by many plain texts of Scripture, such as the following: "Turn ye at my reproof, *behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you.*" "Tis time to seek the Lord *till he come*, and rain righteousness upon you." "Sensual, *having not the Spirit.*"

Those texts which speak of a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit "Except a man be born of water *and of the Spirit.*" "*The Spirit quickeneth.*"

Those texts which speak of sinners as given up of God. "My Spirit *shall not always strive* with man."

7. It saps the foundation of true religion. It places Christianity on a level with heathenism or infidelity. The person who maintains this opinion, virtually confesses that he knows no more about vital piety, than an infidel or Hindoo

THOUGHTS ON REVIVALS.

Against revivals many objections are urged. It is said they are mere excitements which have in them nothing of the nature of true religion, and that they ought not be ascribed to the Spirit of God. In support of these allegations are alleged,

1. Their suddenness, and the fact that such numbers profess to be converted in so short a time.

Answer. The influences of the Spirit are compared in the Scriptures to the rain. "He shall come unto us as the rain,

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as the latter and the former rain unto the earth." Would you object to the rain, and say it cannot be rain, because it sometimes comes suddenly, and in so many drops? We are given to understand that a nation will be born in a day.

2. The great distress which exists in revivals is urged as an objection against them.

Answer. It is not religion which causes the distress, but a conviction of the want of it. Is it surprising that sinners should be distressed, when they are brought to realize that they are exposed to eternal destruction?

When a person's body is in pain, he is in distress; and his friends often sigh and weep. And is the soul of less consequence than the body? Are heaven and hell trifles? Were not sinners pricked in the heart on the day of Pentecost? And was not the jailor of Phillipi distressed when he fell down before Paul and Silas?

3. It is said that persons are only terrified by alarming preaching.

Answer. Why were they not terrified before? They have often heard the same truths. They have heard, perhaps for years, the most alarming preaching, and remained unmoved. Why are they alarmed now, if they are under no influence from on high? Besides, the very same truths which fill sinners with alarm, often, after a season, fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory. How is this to be explained? Does the same preaching, of itself, cause in the same mind, sorrow and joy?

But have not sinners reason to be terrified? When persons have no fear of God before their eyes, it is a mark of great depravity. Was not Felix terrified under the preaching of Paul?

If the results witnessed in revivals, are the result of human influence only, believing what I do of the nature of these results, I should feel under obligation to awaken all my hearers. I should not expect to be saved myself, if I failed to do it. Are you willing to grant that ministers have so much power? Are they able to change the enemies of God into his friends?—to cause them to love what they hated with perfect hatred.

But the objection might have been made against the revival on the day of Pentecost, as well as against modern revivals. It

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might have been said, that the people were terrified—that Peter frightened them.

4. It is said that what we witness in revivals is all the effect of sympathy?

Answer. What begins them? Are the first cases of awakening to be attributed to sympathy? But it not unfrequently happens that numbers are awakened about the same time, without any knowledge of each other's feelings, or of the awakening of any other individuals.

But suppose sympathy does have an influence after revival has commenced; cannot God make use of it as a means of promoting the work, as well as any other means? The psalmist says, "Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." When sinners see others anxious for their souls, it is to them powerful preaching, and God can bless it to their conviction and conversion.

5. It is said that it is all enthusiasm.

Answer. If the distress of sinners is greater than the case demands, then call it enthusiasm. But if the sinner is in danger of losing his soul; not to be distressed, is blockish stupidity. Is it rational to brave the terrors of the Almighty, and to slumber on the brink of eternal perdition?

6. It is said, the sudden joy manifested in revivals, is irrational, and cannot be the effect of divine influence.

Answer. What shall we find to answer these expressions in the Bible? "The peace of God that passeth all understanding"—"Rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory"—"All joy and peace in believing"—"Called out of darkness into marvellous light"—"Having the day-star arise in our hearts." Would not a criminal, who should be reprieved on his way to the gallows, rejoice? Besides, were not the same effects witnessed in the days of Christ and the apostles? Did not Zaccheus come down from the tree and receive Christ joyfully? Did not Peter's hearers, on the day of Pentecost, receive the word with joy? When Philip preached in Samaria, was there not great joy in that city?

