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S E R M O N S,

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V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S,


DOCTRINAL, EXPERIMENTAL AND PRACTICAL.

BY NATHAN STRONG,

Pastor of the North Presbyterian Church in Hartford, Connecticut.

V O L. II.

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That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

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Wherefore the law is holy ; and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Was then that which is good, made death unto me? GOD forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good ; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

For we know that the law is spiritual : but I am carnal, sold under sin.

For that which I do, I allow not : for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I.

If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good.

Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.

For the good that I would, I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do.

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S E R M O N I.

Men the cause of their own destruction.

2. THESSALONIANS, ii. 10, 11, 12.

AND with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish ; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.

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.

THESSE verses are taken from a prophetic description of the rise, progress and final destruction, of that Antichristian heresy and idolatry, which hath arisen within the visible Church of CHRIST. The greatest part of this prophecy hath been accomplished, by which it becomes a principal evidence that the Christian scriptures are true. At the time our holy books were written, no man, unless assisted by the Spirit of GOD, could so exactly have predicted and described the Antichristian power, that hath

arisen, and is now falling into ruin by the just judgments of the Lord.

OMITTING any further observations on the prophecy or its fulfilment; I shall consider the text as a description of the sin that is in men, and of the reason they trespass, and sink down to everlasting misery. Although the sins of men, may be greatly diversified by time and place, and by the particular crimes which are committed; yet they all partake of the same immoral qualities, and there is one common reason, why those remain disobedient, to whom repentance is preached. An heretical rejection of CHRIST may appear in many forms, and be called by different names, but all heresy flows from one and the same cause. The whole variety of vices and crimes, that are in the world, proceed from an unholiness of heart that is common and natural to men, and of a similar nature in all.

THE diversity of errors and of crimes happen from various external causes, in the difference of conditions, employments, and temptations. Change the conditions and temptations of men, while their sinful hearts remain the same, and we should see a great alteration in the errors and crimes of their lives. We therefore determine that the description in our text, although written with special application to the man of sin, or the great Antichristian heresy and idolatry, is applicable in a number of essential circumstances to all sinners, who are destitute of a love to God. We here find a description of the malignity of an unholy temper,—the cause of all those errors and crimes into which men fall,—the reason they reject the pure gospel of CHRIST, and live in im-

penitence and unbelief, together with the certain consequences of remaining in sin.

THIS solemn and interesting passage contains the following truths, on each of which some remarks will be made.

I. IT proves that some men shall perish.

II. IT states the reason why some men shall perish, “because, they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

III. Some remarks will be made on the words “for this cause GOD shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”

I. THESE words prove that some men shall perish.

THE passage coincides with the general tenor of scriptural testimony, and says they shall perish,—shall be damned,—that the Lord shall consume them with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy them with the brightness of his coming. Although this awful truth is, in a high degree, contrary to the feelings and wishes of unholy sinners, it is impossible to be a sincere believer of the revelation we have from heaven, without admitting the certainty of such an event, to all who live and die impenitent. We therefore see that those who question the future punishment of sinners, generally are found, to have a low opinion of the truth of the holy scriptures. They either suppose them expressed, in language so figurative, as will admit any explanation that is pleasing to the sinful heart, or that they contain an intermixture of divine

truth and human errors. And on the latter supposition, they always assume to themselves the right of judging, what part comes from God and what from the invention of men.

WE may find innumerable instances, to prove that these opinions of revealed truth soon degenerate into compleat infidelity.—There is but a step, between doubting the strict truth of the scriptures, and a total denial of their divine authority. If the judgment of a sinful creature may, in one instance, rise superior to the express testimony of GOD; no reason can be assigned, why it may not in all. Concerning the end of an holy and unholy life, and what awaits men in their state of future existence; and whether certain characters will be happy or miserable, we must either submit implicitly to the revelation of GOD, or reject the whole, and commit our faith and eternal interests to the decision of a weak and corrupted reason. No considerate and wise man can doubt a moment where our belief ought to be attached.—It is so clear that credit ought to be given to GOD; and at the same time, so strong is men's desire to think themselves safe and quietly to enjoy the pleasures of an unholy life, that they labor hard to explain away his threatenings, and make a soothing compromise, between their own wishes and the solemn denunciations of a punishment to be executed hereafter, on the impenitent and unbelieving.—But all this will be of no avail to palliate guilt; or to excuse from suffering the penalty; and those, who are determined to live in sinful quietness, will soon pass from disbelieving some parts of the word of GOD, to a rejection of the whole.

THERE are a number of important truths, concerning which, the undirected judgment of men, must be a miserable guide. This is the case respecting the divine character,—with what GOD is pleased,—how he will forgive sin,—and what his treatment will be, now and hereafter, of those, who are opposed to his holiness. It is madness to oppose our own weak judgment to the word of GOD, on these important points. They are subjects hidden from us by their greatness, and there must be a comprehension of eternity, and of the whole existing universe, with all the relations between different beings, to judge truly on such subjects. Therefore the word of infinite truth must be credited when it says that the wicked shall perish, and remain forever unforgiven and under punishment, that they may be monuments of divine justice, and of the awful fruits of sinning.

II. OUR text states the reason why some sinners shall perish. *Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

SINNERS' failure of salvation is their crime as well as their misfortune. They are guilty for not attaining eternal life through the grace of GOD. In this matter, there are often false apprehensions, and many seem to conceive the finally lost, as being rather unfortunate than guilty, for coming to that miserable end. That the loss of salvation, is the greatest misfortune and evil which can happen to any creature; and an evil infinitely greater than can be conceived by any in this world, will be readily acknowledged; but this doth not prevent the guilt there is in coming to that awful condition.

Those who perish will be found guilty in every respect.—Guilty for transgressing the law and dishonoring GOD.—Guilty for destroying themselves and injuring other creatures.—Guilty for rejecting the gospel and failing of heavenly glory.—Although they have the greatest aversion to misery, and tremble in expectation of punishment, they have no choice of heaven; nor of him with whose presence it is filled; nor of the company and employments of the blessed.

OUR text explains the subject. They have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved.—They have resisted the love of the truth, and therefore must perish.—They have pleasure in unrighteousness, and are therefore forever condemned.—

THE love and practice of sin is the only cause, which will ever cut off unhappy men from the gospel salvation; and while this continues, they must be excluded. There is compassion in the Lord, and he delighteth not in the misery and death of sinners. His grace is proclaimed, and the call is, “whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.”—There is a full expiation, and a deliverer able to save to the uttermost, those who come unto him for redemption.—When the sinful conceive or represent any thing on the part of GOD, which prevents their obtaining salvation, they are adding sin to sin, and by an attempt to justify themselves they accuse infinite wisdom and holiness and thus give fresh evidence of the justice of their rejection.

IF any doubt the truth of this representation, let them candidly examine the point; and when they attempt to find any other cause of sinners’ ruin, they will be disappointed. They have

sufficient doctrinal instruction.—The invitation and command to repent extend to all.—The promise is to all, who receive the love of the truth, and turn from their pleasure in unrighteousness.—The atonement of CHRIST is adequate to the utmost extension of gospel grace. Those glorious promises, which comfort the hearts of Christians, and make them rejoice in hope of eternal life, are all set before the impenitent, and it is made their immediate duty to comply with the terms of the promises. Things being thus, the fatal cause of destruction must be in themselves; and if there be sin and guilt in the cause, they are also guilty of the consequence, which is their own loss of eternal life.

THESE sentiments correspond with the representations of Christ, whenever he described the final judgment. The reason he will say to any, depart from me, I know you not, is because they love iniquity.—Though they fly to him to escape misery, they have no love of his character, his law, or of that holy state of blessedness, which constitutes the rest of his saints.

IF this unholiness be their sin; if it also be the only cause which shuts them out of heaven, they are then guilty as well as unfortunate, for not attaining salvation; and it may be charged upon them as a crime that they are not in heaven.

FROM this view of the subject, it appears that impenitent sinners, are as certainly cut off from final salvation, by their own temper and dispositions, as they will be by the law and sentence of the judge. While their unholy dispositions continue, there will be a natural impossibility, that they should be either glorious or blessed.

III. PERHAPS it may be objected to this representation of the sinner's guilt, that the passage we are considering represents a special agency of GOD, which prevents their believing that they might be saved, in these words, "*and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.*"

To understand this verse, we must observe, 1st. THAT there is a reference to a cause beforementioned, why the delusion is sent. And the cause is, *because they received not the love of the truth.* The situation of these persons is described to be this. They had sufficient instruction in the truth, and in the nature of their duty to GOD and men.—They had proper evidence of the divine law, of the gospel doctrines, of the way and manner of salvation by CHRIST, of the terms of forgiveness to which the promises are made, and in what the Christian's temper and practice consists. These doctrines, truths and duties they did not receive with love.—As they were always opposed to the law; so when they came to a doctrinal knowledge of evangelical truth and duty, they were equally disaffected with these. This disaffection, especially when long continued, under the instruction of GOD'S Providence and Spirit, was highly provoking to his holiness. The guilt of their sin thus long continued, against clear light, and the most advantageous means for reformation, became so great, that it was proper GOD should pass by, and give them up to their own heart's way, without any restraint, either upon their errors or crimes.

DIVINE wisdom saw this to be necessary for the glory of his justice, and that they might become monuments forever, of the nature and

effects of sin.—It is probable, that this is a kind of practical instruction, to a universe filled with intelligent beings, which Infinite Wisdom sees to be necessary for the greatest good and glory of his kingdom. The Holy Scriptures often represent God, as giving men up after long continued opposition to light and means, to the power of their errors and vices.

SUCH is the nature of sin, that when special restraint is denied, delusion will be chosen and lies will be received.—Delusion appears pleasant to an evil heart, and if God doth not awaken natural conscience, men will follow that which appears pleasant to them.—Hence comes that fixedness in error which is often seen in rational but fallen creatures. God hath left them to themselves, and natural conscience being asleep, and the invisible things of eternity out of sight, they believe as they choose and as they love. Hence error grows into a beloved and habitual opinion, and the errorist having no idea of the beauty of truth, and the peace of receiving it, is wise in his own opinion. He wonders how other men can believe according to their profession; and he feels such a certainty his own opinions are right, that he is satisfied to risque his eternity, and will come to ruin, without a suspicion of his awful destiny. Because they have made a very sinful resistance to the truth, God, in this way, gives men up to delusion.

2d. In the Holy Scriptures, God often represents himself as doing that, which men voluntarily do themselves.

THESE representations are descriptive of a general divine agency, in upholding and governing the universe, and not of a special agency

impelling them to errors and crimes. There is no divine constraint on their wills, naturally forcing them to believe or do wrong; but they act voluntarily and of choice. This general agency of God, in upholding and governing the creature, and in preserving the existence and active powers of sinners, will be allowed by all, who are in any sense nominal Christians; and it doth not impeach his moral character, unless he is under obligation, immediately to annihilate the unholy, for which it is presumed no objecting sinner will contend. God is represented, appointing and sending the king of Babylon to destroy the Jews; at the same time he acted voluntarily, and was instigated by his own avarice and pride. Although God sent him, he went of choice, being moved by his own sinful heart. His motives were such in executing the commission, that God expressly said, he would punish him for the deed. It was the design of Jehovah to punish the Jews, in a signal manner for their impiety, and he so ordered the condition of the kingdoms of Babylon and Judah, that the distracted and weak state of one, became without any just cause, a temptation to the wicked king of the other, blasphemously and violently to desolate a neighboring state. But in all this Nebuchadnezzar was not tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; that is, he never so ordereth things by his Providence, that there is a reasonable ground, all things and obligations being considered, for any one to transgress his law. Nebuchadnezzar was tempted, being drawn away of his own lust, and enticed: When his lust had conceived, it brought forth sin, and his sin, when it was finished, brought down upon him

the just judgments of GOD. In this sense he was sent ; in this sense GOD executed judgment on his revolting people ; but not, by any special agency, constraining the will of the destroyer. And all cases, where God is described hardening the hearts of sinners, and sending delusion, should be understood in the same way. He withdraws special restraints, and so orders by his directing providence, that the condition of things give an opportunity for sinners, to act out their own hearts in voluntary errors and crimes, and in this they are acting according to their own wicked lusts.

3dly. THERE is no need of supposing a special agency of GOD, inclining men to errors and crimes, to account for all the sin which takes place in the world.

THERE is, without such a supposition, a cause sufficient for the effect. It is more strange, that so much doctrinal truth, and so much order as we see, are preserved in the world ; than it is that there are many heresies and vices. The hearts of men until sanctified lead them to error and vice. These are the elements in which they delight to live ;—these gratify their hearts ;—these are according to their unholy nature. Although the doctrines and laws of holiness from God himself and of his kingdom, are daily set before them, so that their reason is overborne, and they cannot vindicate their wishes ; yet they see no moral beauty in the nature of holiness, and find no delight in the practice.

ALL appears to them like a contradiction, and they often say, these Christian doctrines and laws, and duties are contradictory : But they do not attend to where the contradiction

lies. It is not between these doctrines and laws as they are in themselves, and as delivered to us by GOD, for here they are all harmonious and one supports and elucidates another. But the contradiction is between these doctrines and laws, on the one hand; and their own hearts and feelings on the other. It is between GOD and themselves;—between holiness and unholiness;—between the temper and practice which make a heaven of peace, and those which now do and ever must, constitute a hell of torment. Hence all things are confused in their sight. They cannot disprove the moral rectitude of GOD, while at the same time, being destitute in their own experience, they cannot conceive, how GOD or his saints, are made happy by holiness. This is the ignorance of sinners, arising from wickedness of heart, and not from a weakness of natural intellect. Here is the source of contention between their hearts and conscience, which makes them miserable until GOD gives them up to thoughtlessness.

WHEN specially called by the Providence, or by the admonitory influences of GOD'S Spirit, acting on their consciences, they contend with the truth and with those who declare it. But when the fatal time comes, in which an offended Lord saith, my spirit shall strive with them no more, they follow their own hearts' desires. Seeing no beauty in the doctrines of holiness, they chuse the doctrines of delusion and lies. Finding no pleasure in the duties of a holy life; they live without GOD in the world. Drowned in sense and its sinful pleasures, they wholly lose sight of eternity, of heaven and hell. An evil heart of unbelief which takes pleasure in unrighteousness, is

thus a sufficient cause for all the errors and crimes in the world.

THE great moral Governor need only deny his restraints, and order the condition of things in this world, so that men have an opportunity to transgress with present impunity, and they will reject the law,—deny the essential doctrines of the gospel,—and commit crimes the most subversive of divine glory and human good. There hath always been a disposition in transgressors to throw the blame of sin on God. This was evident in the first excuses of sinning man, when called before the lawgiver to receive sentence for the apostacy, and hath continued in his guilty children. When sinners cannot justify themselves, they attempt to accuse the Almighty, vainly thinking thereby to extenuate their sin and diminish their danger. But on examining, it will be found, that all the blame is in men, and that the principles of their hearts naturally lead to error and vice.

HAVING explained the text, we are prepared for several important and solemn inferences.

1. IT teaches us the reason, why men are so confident in those dangerous errors, which abound in the world.

GOD, being provoked by their resistance to the truth, hath left them to themselves, and in such a case, security and spiritual ignorance may grow into the highest confidence; and they will even make the strength of their evil and ignorant confidence, an argument that it is well founded. Such appearances, are often found in those, who judge well in the things of the world. They are wise in their generation, concerning temporal objects and interests, while wholly

blind in moral and evangelical subjects.—Such may be prospered by GOD in earthly concerns, and become respected and improved among men. All this, while their hearts are disaffected to true holiness, concurs to make them more fixed in spiritual blindness. They think it impossible, that persons, of so much consequence in the world, and whose judgment is so well esteemed by others, in the interesting concerns of time, should be ignorant and erroneous in their opinions concerning another life. When they are reminded of the danger, either in their sentiments or practice, they will answer tauntingly, as the powerful and honorable Pharisees did to CHRIST, *Are we blind also?* It stings their pride when they hear it represented to be possible, that they may miss of eternal peace and dignity, while many of their poor and despised neighbors, shall enter into eternal life.—Thus through their pride, the prosperity of the world, the opposition of their hearts to holiness, with the spiritual blindness attending it, they become in the highest degree confident in their soul destroying errors.

2dly. THIS subject teaches us that errors in opinion are criminal.

THERE is a common but most dangerous sentiment, that men are not guilty for their opinions. This is a modern refinement in vindicating sin, for the apostle not only speaks of the sin of believing lies, but also of damnable heresies. Heresies are false opinions, which have a damning degree of guilt.

THE Jews had a real opinion that JESUS CHRIST was not the son of GOD and Saviour of men. The apostle Paul tells us, that none of the princes of the world, who crucified CHRIST,

knew him to be the Lord of Glory; for had they known it they would not have done the awful deed. But CHRIST reproves them for this false opinion, and he traces it, in a number of his discourses, to the true cause, a wicked heart, and a distaste to the truth. A false opinion, which hath its origin in an unholy heart, is as sinful and guilty as the heart itself. It will therefore be found, that errors in belief will constitute a great part of the sin of the world. They are sinful in themselves, and produce practical sin as their natural effects. Nothing, either in sentiment or practice, can be harmless, which arises from a wicked heart. Such a heart, with all its issues, is guilty in the sight of God, and when we stand before his tribunal to be judged, we must answer for our errors in opinion, and they will all appear to be crimes. It will also appear that we never should have fallen into them, if we had not been creatures worthy of condemnation. Let all beware of that soothing excuse, by which the first risings of conscience are often hushed, "I really think thus, and therefore, if I am mistaken, I shall not be condemned."—The very excuse hath a suspicious appearance, as though there was some doubt of their own sincerity, and however real the false opinion may be, it will not exculpate, because it comes from a heart that opposeth the truth.—When all hearts are exposed before the bar of God, and the internal moral character of the Heathen, Jews, and Gentiles, is unveiled to sight, this will fully account for the multitude of strange, contradictory and horrid opinions, that have been in the world.—These observations take away the excuse some times made, which is this, "There are so many opinions, and so many kinds of pretended religion in the

world, we cannot know which is right, and therefore we determine to live without any kind of religion."—This vast diversity, proves the scriptural account of the wicked heart that is in men, to be true; for wicked hearts will urge men into every kind of error, rather than receive the truth in love.

3dly. THIS subject teaches the danger of resisting the truth.

GOD gave them up to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; because they did not receive the love of the truth.—They were damned, because they had pleasure in the errors of unrighteousness. We have seen the danger, of being given up by GOD, to follow our own hearts, either in opinion or practice.—Nothing is more provoking to infinite holiness than long continued resistance to the truth, and it is supported by sufficient evidence, and rejected thro' a love of sin. An open resistance is doubtless the most criminal, as it brings public dishonor on the cause of GOD; but an opposition of the heart, being seen by him, is very offensive in his sight.—If it be painful to hear or think of the truth; or if we wish it might be otherwise, it is exposing ourselves to be left by GOD to believe lies. Many are uneasy and irritated against the gospel doctrines, who still cannot and dare not wholly disbelieve them. In a general sense, they are willing to have a dispensation of grace, offering happiness to sinners; but when the peculiar doctrines of CHRIST are urged, they take offence, and much resistance is made by their unholy hearts. It pains them to hear a faithful description of the depravity of the heart; the need of regeneration by the special action of the Spirit, and a life of holiness. The doctrines

which exalt GOD alone and humble the sinner, are disgusting.—That self renunciation and weariness from the world, which are required by the gospel, appear to them to be wholly inconsistent with their happiness, and they quarrel with the author of such truth. When we see persons in this situation, we may determine it to be probable, that they will soon be relieved from their uneasiness; but it will be in a dreadful way. It is probable GOD will speedily give them up to a strong delusion to believe such errors as please them. I would apply these remarks specially to those who wish to disbelieve those peculiar doctrines of revelation, which assert that men's hearts are by nature totally sinful and opposed to GOD,—that they need a renewal, or regeneration,—and that this change must be effected by the immediate and powerful influences of the Holy Spirit.—Many who call themselves Christians in a general sense, and think they are going to heaven because they do nothing very wrong, are on the brink of a dreadful disappointment. They have no belief of that corruption of heart, which the scriptures every where represent; and no sense of the need of that divine work, whereby sinners are awakened and sanctified.—They would be Christians, and they think themselves to be thus; but nothing pains them more, than to see trembling convinced sinners, or to hear the songs of those rejoicing converts, in whose minds, the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST hath been revealed. The first reason of their uneasiness in the view of such events, is, that if those things be real, and necessary for entering into the kingdom of heaven, the ground of their own hopes is overturned; for there is nothing in their experience of a similar nature. They must either explode such re-

ligion as this, or give up their own easy expectations, and become sensible they are in danger of meeting wrath in the world to come.

To give up their own expectations is hard, and they resolve on the forlorn adventure of discrediting this kind of experimental religion, and refusing the gospel doctrines by which it is supported.—Unhappy souls! while they fail to meet the gospel promises, they do also deny themselves of its peculiar comforts, for the peculiar comforts of the gospel do arise from loving the true character of a holy, redeeming, renewing and sanctifying God; and not from the simple consideration, I am safe, and therefore I am happy. On this ground, the devils, who fear and tremble, would be happy, if we could make them believe they should be saved. A resistance to the peculiar and experimental doctrines of the gospel, doth commonly soon terminate, in a trembling conviction of their truth, or in a dereliction of all awakening influence on the conscience. Then the unhappy opposer of the truth is sealed to his final ruin, and given up to himself, which is the same as being given up to strong delusion. Awful is the situation of those, who resist the truth of God. They may be honorable,—they may be influential and useful in the society of this world; but fast as their flying days do pass away, and as decrepid nature fails, they are coming before that awful tribunal, where, being *weighed in the balance, they will be found wanting.*

4thly. It may be infered from the subject, that in the day of final account, all the world will be condemned before God.

His providence and his judgments will be justified, and every self justifying mouth be shut before him. It will then appear that every destroy-

ing error of opinion, which hath been in the world, originated from mere pleasure in unrighteousness, and from a heart that did not receive the love of the truth.

THERE is at present much security in the world, because there are so many opinions. Some make one, and some another use of the fact. Some infer that there is no standard of truth; others, that if there be a standard of truth, yet if GOD were much displeas'd with error, he would not permit things to be as they happen. And still there are others, who quiet themselves with the thought, that it is certain from this diversity of opinion, that multitudes of men must be erroneous in some respect, seeming to quiet themselves in error by the multitude of their company. But, my reader, going with the multitude to do evil is no alleviation of the guilt. A multitude of unholy, guilty and miserable companions, will be so far from making the punishment less terrible, that it will only add to the number of torments in that world of horror, where hope shall never come. CHRIST hath told us that many shall seek to enter in and not be able, and he was so far from saying this as a ground of security, that he foretold the event as a reason for diligence and watchfulness to escape the wrath to come.

THE great number of lost ones will be no impeachment of, either the wisdom or goodness of GOD. That great day which he hath appointed for the glory of his character, and the retribution of his creatures, will clear him from all the impious imputations and blasphemous excuses of sinners. The nature of sin will be seen,—the creature's guilt will be proved,—the divine government will be justified, and it will appear that all the lost come to their sinful end, because

they had pleasure in unrighteousness and received not the love of the truth. Mercy will be magnified, and justice made very glorious, and the Lord, the Judge, will be exalted higher than the highest elevation of created praise.—
AMEN.

S E R M O N II.

On replying against God.

ROMANS, ix. 20.

*NAR but, O man, who art thou, that repliest
against God?*

AND is it possible that a guilty, dependant creature, should reply against an infinitely holy, and good Creator, by whom his being and all his benefits are upheld? Against a righteous God, in whose presence he must soon appear, to be judged and rewarded, according to all the deeds that are done in the body, whether they be the thoughts of his heart or the practice of his life? Against a most merciful Redeemer, who came down from heaven, to suffer on an undeserved cross of ignominy and pain, that he might deliver sinners from eternal death? Yes! this is found to be possible, although it might have been doubted, if there had not been a demonstration of the fact by experience. The nature of sin, its principles, its practice, and its

fruits, never would have been rightly conceived by frail creatures if they had not been known by experiment.

AFTER the first finners of the human race had transgressed a positive law of GOD, which was so plainly expressed there was no room for a mistake of its meaning ; even then, they attempted to throw the blame on GOD himself. One said, “ the serpent beguiled me and I did eat,” impliedly throwing the blame on GOD as Creator ; and the other said, “ the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat,” continuing the same implication against the wisdom and goodness of GOD, as the cause of the evil, which had happened by his creatures. This was, in both instances, a self justifying reply, both against the lawgiver and the law ; and the same excuses in spirit, though not in word, have been kept up by all succeeding transgressors. In some way they reply against GOD ; either by denying his right to command as he does, or criminating the justice of the precept, or the reality of the sins with which they stand charged. We shall find this to be the result of men’s excuses, and also of their objections against the holy commandments ; for they all terminate in an impeachment of the lawgiver and the law, and are replying against the infinite perfections of Jehovah.—The creature enters into a controversy with the Creator.

If the nature of sin were not known by experience, we should suppose this controversy would be laid aside, when GOD appears in the mild character of a Saviour and Redeemer ; but facts have verified, the continuance of the same malignity against a gospel of reconciliation, as was shown against a law of holiness. Although mis-

ery be alarming, and much be done to escape it ; there is no return to truth and duty and reason, until irresistible grace takes hold of the sinner, and changes his heart. The same holiness which was offensive in the law, is found to be in the gospel also ; and the same objections arise against each. The introduction of a gospel into the world, which is abundantly sufficient to save all who act reasonably, hath not removed the offence nor the controversy between a holy God and his revolting creatures. Some are offended and reply against God, because all are not saved ; although many remain in impenitence ; some object against one, and some against another doctrine, precept, or duty of the gospel, as they are prompted by their own particular and reigning lusts ; and all find a difficulty to comply with the holy nature of the gospel salvation. The same reasons, which made them rebellious to the commandment, continue their impenitence under the melting calls of gospel love.—Mercy becomes as offensive as justice, when it is offered on such terms, as contradict the reigning unholiness of the soul. This shows, that sinners will not feel any happiness in the moral character and government of God, even after his goodness hath opened a door for their escape from punishment ; unless he will allow them to be unholy still ; and to assume a place in the counsels of government, which can never belong to a creature.—All the anxiety which they show, until renewed by the mighty grace of God, is to escape misery ; but not to be freed from the sin, which makes them odious in the divine sight and exposed to his just indignation.

To a mind thus resisting God, there are two replies may be made, either of which is sufficient to convict him of guilt, and shut his lips forever.

THE first of which is, that all the doctrines, laws and duties enjoined by God, are reasonable and may be proved beneficial for the divine glory and the good of his kingdom. He, in the first instance, gave a law that was the best adapted to honor himself and make his creatures happy. The reason this law condemned sinners, and without a gospel of grace left them under a penalty of punishment, was because the general good required this to be done. It would, at once, have injured the divine glory and the best interests of the rational kingdom, either to omit a penalty, or to forgive transgression without an atonement. And when in infinite grace, God determined to save sinners, it was necessary he should bestow the favor, in some manner that would display his holiness and magnify the law. It never was, and never can be consistent for God to forgive transgression, in a way that would cast a shade over his infinite rectitude; or sink the dignity of his law. It was unreasonable ever to expect this, and infinite wisdom never will do it. The temper which was lost in the apostacy, must be restored; or the gospel can be of no avail to save a transgressor.—A consideration of this truth ought to shut the mouth of every sinner who replies against the gospel terms of salvation.

THERE is a second reason which ought to close the lips of all who reply against God.

HIS wisdom, righteousness, goodness and all his moral perfections are infinite; so that the fitness of what he does or commands, ought never be questioned. His testimony, concerning truth or duty, ought to conclude the opinions of human reason, and bind the practice of all moral agents. God is now pleased in innumerable instances, to inform us of the reasons of his laws and government; but if the fitness of the whole

were suspended on his word, without assigning any of the reasons which incline him to command or work, it would create an obligation on us both to believe and obey, without ever questioning the fitness of the commandment.

THE will, the wisdom, the knowledge and holiness of an infinite GOD, ought ever to bind the faith and practice of finite creatures, so as not to reply against the word of their Creator and Judge. *Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honor, and another unto dishonor? — Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against GOD?*

I SHALL in this discourse mention a number of things, in which the unholy heart will begin and continue to reply against GOD, until overcome by the power of efficacious grace.

I. WE may begin with the doctrine of divine sovereignty, of which the sacred writer is discoursing through the chapter from which the text is taken. *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*—The sovereignty of GOD in the salvation of sinners, whereby he taketh and leaveth whom he will, is a doctrine most offensive to the human heart. This, in general, is one of the first points on which transgressors break with the Lord of salvation.—There are various reasons why, with such hearts as they possess, this should be the case. It is painful to a proud and selfish heart to feel that dependance which this doctrine implies. It is hard to feel divine justice in the condemnation of all men, and lie at the foot of sovereignty to receive an undeserved favor. Also, if GOD be a sovereign in the bestowment of grace.

shewing mercy to whom he will, and leaving to eternal misery whom he wills to leave ; it follows that he may rightly appoint such terms of salvation, as his holy wisdom seeth to be meet. When, in the first instance, God appears to chuse or leave according to his pleasure, and then in sovereign holiness, appoints the terms of acceptance ; the unhumbled and un sanctified heart replies against the dispensation ; and perhaps there is no doctrine which men are more unwilling to receive or more prone to fault. When told that *whom he will he hardeneth*, and reminded in the words of inspiration, *what if God willing to shew his wrath and make his power known, endureth with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.* they answer in the objecting language mentioned by the apostle, *Why then doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?* The sinner, who thus replies, doth little understand the nature of divine sovereignty. The friends of God can answer, that the very objector hath resisted God's will—he hath transgressed a holy and reasonable law—he hath sinned and continues to sin—he lives in disobedience to the gospel, without faith and repentance, and thus he practically denies the doctrines of the gospel to be right. And although the sinner come to that awful end, in which divine sovereignty meant to leave him ; yet in his own sins, which were the means that destroyed, he actively resisted God's will. He is first offended, with the sovereign determination of heaven to show mercy or to leave as pleaseth him ; and he next replies against the terms on which a deliverance is offered.—Such persons do from first to last, resist the will of God, and are taken by their own objection.

FURTHER, all objections against divine sovereignty do virtually deny the need of mercy to save sinners. Mercy in the salvation of sinners, and sovereignty in GOD the giver, are mutually implied.—Grace and mercy imply the bestowment of a favor, for which the receiver hath no claim or desert. Sovereignty in GOD, implies the bestowment of favor by motives drawn from his own goodness; and not from any present or foreseen deserving in him who receives, for such deserving never can be. Mercy to sinners and sovereignty in GOD, are therefore mutually implied. If he hath not mercy on whom he will have mercy, then there is no mercy in the whole transaction; and to speak of mercy bestowed on principles of justice, or arising by obligation from any thing present or foreseen in the sinner, is a gross misunderstanding of the meaning of words. If GOD were not sovereign he never could be merciful, nor would any of the children of men ever be delivered from the pains of eternal death. Still, the human heart replies against that sovereignty, which is the only ground on which transgressors can come to eternal life. And this opposition arises, first from an unwillingness to be dependant on him who reigns; and secondly, from seeing the terms of salvation to be holy. Thus a guilty, a miserable world reply against GOD, for reasons, which if he were to follow, would consign them to eternal death; for if there were no sovereignty in GOD, there could be no escape from the penalty of the law, and all sinners must reap the fruit of their own doings.—O foolish man to reply against divine sovereignty! it is cutting the cords of human hope; sapping the only possible foundation of thine own salvation! It is leaving thyself, who hast no claim from justice or desert,

to be overlooked by the infinite goodness of God, through which alone, the guilty are forgiven, sanctified and come to eternal life.