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7. It is said many who are zealous for a season, turn back, and become worse than before.

Answer. True. And so it was in the time of Christ. "Many went back, and walked no more with him." Does this prove that Christ had no true disciples? It was so likewise in the days of the apostles. John says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us."

That the objection may be valid, it must be shown that all who profess to be the subjects of revivals, apostatize. But this cannot be shown. There are precious fruits that abide.

8. The question is sometimes asked, if revivals are the work of God, why do they not exist among other denominations, and why am not I taken?

Answer. This objection lies with equal force against the Christian religion. Not more than one-fifth part of the world is evangelized. Jews, Mohammedans, and Pagans might say, if yours is the true religion, why does not God convince us of its truth?

But revivals do exist in other denominations. All evangelical denominations have been favoured with them, in a greater or less degree.

If I were to find serious, praying people generally opposed to revivals, and all the impenitent and profane in favour of them, it would alter the case. But praying people pray for them, and rejoice in them.

They are doubtless the work of God, or the work of the devil. If they are the work of the devil, I believe all will acknowledge that there is more praying, and more apparent religion in the devil's kingdom, than there is out of it.

To all who oppose revivals, I would say, beware lest you be found fighting against God.

ON PROFESSING RELIGION.

Objection. I know it is my duty, but I have many fears that my hope is not well founded, and what shall I do?

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Answer. It is your duty so to live, that you will not doubt. Your difficulty is a common one. We know how to feel for you, but we must be plain. Your difficulty is occasioned by your sin.

Objection. I am afraid that I shall do wrong—that I shall eat and drink unworthily.

Answer. It may be so. But is it not strange that any one should have conscientious scruples against obeying a plain command of Christ? Are you afraid to obey the Saviour? If you are really conscientious, you might well say, I am afraid I shall do wrong if I neglect to confess Christ before men. This you ought to say and to feel. You cannot neglect a known duty and be innocent. Is it not astonishing to see persons who are seriously disposed, making a righteousness of their disobedience to the command of God? They hope that they are Christians, and yet refuse to obey a plain command, lest they should sin.

Objection. My relatives oppose my making a profession, and threaten to turn me out of doors; and what shall I do?

Answer. You have a good opportunity to try your heart, and to ascertain whether you are willing to give up all for Christ.

THE DUTY OF BEING TENDER OF THE CHARACTER OF MINISTERS.

A minister's usefulness depends very much on the good opinion that his hearers entertain of him at the time of his preaching or conversation. Prejudice is an effectual bar to conviction. If this cannot be removed, the heart is inaccessible. What cannot be answered by argument, will be repelled by prejudice. Hence the miracles of our Saviour instead of producing conviction, drew upon him the foulest reproach. In the case of Stephen's hearers, although they could not resist the Spirit and wisdom by which he spake, they could accuse him of blasphemy. If they could not answer his arguments, they could assert that they knew him to be a very bad man.

Resolved, with respect to my brethren in the ministry; in regular standing, I will be careful not to say, or insinuate anything which may tend to destroy their usefulness among their

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hearers; but will use my influence to make them respected and beloved by them.

My feelings have often been wounded by the complaints of people about their minister; and I have been much pleased and gratified, when I have seen persons take the part of their pastor.

DECREES OF GOD.

Objection. The decrees of God destroy man's free agency

Answer. The reverse is true. God has decreed that man shall be a free moral agent. Is not man a free agent? Yes, you will say. How came he to be a free agent, unless God decreed that he should be so? If you are a free agent, God has made you such, and if he has made you such, he decreed to make you such. You are a free agent of *necessity*, and you cannot help being free. You can no more cease to be a free agent, than you can annihilate your soul. You are obliged to act as you please, and you cannot act in any other way. If you do not believe it, make the experiment. Try, try hard for five minutes, to do something which you do not choose or wish to do.