FURTHER, it is matter of great grievance to such objectors that some are taken and some left. If, say they, GOD be good ; if he hath no pleasure in the misery of sinners ; why this distinction, which is every where held up in the gospel scheme of doctrine ?

BUT let us seriously inquire to what this objection doth amount. It really goes so far as to deny the justice of GOD in the condemnation of any sinners ; and those who make it cannot be supposed to speak so much from a love of others, as from a fear of their own end. If all might be justly left in sin, and consequently in misery and punishment ; dost thou, O sinner, fault that goodness which rescueth a part ? Because GOD is so good, as to save part of those who deserve to be left ; is thine eye so evil, as to wish eternal ruin to thyself and all thy race ? May not so many be freed from eternal pain, as his wisdom judgeth to be consistent, with his own and with the greatest good ? Or are there any left who do not chuse these immoral principles which make a punishment to the possessor ; and do not all men act freely in this interesting concern ? Will any be left who love holiness, and desire such a heaven as is purchased by the blood of CHRIST and prepared by his power ? No, not one such will be left. Let every such objector remember, that to give human laws to mercy, in this respect, is to shut the doors of heaven, and open the mouth of the pit of despair, so wide that all must enter.

THIS objection of partiality, against the sovereignty of GOD in the bestowment of his mercy

on sinners, denies the moral perfections of the divine character ; it limits infinite goodness ; it contradicts the justice of GOD in condemning and leaving any sinner whatever ; and if the principle were followed into all its consequences, would utterly prevent the salvation of any soul. How can we look on the heart of such an objector ? Can there be any thing but cruelty and destruction in his heart ? If he had been on the throne, would not all but himself have been miserable ? Is not the language and consequence of his objection this, if there be any among transgressors, so implacable in their evil principles, that they reject the only disposition and practice which can make a heaven ; then let all sink down to everlasting woe, for all must come to the same end, lest there should appear to be partiality in the divine government. After all the noise of objection against divine sovereignty, it is presumed, there is not one, who would either wish or dare to suspend his own eternal blessedness or woe, on the propriety of every creature being brought to salvation. Men can see the sin, the guilt and the desert of others, when they do not see their own. The objection rises, rather from a fear of being found in the number of those, who shall be left by sovereign grace, than from any prevalent love of all the souls which are made to exist. Could we assure the persons, who thus reply against God, that they should be forever happy, and might still continue in the pride and sin which they love, the objection would never again be named.

2dly. THE sinful heart replies against the manner of salvation, by the merits of a Redeemer.

It is always found difficult, to convince unholly minds of the need of an expiation, and the

wisdom of salvation through the merits of a Redeemer. Such will say, if God be good, why the need of this expence to bring his grace into exercise? If he means me to be happy, why doth he not take me as I am and make me happy in my own way? Why doth he not let me have the satisfaction of redeeming myself by my own good works, and of thinking I am come to this blessedness by the wisdom of my own understanding, and the strength of my own arm? To this there is a ready reply, that the sovereign wisdom of God never intended to save any sinner in such a way as would deny his own rights, dishonor his own law, and involve his whole kingdom in confusion. He never designed to dishonor himself, and place the rebellious on the throne; that they might become happy in that way which is pleasing to unholy hearts. In saving sinners, infinite wisdom hath a supreme regard to the divine honor, law and government; and for this it was necessary there should be an expiation, and a deliverance by sovereign, unmerited and efficacious grace, pardoning freely, and powerfully sanctifying the ungodly.—The salvation of sinners, is in a way, that is consistent with the firm maintainance of God's law and government; and for this, it was necessary that a Saviour of divine character should personally obey the law and die to make an atonement. Were mercy to be extended without this expence, the glory of divine holiness would not have been reconcilable with the event. Those who are sanctified delight in this way of salvation and see it to be best, because it displays, in the brightest manner, all the moral perfections of God, which it is their happiness to behold. God is more glorious by saving in this way than he could be by any other; also the saved are more happy,

and these are sufficient reasons to justify this manner of redemption. All who are humble and self-abased, and willing to give the glory of salvation where it is due ;—all who love to see the holiness of God and his law displayed ; and the moral system of rectitude forever vindicated, esteem the method of sinners' deliverance to be the highest exercise of infinite wisdom, holiness and goodness. Every thing, which is said against the evangelical plan of grace, originates in the pride and unholiness of depraved hearts. Let them be once made humble and holy, and the reply against God ceases.

3dly. SINNERS will reply against the terms of salvation, and are opposed to the very good which is bestowed by sovereign grace.

INDEED, the objection which we are now considering, is at the foundation of that common impenitence, which is found in lands of gospel light. When sinners are awakened from the dreams of sensuality, by an accusing conscience, to escape the wrath to come, not knowing their spiritual impotence, they endeavor to purify themselves according to the law, and correct their life and practice. This they find to be vain, for their hearts are corrupted, and at enmity with the law and the lawgiver. Having been informed of a gospel they look to this, but find still the same disaffection and moral impotence with respect to evangelical obedience, as they did to comply with the precepts of the law in their full extension. The law was offensive because it is holy and requires moral purity of heart ; and so is the gospel, for the same reason.—The very temper for which they are condemned by the law of God, makes them opposed to the terms of forgiveness, and this is the

true reason they are lost, under a dispensation of grace, which invites them to eternal life. It is a kind of life which is not chosen ; a method of salvation that is agreeable, neither in its nature and terms, nor in its spirit and practice. When the gospel is seen in its true nature and requirements, excepting the power it hath to make creatures happy, it is in all respects as much disliked, as is the law by its spirituality of requirement both in heart and practice. Hence we find so many unbelieving and impenitent sinners, where the gospel is preached. Hence there is a general distaste to the doctrines of sanctification and renewal by the spirit of God, and a holy life in the strict observance of all evangelical and moral duty. To repent and turn away from sin—to loathe its whole nature—to love and serve God with the whole heart—to be self-abased and denied to the world, to live in strict spirituality of obedience, and daily go to an Almighty Saviour for unmerited assistance, and observe all his precepts of duty to himself and others, are requirements hard to be performed by the unbelieving heart. These are hard sayings, and although the death of punishment threatens the unbelieving, they say who can receive them ? They are reconciled to happiness, for they never have been at variance with it, according to their own conceptions of its nature ; but with God, and his law there is no reconciliation—no love of his attributes—no delight in his commandments—or choice of the pure and undefiled religion, which CHRIST hath commanded to be found in all his followers, and to which the promises of final salvation are made.

THESE, are some of the reasons, why sinful men reply against God, in that dispensation of grace which he hath revealed in his word ; and

they are the true cause of that darkness which is thrown over the gospel, by the corrupt reasonings and absurd opinions, which men have concerning a dispensation of grace. The controversy, which begins against Moses, ends, either in a denial of JESUS CHRIST, or in a gross perversion of his doctrines. When sinners find, that the gospel contains a law of holiness, and that its promises are made to nothing short of this ; the old quarrel between them and heaven is revived in its full strength, and as they once defied the commandment, so now they reject the LORD JESUS CHRIST, unless his efficacious grace save them as brands from the burning.

FROM what hath been said on this subject, it appears that sinful men reply against GOD, in the whole progress of the work of grace ; from its first origin in the counsels of divine love, to the final application of his mercy in sanctifying the heart. All which GOD hath done, hath been in direct opposition to the wish of sinners ; and if they ever groaned for deliverance, it was a deliverance from misery and not from sin, for which they were seeking and praying. If they have ever desired a future glory, it was the glory of blessedness and not of holiness which was sought.—They desire a heaven to be at peace ; but not to serve GOD, to be devoted to his glory, and praise him forever.

THIS appears from the replies that are made against the Lord, in every progressing step of his gracious work.

THERE is an objection to his sovereignty, because the sinner who replies, thinks, that on such conditions of divine grace, he may be left to be a miserable creature ; also, because the doctrine of divine sovereignty implies a right in GOD to appoint his own conditions of forgive-

ness, and these conditions contradict the reigning desires of his heart. The very conditions of forgiveness, imply that he ought to be another creature from what he finds himself to be ; that he should forsake what he loves and delights to practice, and have other ends, other desires and motives to action, and other pleasures from what he hath experienced.

THERE is an objection against the manner of forgiveness, through the merits of a Redeemer, and to grace bestowed solely on account of CHRIST'S righteousness : For this manner of salvation, justifies the law, which hath been violated ; and the transgressor must find himself justly condemned and without excuse, before he can lay a single claim to the exercise of mercy. It is hard for a proud and unholy creature, to sign his own sentence of condemnation, and allow himself unworthy of any favor, and exposed to all possible evil, before he can receive any well grounded hope of forgiveness ; yet all this must be conceded and felt by every returning sinner, or there can be no reason to expect acceptance.

AND to compleat the sinner's resistance to the progress of salvation, he is wholly opposed to the terms of divine grace. These terms are the exercise of holiness, in repentance, faith, self-renunciation, and a conformity of desires and practice to the holy law of GOD. There never was a sinner, who before his renovation, desired the gospel salvation. Misery was always frightful in apprehension to fallen creatures, whether angels or men ; but they never, after an apostacy, desired the happiness of heaven, which is holy, and where GOD is exalted. It is against their whole immoral nature to wish for these things with true desire.

WE often say, that it was impossible for sinners either to contrive, execute or apply a salvation for themselves ; and the remark is true in every sense of explanation. They could not have conceived the method and means of making an adequate atonement for sin, nor of purchasing the applicatory influences of the Holy Spirit. Under the immoral temper which reigned in them, they could not have originated a single desire, to be christians on the holy plan of divine counsel. As creation originated from the benevolent and holy counsels of Deity ; so doth redemption, in its plan, purchase and application. Fallen men, if the goodness of an Almighty Sovereign had not interposed, would forever have groaned under misery ; but they never would have had sincere and groaning desires, for the holiness of heaven, or for the holiness of the gospel salvation, even though they had seen it to be connected with happiness. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and must ever remain so, until born of the spirit. There will never a single desire arise in the kingdom of satan, to build up the kingdom of God, or to be restored and live under the influence of its holy temper. Salvation is all of sovereign and efficacious ; as well as of unmerited grace.

WHEN the redeemed come to the kingdom of glory, they will look back with astonishment on the scene of grace, wisdom and power, which hath brought them thither. They will see that it hath from first to last, been the working of Almighty grace, and that their own evil hearts were opposed to every step of God's gracious designs. Opposed to his holiness, and without a desire to be reunited to him ; opposed to sovereignty, without which mercy never could be bestowed ; opposed to a way of salvation which

honored and vindicated the law, which had been transgressed ; opposed to the terms of forgiveness ; to faith, repentance, and a life of evangelical obedience.

THIS being the case, salvation will ever appear to be a work of free grace, and those who are brought to receive it will acknowledge all the glory to be due to GOD. It will appear, that sinners are taken by divine mercy, when they are in a state of entire opposition to the ultimate designs of redeeming wisdom, and brought to a blessedness, that was never conceived or deserved by them. When the great designs of grace are compleated in the redeemed Church of CHRIST in heaven, it will be known by the universe, that the mercy which hath done this was in GOD himself, unpurchased and unmoved by any consideration without himself, and that all the glory and praise must be his, now and forever. AMEN.

SERMON III.

The folly of replying against God.

ROMANS, ix. 20.

*NAY but, O man, who art thou, that repliest
against God?*

IN a preceding discourse, I have mentioned sundry respects, in which sinful men are actually opposed, not only to the law of God which is holy, just and good; but, also, to the scheme of salvation and grace, as determined and applied by his power, wisdom and goodness. While on this subject, we have already seen, that the praise and glory of redemption, must all belong to the Lord; for this work originated in his wisdom and love; the benefits were purchased by his pain and obedience; and the application is made by the efficacious power of his goodness. All this is done while the hearts and practice of men, stand opposed to the nature of benevolence, as it exists in God, and is exerted in the deliverance of the guilty. So far as we have proceed-

ed in this subject, nothing appears to exalt ; but all to humble the pride, awaken the consciences, and alarm the fears of those, who live unconcerned lives while under the gospel call.

MANY are easy because there is a gospel ; not considering the terms of offered salvation to be against them. Many think God is like themselves, and therefore imagine they shall be saved, if they do such things as they suppose to be meet terms of salvation. Others are easy, because there is a Saviour ; having no sense of eternity, and what it will be to stand and be judged, and rewarded through an endless duration of existence. But all quietness on the subject is dangerous, unless accompanied with the sanctifying grace of God. Having noticed several things of great importance, in which sinful men reply against the dispensation of divine grace, I will,

2dly, DISCOURSE on the folly of thus replying against the purposes of God ; either in his sovereignty, in the manner and means of salvation, or in leaving some to be hardened. The sin is so common that there may be great benefit in meditating on its folly and danger. Many, perhaps, are in the habit of replying against him ; either in some or in all of the instances which have been mentioned, without being conscious of the guilt, and that they are, every day treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.

THE following considerations show the folly of this conduct.

1st. IT is unreasonable for a finite and sinful creature, to reply against the infinite, all wise and most holy God.

THE perfections of GOD are such, as enable him to purpose and govern in the best manner. The glory of his nature entitles him to all adoration and praise, to all submission and obedience. Directed, in all cases, by his rectitude and skill, he can and will do that, which is most for his own glory and happiness, and for the good of the whole. By the natural and moral fulness of his nature, he is raised above all possibility of temptation, to do otherwise, than what is best and most glorious through time and eternity.

FURTHER, he hath power to accomplish all his purposes in the most compleat manner. He hath knowledge to look on every mind and discern its qualities and deserts—He is present, in every place, to execute what his eternal wisdom hath determined. All creatures are constantly upheld by his agency, and are his property in the highest sense. Through his all wise ordering, there will ever be found in the universe, the highest possible amount of glory, holiness and blessedness. Surely, it is reasonable that finite and sinful creatures, should in all possible cases, submit to this holy Creator, Governor and Judge. This appears from the fulness of his nature, and from the glory that he is forming in his own kingdom. Can there be any thing more preposterous and evil, than for such men—such sinners as we be, to reply against so great, so holy, so good a GOD? To do this, is the rebellion of ignorance against knowledge; of weakness against power; of sin and guilt against holiness and righteousness; of shame and misery against honor and peace.

FURTHER; if the replies of sinners against GOD and his government were to be gratified, it would involve the whole universe in confusion and misery. Nothing but error and torment can

come from the principles of sin; and if they were to prevail they would end in the perversion of all rights; the destruction of all peace; and the reign of violence in its utmost rage. This appears by the objections, which first began to be made to a commandment, that is holy, just and good; and that the rebellion doth not continue, merely because sinners are exposed to misery by the penalty of the law; is evident from the opposition which is still made, to a dispensation of forgiveness and peace. This dispensation, although it stands on the only principles, which can glorify God and make creatures happy, meets a similar resistance. To be thus unreasonable against the glory of God and the good of the universe, is the highest folly. There never can be an excuse for sin, or an objection against the doctrines of the gospel, which wisdom will justify. The more the nature and effects of sin appear, and the knowledge of these will be increasing through eternity, the clearer it will appear, that sinners from the first to last of their opposition to the law and the gospel, are guilty of the deepest folly. It is probable, that they will, themselves have a conviction of this, in a future state; still it will not be of such a kind, as to change their hearts and make them wise.

2dly. THE folly of sinners' repial against God further appears, from its being ineffectual to answer the purposes they wish.

No creature can contend with God and prosper. His purposes and his works are from the beginning, without any possibility of the smallest deviation from what he hath determined. *Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: Nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.* The

infinite wisdom which concerted the plan of dispensation, both in nature, and in grace, even to the most minute circumstances, will be supported by infinite power and righteousness; so that not a word of all that God hath said, shall fail of its accomplishment. If the Lord be not glorified, by our active and chearful obedience, still he cannot be disappointed; but will honor himself and magnify the scheme of his government, by the execution of justice on the delinquents. The law and gospel of God, were not revealed for the purpose of entering into consultation, and taking the opinion of creatures, whether they are proper to be enjoined and obeyed; but as matter of instruction, and as a rule of duty, requiring obedience on our part. The disobedient, whatever they may suppose their own reason to dictate, will be punished with an awful destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

OF all the false ideas which enter the minds of sinful men, this appears to be one of the most dangerous, that they seem to conceive themselves to have a right to sit in judgment with God, both concerning a law of holiness in heart and life; and also, concerning the most proper manner, of extending forgiveness to guilty sinners, and the number he must receive, that he may be consistent and impartial in the bestowment of grace. But there is no such thing permitted in this matter. God is sovereign in his law and government, never consulting with his creatures how he ought to save; or what number shall be taken, or on what terms grace shall be extended. What is determined, in a dispensation of grace, shall abide to be carried into execution. What is determined, as a right law of conduct, shall abide in force, both in its precepts

and penalties; and creatures have only to obey what is revealed. Their resistance will make no impression on the counsels or works of God. If the opinion of men is thus weak, with respect to what the Lord determines and does; if it be not left to them to judge of the propriety of divine laws and doctrines, after they are delivered; then all replying against him is ineffectual; and if ineffectual it is the extreme of folly. Nothing, among all the strange things that happen in a sinful world, is more surprising, than the presumption of sinners, in determining things above their powers of knowledge and judgment. They speak, and appear to think, even concerning the deepest things of the divine government, that great consequence is annexed to their opinions, and as though they were co-arbiters with the Lord, on the throne of infinite wisdom and power. But all this in the creature, is vain, with respect to the divine plan, as it exists in the Almighty mind; as it respects the final completion of what is determined; and the ultimate state of objecting minds. The great plan of law, of grace and of government, existed from eternity in the Father's mind; and as he can never change, and hath all power, it must ultimately be fulfilled in the most exact order of time and events.

THIS teaches us the ineffectual folly of replying against God, either in his appointments of law or grace; for he did not reveal them, to call men into consultation, with his infinite and holy wisdom, or to be disputed out of his right to sit as sovereign on the throne; but he revealed his will to instruct us in our duty and teach us the consequences of our temper and practice. Here sin and its nature are clearly displayed! When infinite goodness revealed his will, to teach us the only way to happiness; the rebellious heart

rises to judge, to contend, and call the commandments and promises of God into review, and approve or reject according to its wishes.

AND what will be the effect of this resistance? Will men or GOD, prevail? Will his counsels stand, or will the cavils of sin cause him to decline from what he eternally determined to be best? As the waves rise, and roar, and seem mightily to scorn the heavens, and then sink into nothing, without any visible cause but their own weakness; so all those objections of sinners will vanish. It will appear that they had not understanding to see; nor wisdom to determine, nor honesty to judge right; nor power to execute. All their objections and false reasonings will be improved only as evidence of their just condemnation; and not a single stain will come on the knowledge or holiness of the Lord. Their imagined power will vanish, and they will sink helpless and forlorn into the hands of injured justice, to receive the reward due to their deeds. Thus the impotence of those who reply against God will show their folly—The inefficacy of what they object, to execute their wishes, will show them to be fools indeed, and in pain and disappointment they will look up and say, how great was my folly to reply against God!

3dly. THE folly of replying against GOD, appears from the accumulated guilt and misery, which it will bring on the sinner.

BY every reply, against infinite wisdom and holiness, he sinks his feet deeper into the horrible pit and the miry clay. He finds no sufficient excuse—no justification of his temper or practice—no bar against the execution of GOD'S purposes—nor any delay of the penalty which is threatened. All objections are ineffectual for

these purposes and only serve to increase the sin, guilt and penalty. As the power of the Lord cannot be resisted, so neither can his justice be influenced or his knowledge and wisdom blinded.

THE first sin of man, was an opposition to the law of God, and the longer this is continued, the greater is the guilt and the misery that is deserved. Such is the connection between the law and gospel, and such their conformity in moral requirements, that there is a growing sin, by every moment's delay of evangelical obedience. Let not sinners be quiet because there is a dispensation of grace. Let them not think, that there is a better chance for iniquity in their disobedience to the gospel call, than there is for their transgression of the holy law. Why will it be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the inhabitants of Judea to whom Christ preached? Surely, because the latter had more knowledge of their duty and a better acquaintance with the gospel reconciliation. Perhaps there is no cause, which so rapidly and awfully increases the sin and guilt of men, as an opposition to gospel light and invitations. This is that unbelief, which carries more sinners down to the pit of utter despair, than all the other crimes which men commit. To reply against the terms of grace, which are offered by a merciful Redeemer, produces greater guilt, and exposes to a far heavier punishment; than all the crimes against the law of Moses, where there is not a knowledge of the gospel. The highest elevated saints in the kingdom of the redeemed, and the most miserable spirits of the condemned, will be from among those, where the doctrines of the gospel have shone with the brightest light. *Hetbat def-*

pised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses : of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace ?

To reply against the manner and terms of the dispensation of grace, is considered by God, as the greatest sin which men ever commit ; and to those who do this, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.* There is a reason why unbelief should be thus esteemed ; for to oppose God's own method of grace, shows a most fixed enmity against the law, and is practically saying, " we will not be saved by grace, while the law of holiness remains in force." If there was guilt in the first instance of transgression, this conduct proves sin to be exceeding sinful, and worthy of the death with which it is threatened, without any palliation. As Paul said that, *the commandment, which was ordained to life, he found to be unto death ;* so many sinners, under gospel light, will find the gospel, which is *a savor of life unto life* to the saved, to be to them, *a savor of death unto death.* It is a most difficult thing, to preserve men, from turning the grace of God into a cause of licentiousness.

MANY appear to think, that all the words of Christ's ministers, ought to be smooth and soothing to the feelings of men ; and that preaching the terror of the law is a departure from their commission. But who ever exceeded the Saviour himself, in preaching terror to a guilty world ? While he and the harbingers of his advent, proclaimed *peace on earth, and good will to men ;* they

did also solemnly denounce the danger of eternal death. Hear him telling men, that they are condemned already, that except they were born again they could not enter the kingdom of heaven; that if he had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin; that this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Hear him summoning all before the bar of God; describing the process of the day of judgment; and sentencing the unbelieving and impenitent to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Hear him warning, and denouncing the judgments of God against the formal Pharisees, who received not his gospel in all its spirituality. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" These are the denunciations of the glorious author of grace; and he enjoined on all his followers to warn and teach the same. From consulting the apostolic writings, we determine, that all who were faithful, complied with the injunction. They taught, that disobedience to gospel light, and replying against the manner and terms of salvation, sinks men to deeper misery, than they could ever have felt, if a Saviour and his grace had not been proclaimed. The increased danger and guilt, and more aggravated misery of the impenitent, where the gospel is taught, demonstrate the folly of replying against God.

WE have considered the folly of this conduct, as it is unreasonable; as it is ineffectual to answer the wishes of the replying sinner; and as it increases his sin and guilt, in the punishment

he must endure, to satisfy the justice and magnify the law of an injured lawgiver and Redeemer.—And hath not enough been said to show that this is the greatest extreme of folly? To show that all, who enter into a contention with the Almighty, will be confounded by their own excuses; and that if they attempt to justify themselves, the very pleas they offer will condemn them.

It remains that those, who have attended to this subject, make a serious application to themselves, and enquire whether they be not convicted of folly by the remarks that have been made. It is much easier to say to another, *thou art the man*; than it is to feel concerning ourselves, *I am the man reprov'd*. Men will very quietly hear others reprov'd, and join in the censure administered on their neighbors, while they excuse themselves, though chargable with the same sin; and they would be highly irritated, to have it said, it is probable they must fail of eternal life. But to determine who will attain, or who fail of eternal life, there is a Judge, who is high above the selfish and prejudiced wishes of men. While mercy and truth go before his face, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—Justice, is to him, a perfection dear as his mercy; and he will not suffer the truth of his threatenings to fail. Let those, therefore, be afraid of their own folly, who deny the essential parts of a work of grace on the heart. When they say, that what is commonly called a moral life, without a special work of grace on the heart is sufficient for a hope of salvation; when they deny the need of the awakening, convincing, and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit; when they reject the self-denying and soul humbling piety of the gospel, in a life of weanedness

from the world and its vanities ; when they think that men can forget their end and their obligation constantly to seek the glory of GOD, and at the same time, walk in the Christian path of godliness, prayer and watchfulness ; or when they suppose that the design of GOD and the terms of salvation, are so comprehensive, as eventually to embrace all men : When any or all of these sentiments are embraced, they are replying against the revealed counsels of GOD.

MANY, who embrace these unscriptural ideas, are doubtless persuaded that reason is on their side, and they glory in their own scheme, as being the only one, which a rational mind can approve. But let all men remember that human reason, under the influence of a depraved heart, is a most frail and dangerous guide. A sinful heart hath influence on men's opinions, as well as on their practice. We often see those, who judge truly in other matters, strangely blinded in divine things, by their own perverse disposition. The reason of this is, that they have been accustomed to approve and believe, on the sight of something, which they esteemed to be beauty in the object or truth approved ; but with their unholy hearts, they could see no beauty in holiness, not even in the character and law of GOD, which are infinitely glorious in the sight of a holy mind. They could see no beauty, in that method of salvation proposed in the gospel, by which the law is magnified and all the perfections of GOD made honorable. This state of mind is described by the apostle Paul in what he says of the wise Greeks. " For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of GOD. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the under-

standing of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not GOD made foolish the wisdom of this world?—For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach CHRIST crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, CHRIST the power of GOD and the wisdom of GOD. Because the foolishness of GOD is wiser than men.—But GOD hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.—That no flesh should glory in his presence.—Here is a just picture of that human reason, by which the world boastingly go down to eternal death. They are so wise, in their own estimation as to arraign the purposes and the plan of infinite wisdom. Those Greeks had been accustomed to judge with un sanctified hearts, and to form an opinion of truth from their own sense of moral beauty, and by a prevailing unholiness they took darkness for light. They were proud of their rational attainments; still they saw nothing in the Christian salvation, which inclined them to esteem it, either the power or the wisdom or glory of GOD. It is thus with modern disbelievers; for being surrounded with an alluring world, and supposing they have the fairest prospect of doing much for themselves here, and having no relish for the pleasures of the kingdom of GOD, they prefer what they think to be reason to all the precepts of evangelical piety. And when conscience, with a little degree of fidelity to its author, remonstrates against the folly, they sooth its terrifying voice by thinking, that as they are endowed with reason to determine for themselves, and as they can see no beauty, nor taste any delight in the Christian temper and practice, it is,

therefore, unnecessary for salvation. They think **GOD** to be altogether such an one as themselves. —With what amazing astonishment, will a multitude of unbelievers open their eyes in the light of eternity! How they will be surpris'd at the fallacy of reason in depraved creatures! Then they will find, that the the god in which they trusted, hath led them down to the shades of everlasting darkness! The event will teach them, that all their speculations, formed under the power of lust and an alluring world, were vain—vain indeed! and that they were amus'd with the shadows of earthly blifs, to lose the substance of eternal felicity. And is it thus, O boasted human reason, that thou art leading thy blinded votaries to an end they will ever lament? Is it thus that understanding and reason, our natural image of the Créator, are rendered blind by our loss of his moral likeness? Then we will pray the merciful Creator and Saviour of sinners, to deliver us from ourselves—to give the illumination of his Holy Spirit, whereby we may be taught to discern the glory of **GOD** in the face of **JESUS CHRIST**, and find experimentally, that what the world, in the folly of their sin call foolishness, may be made to us the wisdom of **GOD** and the power of **GOD** unto salvation. To him who can humble human reason; who can stain the pride of all glory; to him who can bring the creature to take his place at the foot of divine sovereignty, let us ascribe all power, praise and dominion, now and ever. **AMEN.**

S E R M O N I V.

The wicked desire not the presence and ways of
G O D.

J O B, XXI. 14, 15.

*Therefore they say unto God, depart from us ; for
we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

*What is the Almighty that we should serve him ?
And what profit should we have, if we pray
unto him ?*

THE certainty and nature of human depravity have been formerly considered.* After the most strict examination of men's affections and actions, it will appear that their supreme love is withdrawn from God, and placed on themselves, and on the objects of the world, as the means or instruments of self-exaltation, and that hence come all the crimes that burden the earth ;—all the sins, by which those who have power in their hands, are bearing down the weak and oppressed, thus treasuring up wrath for

* See vol. I. page 95.

themselves, although they consider it not, against the day of wrath ;—all the impiety against GOD, opposition to the pure spirit and practice of the gospel, and unkindness and injustice to men, which have been and still continue prevalent in in the earth.

IT hath been found by experience, that no cause, short of the Almighty power and grace of GOD, can remove this depravity from the soul. Every human expedient hath been tried and found ineffectual to remove evil dispositions from the heart. Instruction will not do it ; neither will fear and a promise of rewards. If men are left without government, they will create the worst hell that can be on earth ; or institute government, in order to suppress one kind of crimes, another will spring up. Party will throw society into a state of altercation, and a multitude of oppressions, and inequitable things, and iniquities, for which men can never justify themselves before the bar of GOD, will be established by law.

CIVILIZATION, on which the present deluded age, hath so much depended, will not alter the moral qualities of men's hearts and actions ; and the most which this can do, is to give a more specious appearance to crimes, and better accommodate the principles of depravity to the taste of those who call themselves refined.

IT therefore becomes an unavoidable conclusion, that there is no cure for a depraved heart, but the sanctifying grace of GOD. And in order to convince ourselves of the need of a Saviour, and of an experimental acquaintance with GOD, by the renewing of our hearts ; we ought to obtain the most just ideas, which are possible for us, what effects do actually follow from a withdrawalment of our supreme affections from GOD,

and placing them on ourselves and on the things of the world, as the objects of self-advancement. If we look on the world, the whole which can be seen, is a picture both of the cause and of the effect ; except so far as there is a divine restraint, or as some have by grace received a new heart, which leads them to a different practice. We have in the word of GOD, many pictures of that depravity, which overspreads the soul, drawn with an exactness, which testifies the omniscience of the Divine Inspirer.—Of these our text is one.

THE verses which precede the text, are a description of prosperous iniquity. In innumerable instances, GOD suffers those who have no love and no piety, to be greatly prospered, that there may be living evidence, how sinners, who have withdrawn their hearts from him, will conduct in this world. This prosperity of the wicked is described, together with its consequences in their conduct. “ They send forth their little ones like a flock and their children dance. 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.” This is too true a picture, of what we daily see verified, in innumerable instances of those, who are made prosperous by the providence of GOD. While they think themselves favored and are exalted with the pride of condition, GOD meaneth not to show them any particular favor ; but only to place them in a condition, where they may show that they have hearts worthy of his condemnation.

WHAT multitudes there are in this case in the world, who think themselves most honored, and most favored ; and are still the most exposed of mankind.

ANOTHER consequence, of being placed in this state, is mentioned in our text. "Therefore they say unto GOD depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him ? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him ?" There are three things here mentioned as belonging to the character of sinful persons, which shall be particularly considered ; and they are found in all, whose hearts are not renewed by divine grace. But they are eminently found, according to the description in the context, in those persons, who have been much indulged by GOD with temporal advantages ; yet they have not loved and served him.

I. THEY do not chuse the presence and ways of GOD.

II. THEY call in question his right to require their service.

III. ON their own principles, they see no pleasure or profit in prayer, and the other services of religion ; but consider them as useless, and that those, who are much devoted to these duties, are laboring under some enthusiastic mistake.