If you say this destroys freedom, then you adopt the sentiment that you cannot be free, unless you have the power of choosing to do something which you do not wish to do.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

Although there may be difficulties in admitting this doctrine, there are greater difficulties in denying it.

If it is not true, then Christians make themselves to differ from sinners. There is certainly a difference; and if Christians make themselves to differ, then a new heart is not the gift of God. But if God makes the difference, he determined or decreed to do it from eternity; for all his determinations are eternal. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. What he once chooses, he always chose. We cannot ascribe the difference to God, without attributing it to his eternal purpose. And what objection can there be to this? If God has changed your heart,

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he determined to do it, and why not determine to do it from eternity, as well as the moment before it was done? If it was a good determination, what difference does it make to you, whether it was formed in time or in eternity?

If this doctrine is not true, then we may say to sinners, why have you not become Christians? God has done as much for you as he has done for others. If you had been as faithful as I have, the Christian may say, you might have been Christians long ago. By your own confession, you have not done as much as that vile wretch who never did anything, till a short time before his conversion.

Objection. If I believed this doctrine, I should be an infidel. I had rather be an infidel than believe it.

Answer. What kind of argument is this? What does your dislike prove? Do not sinners hate the truth? Is not the carnal mind enmity against God? If you hate it as you say, then you have reason to think that your prejudice will prevent you from examining with candour whether it is true. It seems, indeed, that, according to your own confession, you are determined not to believe it, whatever evidence there may be of its truth. It is not for want of evidence that this doctrine is contained in the Bible, that any reject it. one half of the evidence would be sufficient, were not the heart set against it

Objection. But if I am not elected, I cannot be saved. How can I?

Answer. 1. What then will become of you if the doctrine is not true? If it is not true, you are not elected of course. If it is not true, none are

elected. Is it any evidence that the doctrine is not true, that you cannot be saved without it? But continues the objector, if I am not elected, I cannot be saved. How can I?

Answer. 2. Precisely in the same way that you can, if the doctrine is not true. Tell me how you can be saved on your own plan, without this doctrine, and I will tell you how all the non-elect can be saved. Tell me how any sinner can be saved on your own plan, when none are elected, and I will tell you how all may be saved on my plan, when a part only are elected.

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But if I am not elected, I cannot be saved, continues the objector. How can I?

Answer. 3. Sir, you do not mean as you say. You mean that you can be saved without the doctrine of election. For if this doctrine is not true, you are not elected, of course. And still, you think you can be saved, if you are not elected.

You, who do not believe this doctrine, who maintain that none are elected till they believe and become Christians, of all men, ought never to say, if I am not elected, I cannot be saved.

If I am not elected how can I be saved? is a question, which all who deny the doctrine of election, are doubly bound to answer. For on their plan, this is the awful condition of every impenitent sinner.

Those who deny the doctrine of election, do not suppose that it lies at the foundation of all hope, as to the salvation of men, they suppose that any or all may be saved as well without, as with it.

If mankind are so good, and so well disposed, that they can and will become Christians without being elected, very well. I have certainly no objection to your undertaking. If you will repent, and believe, and be born again without being elected, then commence the work immediately. But if I have no such opinion of the goodness of my heart,—if I choose to join with Paul, and attribute my faith, and repentance, and new heart to God alone—if I choose to trace all up to God's electing love, and say, "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, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world"—"Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace

which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”—why should any one complain?

But if I am not elected, I cannot be saved. How can I?

Answer. 4. I do not know. That is for you to answer who deny the doctrine. My object has been to show that if there are difficulties in admitting the doctrine, there are still greater difficulties in rejecting it.

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Sinners who cannot get along with the doctrine of election, uniformly plead that they cannot get along without it.