I. THEY do not chuse the presence and ways of GOD. "They say unto GOD depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

NOTHING can be more terrible, in contemplation, to those who delight in themselves and in the world supremely, than it is to think of the divine presence and providence. These are their dread, and they dislike even to be informed that

there is an all-present Jehovah, and a providence directing all events.

THE essential presence of God is in every place and cannot be escaped ; and it is utterly in vain, with respect to this, to say unto him, depart from us. If we ascend up into heaven he is there ; or if we make our bed in hell, he is there also. If we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea ; even there shall his hand lead us, and his right hand shall hold us. But I conceive, that by saying to him, depart from us, and that we desire not the knowledge of his ways, is meant putting away all consideration of his perfections that are present with us, and of his providence. And it is thus in all the sinful. They do not like to remember and to retain his perfections in constant view. The perfections of God are his infinite and holy nature. Through the weakness of our manner of conceiving, our apprehensions cannot reach to the infinite fulness of his adorable nature ; but we apprehend him composed of parts, in their nature separable, as we are obliged to do, even the creatures, which are infinitely less than he is. These parts apprehended by us, we call the perfections of God ; and they are his character, as it can be conceived by creatures. From these perfections the sinful desire to depart, or never seriously and feelingly to contemplate them. The justice of an infinite mind fills them with dread. His righteousness assures them that they are exposed to his displeasure. His truth threatens them, that unless they turn from their ways, they must come under an everlasting punishment. His infinite holiness and rectitude form a character that is altogether disagreeable. His power and knowledge, whereby he is able to fulfil his own holy counsels, are alarming perfections,

when found in a GOD whose purposes, counsels and laws they do not like.

IT is true, that the goodness and mercy of the Lord, are contemplated with a kind of pleasure by the sinful ; but then it is a goodness modified and exercised on their own principles. It is a goodness that speaks peace to men, while following the devices of their own hearts, and without turning from sin to holiness. When we describe mercy and goodness, acting in concert with the truth and justice of GOD ; or as being the same with his holiness ; and that mercy can reach only to those, who are in temper conformed to the divine rectitude, and who delight in obeying the law ; then even the mercy of GOD is disagreeable. Sinful men, while governed by the natural principles of their hearts, will always put GOD at a distance, and think of him, and realize his presence, and their accountableness, rarely as possible. They will be greatly disturbed with those dispensations, which give them a lively sense of his holy nature and providence. They will dislike that scheme of doctrine, which displays those perfections, even though it offer salvation ; for the salvation is not of a nature to be liked. Every means will be used, to quiet the mind in a forgetfulness of the supreme, infinite and holy nature of GOD. That religious instruction, which brings him into view, will by such be thought too particular, or too much filled with terror. As they do not chuse to think of coming before GOD in judgment ; so neither is it pleasing, to have his perfections made real to them on earth. We must not impute the uneasiness of sinful men, at the thought of coming before GOD in judgment, wholly to their fear of the consequences. Although this may be a principal reason, there is also a dislike of his pre-

fence—a dislike of his perfections, and it gives them pain to see him. The infinite object of view is not pleasing—not beautiful and glorious in their sight; but entirely the contrary. *They say unto God depart from us.* They say the same to his providence, when considered as a means of displaying him; to his word, in which his character, and counsels are described; to his law which is a picture of his rectitude; to the true doctrines of the gospel, which bring his holy nature into view more clearly than the law; to his ministers, who are faithful in representing his holy counsels and requirements. Indeed it is impossible, that the unholy part of mankind, should feel pleased with the faithful preaching of the gospel. Through the terrors of natural conscience, they may be restrained, and may be rationally convinced, that it is best for them to hear the truth; still they do not love the truth, because it displays God before them. It is very natural to transfer these ill feelings, which begin against the truth itself, to the persons of those who are the instruments of declaring it. The man is not fit for an instructor, who doth not see this, and hath not Christian fortitude to meet these things, with a thorough composure of mind, and determination from a regard to the honor of CHRIST, and a love to the souls of others, that he will do his duty, through the assisting grace of GOD. He must be willing to spend and be spent that he may honor God and save the souls of others. He must be willing to go through good report and evil report; through pains as well as pleasures; through revilings and the imputation of every base motive, as well as approbation; and all this in the spirit of CHRIST, who said, Father forgive them, they know not what they do. And if at any time they meet

approbation and success ; then let them be careful to humble themselves more low than at other times, and give all the glory of success to the efficiency of the Spirit of God.

2dly. DEPRAVED and unholy sinners, do not like to have the providence of GOD, made real to their apprehensions, and in this respect they say to him, "depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

THE providence of GOD is the display or acting out of his counsels and his most holy nature ; and if the latter be disagreeable, the former cannot be pleasing. It is impossible that any one should be pleased with the execution of those counsels, which are disagreeable to the mind, in their nature, tendency and end. We do not, generally, find a very sensible desire for things or for changes, which are known to be impossible ; but if they could become possible, we might very sensibly desire them. It is thus, in unholy minds, with respect to the providence of GOD.

FURTHER, they may think themselves pleased with the truth of a general divine providence, and the reasons, at the same time, may be a dread of having no providence. They know that they cannot govern the universe, the world and the times and seasons, by their own power and wisdom, and dread the want of any providence whatever ; lest they should cease to exist, or lose those desirable bounties which they have hitherto enjoyed. If they could govern by their own providence, this would be immediately chosen, and they would put GOD from his place. This with what was before observed, that men do not so visibly desire what they know to be utterly impossible, are the reasons why there are not more sensible repinings against the general pro-

vidence of a most holy God. All this is no certain proof that men are pleased with the doctrine of a divine providence. There are, in the case of every man, particular providences, which are disagreeable; and if there be a humble submission under these, on the principle, that God is holy and hath a right to reign in the excellency of his power and truth, this is the best evidence of a sincere acquiescence in the principles of a general providence. Still it cannot be, that unholy men should sincerely rejoice, in the providence of a God who is glorious in holiness. This may be determined by reasoning from the nature of holiness and unholiness; for considered as opposites, they cannot be united in aims, views, desires and pleasures. Experience also evinceth, that sinners do not delight in the scriptural ideas of a supreme and universal providence. The scheme of infinite counsel is disagreeable in speculation, and must be more so in execution. Hence come revilings of the divine plan; objections against its fitness; and irreligious doubts of the whole scheme of truth. Hence come impatience with the special dispensations of God, and the most refractory spirit of opposition when he crosses their desires, or in sovereignty removes their earthly pleasures. Being without reverence and love, they say unto God, we do not desire the sight of thy perfections, nor the ways of thy providence.

DOUBTLESS, many, who are un sanctified, will think this to be a hard and unjustifiable charge, and do not feel conscious that they say thus to God. This arises from not knowing and observing themselves, and honestly comparing their present exercises, and the nature of their governing principles, with the sacred rules of piety. Nor do they see to what length, their little be-

ginning uneasiness with the providence of GOD would run, if they were not restrained by a sense of present interest, or the fear of judgment to come, or the special orderings of a wise GOD to keep their depraved principles within some bounds. In the manner I have mentioned, the truth of the first proposition appears, that depraved men do not chuse the presence and ways of GOD.

II. SINFUL and depraved men call in question GOD's right to require their service.

THEY say, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him?" The progress of a sinful temper, and its growing influence to blind the understanding and to sear the conscience, is wonderful. There is a natural conscience in men, which in the first part of the career of iniquity is a great restraint. They sin tremblingly—they sin against principles of duty—against acknowledged doctrines of belief—and seem, for a season to retain a sense of the awful end to which they are coming, and tremble from a sense of their own opposition to conscience and known truth.

THIS progress of sin, in its reign over the mind, deserves to be delineated with a more accurate pen than the writer possesses; but a sense of insufficiency shall not prevent some observations on this part of the subject.

THAT natural conscience, which, although it be not sanctified by the grace of GOD, is at first tender and easily affected; afterward becomes hard, secure and difficult to be approached. In the beginning of a sinner's life, and while he is young, conscience is easily susceptible of impressions both of obligation and of danger. Nature

and the condition of human life are so constituted by an all wise Author, as to make this a proper state, for the recovering of sinners from their folly. When they sin in early youth, it is generally against a sense of obligation. The mind trembles to review its own folly; and on being accused, after a short season of stubbornness, it will own the right of God and men to command, and on its own principles, reformation and obedience are promised. There is a stubbornness, which is loth to yield; but the sense of a right in God to command, and of duty to obey, is not lost. Appetite on one hand, and natural conscience or the sense of right and wrong on the other, reign by turns. But as disobedience and sins are repeated, conscience becomes stupified—a sense of the magnitude of crimes is lost—the presence, and right of God to be obeyed, go out of sight—and an apprehension of the turpitude and danger of sin is lost.

2dly. By the progress in sin, which hath been described, the way is prepared for a deep security and for abounding in crimes which dishonor God and disturb men. In this state a very great number of men are found. They have sinned away the tender sense of conscience, and the early impressions of a good education. Have departed from the fear of the Lord, and become quiet in transgression. Some in this case will commit every kind of sin, as passion, temptation and opportunity prompt. Others, through motives of interest and reputation, are kept from this; yet they are altogether unfeeling and careless. They are going into the presence of God and an endless eternity, wholly insensible of their own moral character—of their own hearts—of the duties they have omitted—of the consequences which are to take place on their opening

their eyes in the eternal world—and of the dread, dismay and sense of folly, which will crowd on their minds and fill them with eternal sorrow. Such minds are prepared for the next step in the progress of sin.

3dly. If when brought to this case, they are challenged by the law of GOD for their conduct, they can without blushing, either in direct words or what implies it, say, “What is the Almighty that we should serve him?”—It is probable, that such persons rarely think of obligation or of danger; but when they do, they deny the rights of GOD. Of the law they say, if perfect holiness be its meaning, it is a hard commandment; for such purity, such consecration of ourselves to him, in all cases; such weanedness from the world and all its pleasures, cannot be expected from mere men. Of the gospel they say, if it requires such spirituality of affections and practice, it is a hard way of receiving mercy. Thus the mind rises against the divine rights to direct and give a law of duty, in every case; and against the obligation of men to be ever obedient and submit their own will to the sovereign determination of heaven.

I AM sensible that this looks to many, like a high formed description, of the common evil disposition of the secure. They think it hard to accuse them of saying, “What is the Almighty that we should serve him?” But this is practically done, by every one, who neglects obedience to the law and gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. This is done, when men either dispute or doubt the system of counsel, which he hath revealed; or when they deny the reasonableness of Christian doctrines, or the reasonableness and possibility of Christian practice. Sins, which are high in their nature, aggravated in

their circumstances, and awful in their consequences, often appear small to those who commit them ; because they find much company in the paths of disobedience. Also, this often happens from the delay of a threatened punishment. “ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men, is fully set in them to do evil.” This also happens from being filled with a selfish spirit ; for those who are thus filled and governed, will not look on the interests of a universe, as comparable in value, with their own interests ; so that they will feel concerning God, the great and the eternal guardian of universal right and happiness, “ Who is he ? what is he ? and what is his cause that we should serve him ?”

THERE are great numbers ; who, in feeling and practice, adopt this impious sentiment. Persons in this disbelief and unholiness, are to be found in every grade of society—among every class of men—and indeed they include the whole numerous class of disbelieving people, and un-sanctified and ungodly livers in the world.

IN comparing ourselves with others, we often form a false estimate of our guilt, and of the atrocity of our sins against a holy-lawgiver, and a holy and most merciful Saviour. Many would tremble to be open blasphemers and avowed infidels ; they would allow themselves to be worthy of all execration, if they were of this character ; but still, let us see whether, beheld in the glass of the law of God, they are any better. They do not blaspheme, neither do they worship ; they do not violate the Sabbath by riotous commotion in the streets, but they spend the day in their own houses in idleness or sleep, without praise, prayer, or the worship of God in any kind. They do not openly affront those who wish to seek,

serve and praise the Lord; but they either think not at all or suppose that such precision in the duties of religion is unnecessary and useless. They are willing that others should enjoy their own opinions, if it may be so, that they never are troubled with exhortations to be thoughtful, praying and pious people, and thus they risk their eternity. If the subjects of religion are urged upon them, any further than this, they say, "What is the Almighty that we should obey him?"—All this is the natural consequence of that pride and selfishness, which are in the depraved heart of man, until removed by the sovereign and sanctifying grace of God. Hence comes every sin in thought, word and deed, with which the world is filled—all the impiety, stupidity, worldliness and disregard to divine laws and institutions, that are apparent in the general conduct of mankind. The whole began in an alienation of the heart from God, and progresses to an open contention with his power and holiness. And this spirit of opposition so strangely closes the eyes of those who are under its power, that they do not see the danger and inevitable ruin of their condition.

III. SINFUL and depraved men, after they have become deeply fixed in impiety, see no pleasure and profit in prayer, and the other services of religion; but consider them as useless. They think that those who are much devoted to these duties, labor under some enthusiastic or superstitious mistake, and are giving themselves needless trouble. "And what profit should we have if we pray unto him?"

ALTHOUGH they find the duties of prayer and worship directed in the word of God, and are obliged to own the reasonableness of the injunc-

tion ; notwithstanding this, on their own principles, they can see no profit in the service.

1. THEY cannot expect that GOD will hear them, if they ask for things agreeable to their own hearts. If they ask to be delivered from the obligation of the law—to have an indulgence in sin, and to devote themselves to the pleasures and interests of time ; there is no room to think that such requests will be granted. Indeed, with the doctrinal knowledge, that men generally possess, it must be high presumption to wish such things from GOD, in the solemn form of prayer, or under the appearance of devotion. Even wicked men, with all the impiety of their hearts, would allow this to be folly and presumption.

2dly. BUT we will consider this part of the subject in another point of view.

MEN generally estimate profit by pleasure. Those labors and services, which afford them pleasure, they think to be profitable ; and those which give them no pleasure, to be unprofitable. This is not a new rule of judging, but one that hath reigned among men, from the beginning. Awakened sinners who have no reason to think that they love GOD, may still suppose their attendance on seasons of worship, and the duty of prayer, is profitable to them ; but this idea is entirely from the pleasure they find, in hoping they may be thus delivered from a danger in prospect, with which they are terrified. Take an unawakened sinner, who hath no apprehension of danger from the divine wrath—who hath no sense of divine holiness, no feeling of an opposition between the law and his own heart ; and he will not think that there is any profit in praying to GOD. The reason of this is, that he hath no pleasure in the duty. There is every possible circumstance, to render prayer a displeasing ser-

vice to secure and unholy sinners. I now speak of such prayer as God enjoins, and as appears in the devotional seasons of pious people. It is true, that in accommodation to the manners of the people with whom they dwell, they may bear with the visible performance of the duty at certain times, on the same principles that they would join in any other social entertainment. But the fervent prayer of a godly soul—the humble confession of a penitent heart—the earnest entreaty of forgiveness uttered by one who feels himself sinking, and justly sinking to everlasting misery—the feeling supplication for grace, and light, and strength to be communicated from JESUS CHRIST—the expressions of triumphant praise, offered by the children of GOD to him, in hours of communion, and when the light of his countenance is granted them : these prayers and praises have no beauty in the sight of a secure and unholy sinner. He takes no pleasure, and therefore finds no profit in them, as profit is estimated by all such persons. It is therefore true, that there is every possible circumstance, to make prayer an unpleasant duty to an unholy and secure sinner. It brings GOD into his sight, in whose character and ways he hath no pleasure.—It reminds him of a law and of a moral obligation, which he wishes to forget.—It admonishes him of a disagreeable dependance on the providence and grace of a sovereign GOD ; and dependance is always disagreeable to a depraved mind.—It awakens conscience, that enemy within the sinner's own breast, which gives him more trouble than all the other preachers of religion ; for from others he can either fly or not permit them to approach him, but from conscience there is no fleeing away.—Prayer brings into his recollection the precepts and

duties of a holy life ; the need of a great preparation to meet God in peace ; and the certainty of death and an eternal judgment. All these are considerations which render prayer a displeasing, and therefore in the opinion of sinners, an unprofitable duty.

IT appears, by attention to the subject, that the several parts of the description in the text, are naturally joined together. Proud and selfish sinners, while they remain of that temper, cannot love the presence and ways of God. When his character, ways and presence are disliked, they will deny his right to rule, and will neglect his worship ; and all this is verified in the practice and appearance of a sinful world. Many important inferences arise from this subject.

I. ALL men need a change of heart to make them obedient and happy.

THOSE who appear to be smaller sinners, according to worldly rules of estimation, do as really need a change of heart, as others who are apparently the greatest. Although there be degrees of aggravation in iniquity, yet all sin is of the same immoral nature ; comes from the same heart of alienation from God, and hath a tendency to the same consequences. Those who have, by any cause whatever, been restrained, are prone to think, that as they have not committed the grossest of crimes, they do not need a change of heart. They will allow that some greater sinners than themselves, may need to be renewed ; but in themselves they cannot see the need. The young man in the gospel, who said to CHRIST, “ what lack I yet ? ” would doubtless have allowed that some others lacked much ;

but he did not see his own wants. Many are blinded in the same manner.

THE subject we have considered shows the genuine tendency of sin. There is a progression in evil principles and practice; but all sin is of the same nature, and if not restrained, leads to the same consequences. The sin of one, who appears to be less vicious, is of the same nature, morally considered, as of one who appears more vicious, and there needs the same change of heart to take away the reigning power of sin, and produce a beginning conformity to GOD. On these principles, it remaineth true of every man, that except he be born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, every man, when he sees his own heart truly, is willing to confess he is the chief of sinners. He may be sensible, that GOD hath preserved him from crimes, into which others have fallen; at the same time, he sees the heart, the reigning nature of sin, which must be taken away to escape the death of another world. The only prayer which he can honestly make, is, GOD be merciful to me the greatest of sinners. This doubting of the need of a changed heart, is a most perfect proof, that men are ignorant of themselves. None have ever seen themselves in the light of the divine law, who doubt the words of CHRIST, that all men must be born again. And doubting of that doctrine, not only shows great ignorance of themselves, but also, great deadness of conscience. Indeed, denying this moral corruption of human nature, is virtually denying the need of a gospel, and all the principal doctrines of divine revelation, which distinguish the Christian scheme, from the religious belief of the rest of mankind.

2. THE subject shows us the hateful and dangerous nature of the immoral principles, which are found in every heart, until removed by the sanctifying grace of God.

THEY make a complete separation between the Creator and his creatures—between the king and his subjects—the Lord and his servants. Although he be infinitely excellent, they shun his presence. When he hath all possible right to command, and their own happiness depends on obeying, they say, “What is the Almighty that we should obey him?” Worship is but a fit acknowledgment of the excellency of his nature and of his divine rights; and this also is denied. Give scope to the principles of an immoral heart, and they would terminate in nothing short of universal misery, and every thing would be done to break up society, destroy divine and human rights, and render universal being a scene of misery. Sin is therefore exceeding sinful, and the more God is opposed to it, the more glorious, excellent and adorable, we ought to esteem his infinite nature. God’s opposition to sin, for which the unholy hate to have him rule over them, is the very thing which makes his character lovely, and renders him worthy to reign. His infinite power and knowledge, if they were not joined with a holy rectitude, would make him an object to be infinitely dreaded. Without infinite power and knowledge, he could not have created a universe of intelligent creatures; and unless he had holiness to direct his power and knowledge, existence, under his government, would have been worse than never to have had a being. This shows the principles of sin to be hateful and dangerous; and while happiness is sought by the sinner, his principles of gaining

it, would banish from the universe all peace but his own.

3. THE subject teaches why it is so difficult to make men prayerful.

WE know that this duty is generally neglected by those who have not piety. Many neglect even the public worship of God, or make their attendance wholly subservient to their worldly interests and pleasures.—Many who do attend on the public Sabbath worship, seem to conceive the service rather as a season of amusement and of conformity to the customs of society, than as an opportunity for devotion. Of many who sometimes attend the sanctuary, it is known that they do not pray in the family, and there is every reason to think that they wholly neglect the duties of the closet. All this confirms the remark, that it is difficult to make men prayerful. If they could be brought to a regular and serious observance of the duty of prayer, without the spirit of ostentation and self-righteousness, it becomes probable that their attendance on all other religious duties would follow. Our subject shows the reason of this difficulty. Prayer makes them serious, and this they do not like.—Prayer warns them of their guilt and of their dependence, and this they do not like. Prayer sets God and eternity before them, and gives a voice to their sleeping consciences, and shows them that they are sinners, and these things they do not like; so that it is not strange they are prayerless persons.

FROM this subject it also follows, that the regular attendance on or neglect of the duty of prayer, is one of the best evidences of the state of men's hearts. We are often called upon for

rules, by which men may know, whether or not they are the children of GOD and forgiven in CHRIST JESUS. There is no difficulty in finding rules of trial; but the difficulty is in applying them faithfully. Those rules are the most safe for common use, which admit the most easy practical application; and none is more so, than the delightful practice or habitual neglect of the duty we are now considering. It cannot be thought, that those who never pray are good people; or that those who only join in the sanctuary service, and neglect every other kind of prayer are pious. As it is impossible to make those forget each other, whose hearts are joined in tender affections; so those who love GOD, will delight to converse with him. But if they do not delight to converse with him, they are not his friends. Thus a delight in praying to GOD, or a neglect of the duty, becomes a rule of easy practical application, whether or not we be Christians. If this rule were faithfully applied, many who feel easy, and go on in worldly joy, without any sense of danger, would find themselves condemned.

To conclude; all who read this, who have in time past, thought lightly of the universal depravity of men, and of the need of being renewed by the Spirit of GOD, are supplicated to review the subject and consider its interesting nature. If such should happen to be mistaken in their former notions, and when they come into the immediate presence of GOD, should find an opposition to him and his kingdom, which they have not thought; how dreadful would the consequence be? And especially how dreadful to make a discovery of this, at an hour too late to amend the mistake? The loss must be their own; but every benevolent heart must, at present, mourn and weep over such instances of delusion. Now is

the time to pray and weep over sinners, not knowing whether GOD may give them life; but when the scene is closed and the day of grace is past, every good mind will say, *true and righteous are thy judgments, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY.*—
AMEN.

S E R M O N V.

The kingdom of God brought nigh to those
who are lost.

LUKE, X. 11, 12.

EVEN the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you ; notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

BUT I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

THE context informs us of some singular and instructive circumstances, in that conversation of CHRIST, with his disciples, which contains our text.

ON these words we may remark,

THAT although the influential Jews made great opposition to the gospel, and finally crucified the Redeemer, it is apparent there was a great disposition to hear in many of the people, and in some from sincere motives. Therefore CHRIST in this discourse told his disciples, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few :

pray ye therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." This passage, at least intimates that there were many attentive to the important things of religion.

THE prophecy of Daniel, in the ninth chapter of his book, in describing this period of Christ's life, together with his death, predicts the same. "And after three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week. This means seven, or a week of years, and is to be counted from the beginning of his public ministry. In the midst of this week of years, or three years and an half after the commencement of his public ministration, he was cut off by death. It is said that through this whole week of years, he should confirm the covenant with many. This is a prediction that there should be an uncommon outpouring of the Spirit of God, in that period, whereby many would be brought to an holy obedience. This CHRIST intimated when he said, *The harvest truly is great*, and after Messiah was cut off, and the pentecostal days commenced, there is the best evidence that there was a great ingathering of true converts to the Church of CHRIST. It therefore appears, that although CHRIST was in this period put to death, the words of the text were spoken, at a time of revival in religion. To those, who opposed in such a day, he taught his ministers to say, "Notwith-

standing be ye sure of this, that the kindom of God is come nigh unto you.”

Remark 2. At this time CHRIST was careful to multiply the number of his teachers, that those who had a disposition to hear might have an opportunity for instruction. Now the seventy were appointed, and sent through all the land of Judea; to teach them the advent of a Saviour, and salvation through his grace and merits.—Of all matters, which experience teaches, it is one most clearly evinced by the general history of the Church, that the Father of divine influences, at particular seasons, seems to be nearer to his Church than at others. What his reasons are for this mode of dispensation, it is not my present duty to describe. The fact, ascertained by experience, is enough to gain our belief, that in such seasons of an out-poured spirit, there is a general attention in a multitude of minds—many are deeply convinced of sin—and divine grace appears more freely to meet, sanctify and comfort the enquiring.—Such seasons of extraordinary grace, have been found in every age of the Christian Church, and many places in New-England, may esteem the present day, to be of this kind.—The Lord grant that the present outpouring of his spirit may extend through our nation and through the world! If CHRIST, in such a day, was careful to increase the means of instruction, it teaches all his ministers to be instant, in season and out of season, to warn the careless, to teach the trembling, and guide the steps of young believers into the paths of habitual holiness and peace. When the Spirit of God is poured out on the minds of the people, there will be a disposition to hear, and collections for prayer and praise will be multiplied.—Nor is it strange, that in such a day, those who

have no belief of experimental religion, and whose minds are left in carelessness, the probable presage of eternal death, should think that others are overdoing in the visible duties of religion, and even be irritated by seeing them spend those hours in prayer and praise, which would be more agreeably spent by themselves in the festivities of a careless and unholy life. Still this ought to be no objection, in the way of serious people and faithful ministers, against multiplying seasons of devotion. The hours added to attendance on the worship of God, will be fewer, than those which are saved from courses of thoughtless impiety. If the great Lord of the Church, multiplied the instruments and seasons of instruction, when he saw the harvest to be plentiful and the laborers few; it is an example which should ever be imitated. It ought not to be an impediment, that men of other minds complain; for this will always happen. They have no sense of the worth of their own souls, nor of eternity,—no sense that they are sinners, and need an escape and a Saviour,—no sense that they are sinking down to wrath, or that there is any efficacy in the duties of religious worship. In such cases Christians ought neither to be discouraged nor overawed, nor to revile and contend; but to be humble and more benevolent, and abound in prayer, that the eyes of the blind may be opened.

Remark 3. OUR Divine Instructor directs, what the conduct of those should be, who are faithful to him in such a day as hath been described.

INTO whatsoever house or city they enter, they are to say, “peace be to this house.” Salvation is offered to this house or city. And he says,

“if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it,” and there they were to remain, eating such things as were set before them, and to tell them “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” You now have an offer of forgiveness and salvation. But if any house or city did not receive them, they were to go into the streets and shake off the dust of their feet, as a testimony against them, and as a farewell, to tell them, “notwithstanding, (we depart) be ye sure that the kingdom of God hath come nigh unto you.” Remember that you have had an open and fair offer of eternal life. Shaking off the dust of their feet, as a testimony against them was an ancient custom of rejection, and is an intimation that every circumstance, in nature and providence, will witness against the impenitent. The sum of the direction given to teachers of religion, in this place seems to be this; that they should make an explicit declaration and offer of the truth and of life—declare to men their state—and offer them peace and reconciliation through the blood of CHRIST; but not officiously to follow them, where there was no other prospect, than that of being reviled. Having given open notice of their errand from God, they could do no more; and the rejectors must abide the consequence of their own impiety and unbelief.

Remark 4. THEY were to tell those, who rejected, after so free a call; that it would be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for Sodom than for them.

It ought to be considered, by men in lands of christian knowledge, that sins, against great light and the free call of God, incur a heavy guilt. Sodom and Gomorrah, according to the light they had, were among the most guilty of

mankind, which made them worthy to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, that they might be terrifying examples to mankind; but CHRIST assures us, that those have greater guilt, who sin against the gospel light. We may be more guilty and have a less tolerable state in the world of woe, than those who came to so dreadful an end. The honor of the divine government and the safety of mankind, in those early ages, required a signal vengeance to be inflicted on a people, which were less guilty, than some who now for a season are spared.

AMONG those who become eminently guilty, and will, perhaps, fall the lowest under the wrath of GOD, we may number such, as live in a day when the spirit is remarkably poured out, and they pointedly ridicule and oppose its influence. To such the awful words of CHRIST, seem appropriately to apply; "but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

Remark 5. By the kingdom of GOD being come nigh to them, is meant, that they had enjoyed the best means for obtaining salvation.

IT is a representation of their external advantages being great; but not that their hearts had been wrought upon, in any degree, to make them more susceptible of a love of the truth. People are very prone to judge of the goodness of their hearts, from their advantages; whereas there is no rule more uncertain. The heart often becomes most fixed in sin, when truth shines the brightest; and it is not uncommon for those, who, in respect of privileges, are exalted to heaven, to be brought down to the lowest hell for their misimprovement. In the school

of excellent religious means, men are ripening fast for a great degree of glory or woe; but which of these it shall be, cannot be determined from their advantages. By means, the kingdom of GOD may be brought very nigh to men; while in their disposition and practice they are departing far from it, and making themselves more worthy of death, than if they had never possessed such privileges.

HAVING made some explanatory remarks on the text and context, I shall next consider this particular clause of the text, *Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of GOD is come nigh unto you.*

I. I WILL consider the words, as they respected the Jews, to whom they were originally spoken.

II. As they respect ourselves, who have greater light and advantages for salvation than even the Jews, who saw the miracles and heard the preaching of CHRIST himself.

IT hath pleased infinite wisdom, progressively to open to the world, the system of his government and truth. The whole government of GOD hath been a series of instructing events, which were necessary to follow in succession, as means for bringing the minds of creatures to the most perfect knowledge of the Almighty, of his nature, counsels and glory. Perhaps the scheme of divine truth and of duty, could not have opened more rapidly to the understanding of men; and those seasons, which have appeared to be retrograde in the advance of sacred knowledge, were necessary to be examples of truth already revealed; so that revelation and provi-

dence, acting together, have unfolded divine truth in the most rapid and impressive manner. But men have never lived according to their light. From those to whom little is given, less will be required. For this reason the Heathen are open to condemnation, as they have never lived agreeable to their light. Therefore, the apostle, in describing their character, practice and end, saith, "Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful;—For when the Gentiles, which have not the (revealed) law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves,—their thoughts accusing or else excusing one another."

MANY of mankind have been left in this Gentile state; but these knew enough and sinned enough to condemn them forever, if the Sovereign Judge so please. Compared with such, the state of the Jewish nation was from the first highly privileged, and the kingdom of God was brought nigh unto them, from the early day of their forefathers. To them God revealed himself as the Supreme Jehovah, Creator and Governor of the world; he declared his holiness and whole moral character; gave them a law of practice in heart and life; revealed his merciful intentions and a future propitiation for sin; and announced a judgment and reward to come. Compared with this dispensation all before was darkness. Compared with this, all around them, for many ages, was darkness. Those around them knew enough, if they were disobedient, to condemn them: To these therefore the kingdom of God, comparatively came nigh. They had the nature of personal holiness and sanctification, by which men are prepared for the kingdom of heaven, very clearly revealed to them, and could not

be in ignorance of the moral duty they owed to God and men. These laws were given with evident signs of God's mighty power; they were committed to writing and to public national custody, that they might not be corrupted.—They were not only in the hands of the people, but to be publicly read many times a year before the assembled nation.—There was a national system of worship and instruction, and a whole tribe assigned to these duties. Their temporal, civil, political and domestic regulations were all enjoined, in a particular manner, by God himself; and the whole so framed as to point them daily to religious truth and duty. The very tenure of their lands and all their national prosperity, by the declaration and providence of God, depended on their religious obedience. Through many ages, God was not forgetful of his promises and threatenings; but by the mouths of extraordinary prophets, and a mighty and wonderful providence, he enforced his commands, explained his law, punished disobedience and graciously rewarded their observance of his commandments. In the sight of many generations the whole power, majesty, wisdom and goodness of God seemed to be centred, in bringing truth, a knowledge of himself, and of their own duty, and of eternity into their sight; that thus the kingdom of God might be kept nigh them.