If mankind were good enough to become Christians without being elected, then I acknowledge that this doctrine would not be necessary. That it is the duty of sinners to become Christians without being elected, I agree. But that sinners are disposed to do their duty is not admitted.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

It is said that Judas became a devil after the sop, and not before; for would the devil enter into a thief? *Ans.* The devil did enter into a thief, for so Judas was called, at least six days before the devil is said to have entered into him

INFANT DEPRAVITY.

If infants sustain the same relation to the moral government of God, as brute animals, then they can no more be the subjects of prayer, of regeneration, of redemption by Christ, or of salvation, than brute animals.

Those who deny that infants are sinners, have devolved on them the Herculean task of defending the justice of God in bringing suffering and death upon millions of beings who are perfectly innocent. Those who admit the doctrine of infant depravity, have no difficulty on this subject.

How old must a child be, before he can be said to belong to the human race? When a child dies, how old must he be, before it can be said of him—that his death was *by sin?* in other words, before he can be considered as included in the following declaration of the apostle? “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon *all men* for that *all have sinned.*”

THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-INTEREST ON HUMAN BELIEF.

To believe against personal interest requires an honest heart

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Without it, the mind will exert itself to evade the truth. It often requires but little evidence to lead to the adoption of a pleasing sentiment; while the most conclusive evidence fails to produce conviction of an unwelcome truth. *E.g.*, The word everlasting, when applied to the future punishment of the wicked, is by some explained to mean always a limited duration; but when applied to the future happiness of the righteous, it is readily admitted to denote endless duration. I know not that the latter was ever questioned. If a man were to undertake seriously to prove, that the word everlasting, when applied to the happiness of the righteous, denotes only a limited duration, and when applied to the punishment of the wicked, means an endless state of being, he would be pronounced a fool. And yet he would act no more irrationally than the man who adopts the opposite course of reasoning, by which so many profess to be convinced.

Hence we should exercise great caution in receiving doctrines which are pleasing to the natural heart; and equal caution in rejecting doctrines to which the natural heart is opposed.

PRAYER.

Objection. I have a wicked heart, and it is an abomination for me to pray with such a heart.

Answer. Granted. It is so. But what then? Is it not an abomination to neglect to pray? And do you think that God will accept of one abomination, in excuse for another?

Objection. What shall I do then? You tell me I must neither neglect to pray, nor pray with an impenitent heart. You leave me no choice. I expose myself to the curse either way.

Answer. This statement is not correct. There is a course left for you to choose, and that is, to pray as God commands you. Why are you not willing to do as he commands? It is true you have no choice between neglecting prayer, and praying with an impenitent heart. The path of duty is plain.

Objection. If to neglect prayer is sin, and if to pray with an

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impenitent heart is sin, I wish to know which is the greatest sin?

Answer. Why do you ask such a question as this? What right have you to be balancing sins, to see which you shall choose, when your duty is plain before you? It is of no consequence to you to have this question answered. To neglect prayer, or to pray with an impenitent heart, is abomination to God. Either course leads to hell. Of what consequence is it to the poor soul who is determined to walk in one of them, to know whether they are of equal or unequal length, when they both lead with equal certainty to destruction? Your duty is plain. You must pray with a penitent heart, or be lost.

Objection. But I cannot pray with a penitent and believing heart. I do not possess such a heart; and I cannot change my heart.

Answer. Do you mean to plead your wicked heart as an excuse? Will God, who commands you to love him, excuse you from performing this duty, because you hate him? You say you have no heart to pray aright. What a confession is this! This is the very thing for which you are to blame. Will you plead your sin—your desert of condemnation as an excuse for disobeying God? Do you think God will accept such an excuse?

Objection. The ground you take, leaves only one way for the sinner, and cuts off all hope of safety in any other.

Answer. This is the very thing I aim at. To cut off all hope of safety in your present course is the grand object I have had in view. The ground I have taken is, that obedience, and that only, is acceptable to God; and that we cannot expect safety in any other way. There is not a principle more clearly taught in the Bible, than that it is the duty of all men to love God, and to worship him in spirit and in truth.