BUT not to be wearisome by mentioning particulars, we will come down to the time in which CHRIST lived.

THIS people with all these things before them, in their law and in the history of their nation, had the additional advantage to behold the bright rising of the Sun of Righteousness with their own eyes. The Messiah was promised, and they had, for a considerable time, expect-

ted his appearance. The manner of his birth, life and death ; his character, works and doctrines ; his appearance, and the manner of his kingdom, were all foretold. There was divinity in his appearance, works and doctrines. The heavenly life seemed to be brought down to earth, in his good words and actions. He taught them as no man had taught—spake of the Father like one come down from him ; and of eternity, like one who knew its awful solemnities and blessed praises. He called to repentance and a holy life, and enforced all his words, by the argument of rewards to be pronounced, before the bar of GOD. He offered them a free forgiveness on the reasonable conditions of repentance towards GOD, faith in him, and a holy obedience to the laws of his kingdom. Who can deny, that the kingdom of GOD was brought nigh to this people, and that they had a fair offer of eternal life? Nothing but their own hearts of love to the world, opposition to GOD, and a dislike of his holy law, could prevent them from entering into the life of glory.

PERHAPS those who read will think, of what avail to us is all this long account of Jewish privileges? They lived and died for themselves, and how are we interested in their privileges or end? Much every way. All this truth is for us ; to instruct, to warn and to make us tremble for ourselves, if we are impenitent. When the Heathen, not having the written law, were a law unto themselves, and had sufficient knowledge to condemn them to eternal death, if it should be the pleasure of GOD ; how much more justly condemned, and how much more miserable must these Jews be, to come so nigh to the kingdom of GOD, and not enter in? Think on the compar-

ison of advantages, and the aggravated guilt of the latter, and then carry the comparison much further as it ought to be with respect to us, and ask what will be the guilt and woe of an inconsiderate sinner, dying from the midst of christian light? What a wonderful scale of increasing guilt here comes into sight! As the unbelieving Jew was above the Heathen in privileges; so far he sinks below him in guilt and in misery, which is its fruit and reward. As the Christian rises higher in privileges than the blinded, rejecting Jew; so will he sink to the lowest state of misery, when justice is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet. Such are eminently those, of whom CHRIST said, to whom much is given, from them much will be required. The subject therefore is much to us, in every point of view that it can be considered. At whatever time we hear Jewish privileges described, we ought to be reminded of our own higher advantages—our greater danger from impiety—and our deeper guilt if we reject the grace of GOD by resisting his Holy Spirit.

II. BUT I was to consider the words, “Notwithstanding, be ye sure, that the kingdom of GOD is come nigh unto you,” with particular application to ourselves. On this part of the subject, we ought to read with great candor and seriousness. Being accustomed to remember the Jews as the crucifiers of Christ, we conceive them as murderers of the most guilty character; and forget our own sin in the enormity of their crime, in the exemplary vengeance inflicted on their nation, and in the propensity to self-exculpation, which is found in all men. Let it be remembered that I am not exculpating Jews, but more highly crminating men, who have

Christian means of knowledge, with disobedient hearts and unholy lives.

FURTHER, by not attending to the nature of the human mind, and of sinful principles in the heart, we are prone to think, there was an efficacy in the means, which GOD used with the Jews, superior to any in the means which we enjoy. Abraham told the tormented sinner, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Still he said, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham answered, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." So, we are disposed to think, that because the Jews saw the Son of GOD in the flesh, and heard his words and beheld his mighty works, their advantages for repentance were greater than our own; and therefore, that the kingdom of GOD was brought nearer to them than to us. But all this is false reasoning; and the opinion arises from an ignorance of our own hearts, and of the malignity of sin against GOD.—The surprize, which is wrought by the sight of miracles, is not the exercise of holiness in the heart. That conviction of truth which comes from seeing mighty works, may terrify natural conscience, for a season; but hath no power to produce sincere humility and obedience. When the impulse of terror hath ceased, wicked appetites will lead the sinner to all manner of impiety and crimes. Thus the Jews who saw the mighty works of CHRIST, crucified him, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save."

THE mighty works of CHRIST and his apostles, were not designed to change the hearts of men; but to give evidence of the truth, and in

this sense they were means to the Jews. Also, in this sense they are means as effectual for us, as for those who actually beheld with their eyes, the works of Almighty power. If by the means of knowledge and evidence of the truth, the kingdom of God came nigh to the Jews, how much nigher to us? All that knowledge is communicated to us which was contained in their law and prophets; all which arose from the instituted rites and ordinances of their worship; all which could be attained by attending to the singular dispensations of providence in mercy and judgment to their people, for many ages. We may look back on these sources of information, with as much certainty as the Jew himself. The means of their instruction are also ours, and in most cases, those very means shine more luminously on our understandings. For an instance, the sacrificial worship of the Jews, gives to us more instruction, than it could give them; because the type hath received its accomplishment, in the efficacious sacrifice of CHRIST; and to view the type and antitype in connection, makes either of them more instructive than it could be when seen alone. *Even the type gives more instruction to us than it did to the ancient Church. Also the writings of the prophets, by having been in part fulfilled, with a wonderful agreement between the letter of prediction and the event; and having been explained by the evangelical writers, are more instructive to us than to them.

WITH regard to the life, works and death of CHRIST, events which happened in ocular view of the Jews, our evidence of these is greater than theirs. We can look on those events without that kind of party passion which filled them. We may look on the whole scene in connection—

on the whole scheme as ordered by divine wisdom. Succeeding events have illustrated the wisdom of GOD in those which preceded, and a sight of divine wisdom in the plan, is evidence of its truth.

THE evidence that hath arisen for the divinity and truth of CHRIST, since his death and ascension, by the explanation that hath been given of the gospel scheme; by the success of the gospel; and by the special orderings of a divine providence, is perhaps as great as all which anteceded; especially this will appear to be the case, when we consider it in connection with what went before.

FURTHER, the gospel, or evangelical writings of the new testament, have opened the mystery, that was hid from preceding ages, in the counsel of GOD; and have showed its whole consistency, beauty and truth. The ancient Church knew a propitious and sin-forgiving GOD; we know the very manner and means by which GOD forgives sin gloriously for himself, through the atonement of CHRIST and sanctification by the Spirit. They, by the promise of GOD, knew and believed in a Saviour to come; but knew nothing how this glorious character would be formed. To us is known the wonderful formation of the Mediator's character, by the union of his divine and human natures, whereby his sufficiency both to atone and apply salvation, appears to be infinite. The scheme of gospel doctrine, shows how mercy and truth have met together—how GOD is just in justifying the ungodly—how we became entitled to justifying grace, and must prove to ourselves our own gracious acceptance with GOD. Also, there is here a more clear revelation of the final event of GOD's present government in the kingdom of grace—the certainty

and process of a judgment day—and the eternal rewards of the children of men, according to their different characters.

THE providence of GOD in spreading the truth; in protecting and governing the Church; in defeating the designs of his enemies by turning their counsels into foolishness, and making their enmity beneficial to his cause and friends; in giving patience to his people and saving them from impending dangers; and in fulfilling the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail. The providence of GOD in all these things, for so many ages as have intervened since the time of CHRIST, is a confirming evidence of the truth. All this is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes, and proves that the Christian cause is protected by GOD.

THE fulfilment of prophecies, which are every where intermixed with scriptural doctrines and precepts, both confirms and explains the whole. By all the increase of knowledge, and of evidence for the truth, the kingdom of GOD is brought nigh unto us.

ON this part of the subject, we are further to consider, that we are delivered from that bondage of rites and burdensome ceremonies, which were imposed on the ancient Church; and in the place of these, have an instituted service that is plain and solemn, containing truth in substance and not in shadows. The simplicity of our religious rites, tends to simplify and give clear and precise ideas of the truth. By improvement in science and in modes of instruction, we are highly privileged above ancient Churches. By the multitude and facility of the means of instruction, doctrinal light is diffused among all who do not chuse to put it away. The Sabbath,

the public means of teaching that are become habitual in our land, the pulpit and the press furnish doctrinal knowledge to the ignorant, and practical rules of duty to all who wish for obedience. GOD's holy word, is not now slowly transcribed by the pen of a heavy writer, but copies are so expeditiously multiplied, that it may be read by every man, woman and child, in every condition of life. O how great a privilege, have all the people, in being thus enabled to resort immediately to the fountain of truth ! In most Christian lands, so great a number can read for themselves, as precludes the possibility of imposition by the fraud of designing instructors.

THESE are our privileges ! And is not the kingdom of GOD brought nigh to us ? Are we not exalted to heaven in respect of means to know and do our duty ? What could GOD have done more for us ? And is there any thing in the way of our salvation, but our own sluggish and opposing hearts ? Ah ! these hearts are enough, even with all our means, to sink us to eternal death, if the efficacious and sanctifying grace of GOD doth not interpose, to give us new hearts, a knowledge of JESUS, experimentally, and that sight of his glory which comes from loving him.

I HAVE mentioned some of the advantages, which are had by Christian nations of the present age ; yet how few who live where the light shines and the gospel is taught, do by their lives show themselves to be followers of the Lamb of GOD ? How many, who are utterly thoughtless, making no account of GOD's Sabbaths, his word and the means of instruction ! How many who visit the sanctuary through habit,

either to sleep, to see or be seen ! How many who never go near the house of GOD, and after the indolence of nature, when not excited by some immediate worldly concern, is fatiated with sleep, pass the remainder of the day worse than in sleeping ! How many formalists in their service, with whose lips and hands the heart is never joined ! How many, O awful to tell ! are sunk into the deepest infidelity concerning the truth ! All these, living and disobeying in the midst of light, shall receive a heavy damnation !

I CANNOT justly finish this subject, without calling the reader's attention to that wonderful outpouring of GOD's spirit, which hath happened at the present time. Many congregations have been graciously visited, and a multitude of souls have been made first to fear, and then to rejoice. In the first part of this discourse it was mentioned, that such seasons, in which divine grace appears to be peculiarly near, have been found in many ages of the Church. Happy are those who partake in them ; but unhappy, unhappy indeed ! are those who live in the midst of such demonstrations of divine grace and power, only to disbelieve, oppose and shut their eyes. To such the kingdom of God hath come near in the highest sense, and they have put it away. They have said, we will not enter in ; and some have endeavored to hinder others, who were attempting to enter. Many have been the instances of divided families ; divided in their sentiments of the importance of religion and in what it consists. Even parents and children have separated at the door ; the former for their happiness going to places of amusement, and the latter to places of prayer. Sometimes the coercion of authority hath been used, to prevent these from joining in praise and supplication, which was

their only happiness. Others have ridiculed and spoken all manner of evil against those who were beginning to be wise. Is not this falling under the reproof of our blessed Redeemer on those who hinder others from entering in? Doth it not show, that in the depravity of man, there is a principle of opposition to the kingdom of CHRIST? What else can be the motive of those who have no pleasure in religion, to throw difficulties in the way of such as labor for eternal life. If such were wise, instead of discouraging others, they would tremble for themselves, lest they be left by a sovereign God to their own blindness.

SUCH days of the outpouring of GOD'S Spirit, are a bright illustration of the following truths.

1. THAT there is sin in the hearts of men, which they do not see, until GOD opens the truth before them, by his own Almighty power.

MUCH is said in the holy scriptures, of the blindness of mankind; but with all that is said, we need the aid of experimental conviction and conversion placed before our eyes, to correct our apprehension on this subject. Such days as many have seen and felt, lay open the human heart—they give personal conviction that the heart is at enmity against GOD until changed—that the world of mankind, in their secure state, do not know themselves, and never in this world will know, unless the spirit of the Lord remove the darkness—that sinners, by the power of sense over them, and their indisposition to the truth, are rendered blind to their own character, and to their deserts in the sight of a holy GOD, to eternity and its awful realities. They never consider what it will be to appear before the bar of infinite purity, without sanctification and forgiveness.

THIS spiritual blindness of men is proved, first, by the new apprehensions of those, who become the subjects of a divine influence ; and, secondly, from the deep stupidity of others, who are not moved by the anxiety of those, concerning their eternal well being, with whom they are nearly connected here.

zdly. SUCH days show the difference between true religion and irreligion.

IT is not uncommon, in times when divine influences are much withdrawn from the Church, to see the wise virgins slumbering and sleeping, and living too much like the foolish. But when the Spirit of God is outpoured it appears that there are two kinds of pleasure, which men pursue ; the one heavenly, the other earthly ; one in sense and themselves, the other in divine enjoyment. This shows, that there is an essential difference between piety and impiety ; and that some, although they live too much like the world, have by the grace of God been made partakers of a divine nature. This divine nature aspires above, and is satisfied with the enjoyment of nothing below God himself ; while others, with an ostensible appearance of being Christians, have no pleasure in the true temper and practice of the gospel. Indeed, by observing critically the subjects of these feelings, we may see the first principles of a heaven and a hell ; and the observation goes far to convince the observing, that men are destined to these two different ends. As the principles of religion and irreligion are different, and can never be reconciled one to the other ; so the end of people must be essentially different. It is surprising, that so many have boldness to controvert the word of holy scripture on this point, when nature and reason teach the same

truth, and afford incontrovertible evidence that virtue and vice have a different destiny.

3dly. SUCH days as we have seen, do by example prove the office work of the Holy Ghost, in the salvation of sinners.

AMONG modern errors, it is one of the greatest, to deny the efficacious work of the Spirit in convincing, renewing and sanctifying men. The temptation to this, arises from men's desire to think well of themselves. The doctrines of human depravity and of a just exposure to eternal death, and of the need of divine influence to convince and convert sinners, are so connected, that to admit one, implies the truth of the other.— Therefore, that they may think themselves not very guilty and exposed, they are tempted to deny the need of a Spirit, and his whole convincing and applying work to the hearts of sinners. There are reasons enough why unprincipled men are opposers or secret contemners in a day of religion. If that which they see, be the truth and work of GOD, it condemns them ; shows their certain danger ; and calls them to leave the things they love. But can we account for the reformation that often happens, in particular places and persons, without recurring to the doctrine of a special influence from GOD ? Why do we at times, see multitudes inquiring, concerned and pained with a sense of their sin ; self-condemned, and then rejoicing in the truth ? Why do we find them, with the sentence of self-condemnation in their mouths, still hoping in the free grace of GOD ; bearing a new testimony for the truth ; and confessing the law of GOD to be right, at the expense of acknowledgng themselves to be the chief of sinners ? Why do we find them leaving their old pleasures, and professing that they have

found new delights ; confessing their old sins and amusements, and departing from them ; and daily attending to duties, in which they once had no satisfaction ? Why have we seen infidels and men, who had fallen into every kind of loose and dissipating principles, with opened eyes become sensible they were going down to the chambers of death ; and at once turn round to acknowledge the power of CHRIST'S religion and become the friends of his friends ? These things have been seen to take place, without any external cause of excitement. They have not been the effects of a fright, by any sudden and awful providences of GOD ; not the consequence of combination in families and neighborhoods, for while one or a few have been taken, others have been left to part from their dearest friends, rather than devote themselves to the service and praises of GOD ; not the effects of enthusiasm, for the serious have been calm and the greatest friends of order and decency, and very humble in the midst of their greatest joys. When all external causes appear to be insufficient to produce these effects ; when men's thoughts are thus called from time to eternity, must we not suppose the cause to be from GOD'S own immediate action ?

FURTHER, this appears from the nature of the effects which are wrought, as well as from there being no other cause which could produce them, besides the direct influence of heaven. The moral natures or dispositions of men, are not changed by small causes. There is a taste or relish in the mind, which we commonly call natural, that doth not appear suddenly or by small causes to be altered. But in the present case, the effects wrought in short seasons of time,

have been great. Persons turning the habitual current of their thoughts from time to eternity ; from the pleasures of the world to a delight in God, and in the expected happiness of serving and praising him forever ; from earthly amusements to the pleasures of Christian communion, and delight in prayer and the worship of God ; from vain companions to serious ones, whose company but little before was painful ; from exalting themselves to deep humility ; from themselves and the world, to a Saviour, his laws, and his service. These are great effects, which run through the whole economy and manners of life, and through all the feelings of the heart. The subjects of this change, do also make an acknowledgement by which it is confirmed. They say, “ whereas once we were blind, now we see. “ Once we were miserable in the pursuit of worldly happiness ; now we are happy by relinquishing the world and ourselves.” Such effects as these, if witnessed by a good conversation, must be allowed to come from the operation of a divine and all-powerful cause.

It only remains, that I apply this subject to the consciences of those, who reject the Spirit of God, in his operation on their own minds ; and endeavor to hinder others from entering into the kingdom of CHRIST.

“ NOTWITHSTANDING” your own feelings and distaste to what you see, “ be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Are you sure that you are right ? Are you sure that there is nothing in that religion of which you speak so lightly ? Are you sure that your neighbors, your acquaintance, and those of your own families whom you afflict, have not found a good in the enjoyment of God, which

you never tasted yourselves? Are you sure that there is not a heaven and a hell, and that those whom you think to be needlessly deluded are not better prepared for heaven than you can hope yourselves to be?—Suppose they should be right, what will your own case be, when you stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST? Can you then look to the face of him who was pierced, and avert his thunders, and prove before his presence, that you have been or that you now are innocent? Will you then be able to dispute the existence of a Holy Ghost, and the need of his operation on your own minds, to prepare you for eternal life? Can you be sure that our Lord, is not a holy GOD, and that his gospel doth not require all that is set before you as duty, and as the only way of entering into eternal life? But I can conjecture, the questions which are now proposed begin to become disagreeable, and must apologize for them. Are you sure that they are improper and needless? The writer is sure, that if you have thought of them they make you unhappy; but are you sure, that it is not best you should thus be made unhappy? To show that there is some ground for such questions as these an appeal is made to your own consciences. Do you not, in the hour of affliction and solitude, feel afraid that there is some truth in this kind of religion? Have you never caught your own heart whispering to itself, “if I am mistaken it will be a dreadful mistake, and I never can answer before Omniscience?” These inquiries are designed for the consciences of those who read, for if we cannot first reach the conscience we never expect the heart will be affected. I cannot conclude this discourse, with a more solemn address directly to the souls of those who read it, than in the words of the text. “Notwithstand-

ing, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of GOD hath come nigh unto you." You have been highly distinguished from the perishing Heathen—greatly elevated in privilege, even above the ancient Jewish Church, and above those who heard the doctrines, and saw the miracles of our blessed Redeemer—yea, you have lived in a day when the Spirit of GOD was poured out, and those around you entered into the kingdom of GOD.—If now you are lost, the cause must be fought in yourselves. May GOD preserve you from this deplorable end! AMEN.

S E R M O N VI.

Christians a light in the world.

MATTHEW, v. 16.

LET your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

THE chapter begins with a description, which is given by CHRIST himself, of the character of his true disciples; and while he describes their temper he promises blessings, which are to begin in time and extend to an eternity of bliss. After describing their character, and pronouncing his blessings, he tells his hearers, that if they were of this blessed number, they were the light of the world. CHRIST is the Sun of Righteousness and the great prophet of the world; for he taught men by his word, by his own example, and hath continually been instructing them by the exemplary virtues of his people. The sinners, who are taken from among men, are saved through the sanctification of the Spirit. Sever-

eign grace calls them effectually and savingly, by changing their hearts ; and when renewed, they delight in things, which are agreeable to God and according to his law ; and thus they become examples of a divine temper and practice. Therefore, the scripture saith, that the people of God are made “ partakers of a divine nature ”—that they are conformed to him—and that they exemplify, in temper and practice, the same which is enjoined in his commandments.

It is found by experience, that example hath great power both to instruct and persuade. An exemplary manifestation of virtue, instructs more effectually than any precepts ; for we learn better by seeing than by hearing. The instruction of sight, is generally more impressivè than can be given by words. Therefore it is more awakening to the secure, and more persuasive to the good, to behold the beauties of piety, than to hear them painted in any human language. One is beauty in real existence, and the other in imagination. Therefore, exhortations which are similar in meaning to our text, are often repeated in the holy scriptures ; and those, who do not live exemplary lives, especially after they have made a Christian profession, are represented as injuring the cause of truth, and making its reality and beauty doubtful in the minds of men. As a good example is a light to honor CHRIST, and show the excellency of his gospel ; so, in the same proportion, an evil one darkens that bright light, with which the truth ought to be set before the understandings of men. Sundry observations will be made, to illustrate the nature and importance of the duty enjoined in the text.

I. THE Redeemer’s exhortation is evidently designed for real Christians, who have made a

profession of evangelical obedience, by repentance towards **GOD** and faith in our **LORD JESUS CHRIST**.

HE told those to whom it was directed, “Rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward in heaven.—Ye are the salt of the earth.—Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” Such expressions as these, imply a profession of real piety, and hope of forgiveness through the blood of **CHRIST**. Although the commands to repent and be holy, do extend to all ; still the holy scriptures evidently make a distinction between the conditions of men, as they are seen by the Omniscient eye of **GOD** himself. Some are represented, as being in the un sanctified state of nature ; unconverted ; unforgiven, and abiding under the wrath of **GOD**. These are said to be in a state of great danger, as they never have done any thing, really to glorify the Lord. They have no covenant engagements from him, that they shall meet his acceptance, because they have not complied with the terms of grace ; but remaining as they now be, must sink down forever under the power of sin. Others are described as having through divine grace, and the effectual aids of the Spirit, become obedient unto eternal life. They have accepted a Saviour, and in heart have covenanted to love and serve **GOD** and keep his laws. To such there is a promise, and they have peculiar exhortations to live soberly, righteously and godly. And although their own merits are exploded, and their acceptance is ever attributed to free mercy ; yet they are called a peculiar people, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and the friends and brethren of **CHRIST**, by a spiritual union that is indissoluble and eternal.

CONSEQUENTLY, the honor of CHRIST and the success of his cause in the world, are most intimately connected with their profession and their behaviour. This creates upon them new bonds to be circumspect, watchful, prayerful, and to live in all respects, as though their affections were placed on the things above and on the life to come; and as having no abiding city here, but seeking one to come, even a habitation not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where their best employ will be to praise and serve the Lord.

FOR this reason, there is a propriety, that to such there should be peculiar precepts; peculiar exhortations and admonitions; and peculiar reproofs for such conduct as brings religion into disgrace, and endangers the souls of unbelievers, by making them think there is no sincerity in professors, and no reality in religion. Therefore, such exhortations are greatly multiplied in the holy word. The guilt of the disobedient, although it may not end in an eternal rejection, is said to be of the highest kind. Churches are commanded to watch over their members, and if they find any deviating from a strict Christian practice, it is made their duty, either by private or public discipline, to bring them back to a sense of their departure from a pious, humble and holy example. When we place this subject on scriptural grounds, it must appear to be of high importance; for there is no other, on which more is said, in giving directions to the people of CHRIST, how they may benefit the Redeemer's cause. Or if we consider the subject, in the light that we gain by experience and observation, it doth not appear of less importance; for it is certain, that a multitude of unholy men, instead of going directly, as they

ought to do, to the holy scriptures as a fountain of true opinions, concerning the gospel, its doctrines, practice and hopes ; will go to the practice of those who profess to be Christians. And if they see such professors to live unworthy of the Christian law, they will make false deductions ; either that the law is not a reality ; or that their professions of experimental piety, are false and hypocritical ; or that they themselves are as good as others, and therefore in a safe state. When such consequences come from Christians' mingling in the unholy manners of the world, it is not strange that so many commandments should be given on the subject ; and if they are not observed, we must expect the Lord will fulfil his promise, made in the eighty-ninth Psalm. " If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments ; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

II. WE will next consider the means, by which the light of Christians ought to shine, in the midst of an unholy and perverse world.

AND, in general, this is to be done by every thing that is evidential of their own sincere belief ; by every thing that indicates holiness of heart and life, and that there is a comfort even in the present world, by serving GOD, which is superior to all the pleasures of sinning.

JESUS CHRIST spake of the world as being opposed to him and his cause. By the world he meant the irreligious part of men. The light of

Christians, when it shines by proper means, evidences their difference from the world, and their belief, love and practice of CHRIST'S doctrines. Also, that they have consecrated themselves to his cause and glory, feeling the power of his doctrines in their hearts, whereby they are convinced that it is wise, right and happyfying, to be his true servants.

1st. THE light of Christians ought to shine by an explicit acknowledgment of all the revealed doctrines of truth ; and that they come with sufficient divine authority to control the faith and bind the practice of men.

A Christian is very explicitly defined in the scriptures, to be one who believes the doctrines and obeys the laws of CHRIST. There always have been a happy few in the world, who have exemplified this in their articles of belief, and in their lives. But the name of Christian, is many times used in a vague sense ; sometimes meaning no more than the place of a person's birth, or the general profession of the people among whom he dwells, or the opinions of his ancestors in distinction from others. Among a number of causes this vague use of the word is one, which leads some to suppose, they need not be very careful to believe all the doctrines of Christian revelation. But in this way the light of Christians cannot shine. There is the beauty and harmony of a plan in the divine scheme of doctrines—they are all most glorious for GOD—most for the happiness of the universe—and most for the good of those who love them. The consistency of these doctrines depends on their connection, so that by breaking the scheme of divine truth, the whole is rendered weak.—

Rejecting part of the Christian revelation, is virtually casting away the whole.

THIS is especially the case, with the doctrines of natural and total depravity ; efficacious and sanctifying grace in the salvation of sinners ; and the divine sovereignty in his counsels, providence, and the whole scheme of Redeeming love. These were the doctrines which CHRIST and his apostles taught most explicitly ; and the light of CHRIST and his apostles shone, by the plain manner in which they urged them on the understanding and consciences of men. If the several parts of the Christian scheme be separated, its light is gone ; GOD is not glorified ; the heart is not cleansed and comforted ; neither is a guilty conscience purified. Let these doctrines be rejected, and whatever light shines, it is not the Christian light. Therefore, for the Christian light to shine, there must be an explicit acknowledgment of all the doctrines of revelation.

It is in vain to say, that a man's practice may be good, although he rejects some of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. It is true, that doing this, his practice may be good for some purposes and ends ; but it is not good for the purpose of bringing him to final happiness as a follower of CHRIST. He may have the shining light of a moral Heathen ; but not of an evangelical believer, and it is this which CHRIST urged in the text. A good practice, in the sense of the holy scriptures, extends to a good heart ; and a good heart will delight in all the Christian doctrines. GOD will judge and reward men by the feelings of their hearts, as much as by certain visible actions ; and their rejection of the doctrines he hath declared, is in his sight a practical sin. Also, it hath always been found, that de-

nying true doctrines, doth in some way, lead to affections and external actions that are bad.

DOUBTLESS some, who are real Christians, have been so much afraid to express their sincere and cordial belief of some weighty gospel doctrines, as hath prevented their Christian light shining. They may have done this through complaisance to the opinions of others, although they felt their own judgment convinced; or from a hope, that by yielding some things, they might gain others to believe the truth in part, or from a fear, that by speaking plainly, they should croud them into greater extremes of error. But this kind of temporizing, was never found to have a salutary effect. The erroneous are never reclaimed, by meeting them half way in their false opinions. It never was CHRIST'S manner to do thus; and the apostles called men's consciences to witness, that they had declared the whole counsel of GOD. By this, it is not meant to take away the distinction between prudence and imprudence, in declaring the truth. There are prayer times and places, and a most suitable manner of acknowledging our belief of CHRIST'S doctrines; and it ought to be done in meekness and fear; but is never to be neglected.

2. THE light of Christians ought to shine by their good works. The reasons annexed to the precept in the text, is, "that men might see their good works and thus be induced to glorify GOD." I shall consider good works as including both pious and evangelical exercises of heart, and the visible duties of a moral life; or a sanctified heart and practice. In the holy scriptures, the term works, often hath this extensive signification. There is a sense, in which pious and evangelical exercises of the heart may be seen. Through the medium of external actions and signs, the

heart may be so seen, as to give a satisfactory knowledge of its moral qualities, its pleasures and its aversions.

1st. THE regular practice of all external duties, that are due to GOD and men, is necessary, that the Christian's light may shine. An immoral life, or neglect of such external duties as are commanded in the divine law, is the most palpable evidence of irreligion. The conduct of such persons is all darkness. There is not in them, even that common light, which shows the excellency of a rational nature; but the intelligence which they possess, seems to be thrown away, and to have become worse than useless to themselves and to society.

THE commission of crimes, and omission of external duties, in those instances where it becomes general and habitual, makes the existence of the creature, so far as he follows his own dispositions, to be a real evil to the universe; and the only consideration which alleviates this gloom, is, that the infinite power and wisdom of GOD can control, and bring good out of evil.

FURTHER. The commission of crimes and omission of external duties, shows the heart to be dark with sin.

ALTHOUGH men may do things, which are visibly commendable and beneficial, when actuated by sinful motives; yet it is not possible that a good heart should habitually commit crimes, and omit visible duties.—A good heart consists, among other things, in abhorring crimes and loving the external duties of religion; and it is not possible, that men should habitually do things which they abhor, and omit to do things which they love. By such evidence, the heart is proved to be bad, and full of darkness—to have no sight

of the moral beauty of holiness and truth—and no sense of the excellency of the gospel scheme. Those who have no light in themselves cannot be a light to others. Though they call themselves Christians by the place of their birth or ancestry, they are the highest dishonor and injury to the cause of CHRIST. Such Christians as these, have been the means of prejudicing millions of Heathen against the pure doctrines of CHRIST; and will fall far below them in a state of misery.

FURTHER. The Christian law enjoins a most pure system of morality, in all the visible duties, which conduce to the glory of GOD, the promotion of his cause, and the happiness of men in society. All manner of visible worship is directed; prayer and praise; every expression of a sense of dependance, and love and delight in the Lord; every expression of a sense that he hath in his nature infinite and eternal loveliness. The acts of religious worship, and the Christian ordinances are designed as an expression of these duties of the heart. Also the Christian law of morality enjoins all external duties by which society is made happy; and all truth, justice and beneficence, in all the variety of relations subsisting between men, and in all possible modes of practical expression. The law is summed up in the incomparable rules of CHRIST. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Christian Churches are directed to purge themselves from those, who do not observe these things. They are told that a neglect of these external duties, is evidence they have not that faith and repentance, to which the gospel promises are made. Also, that such are not worthy of being counted members of the

visible kingdom on earth ; and that much less have they any right to expect an entrance into glory. How can such expect to find an eternity of holiness in heart and practice agreeable to them ?

THEREFORE, a life of strict morality, and regular observance of all the laws and ordinances of CHRIST, must be considered as necessary to the Christian light. Where this is wanting, there can be no substitute. Where this is wanting, all pretences to high piety ; all apparent fervor in favor of experimental religion ; and an imagination of being the frequent subjects of communion with GOD ; and of exceeding joys and transports, will be of no avail, either as evidence of personal sincerity, or as a light shining to illustrate the glory of GOD's goodness and power in forming a people for himself. The appearance of such persons in the eyes of the world, is so far from being a light, that it casts a dark shade over Christianity. Men will never believe these pretensions to inward and hidden holiness to be true, which are not evidenced by an external holiness of practice. A profession of secret communion with GOD, while there is an open communion with the workers of iniquity, is not to be credited.

I OUGHT also here to observe that there may be much punctuality in tything mint, annise and cummin, so as to make a very specious external appearance, while there is an evident want of love to GOD, of deep humility before him ; or there may be the pride of affected humility. A man may profess to have a heavenly honesty, and escape the law in all his dealings, and still every person discover dishonesty in his heart. He may pray eloquently on public occasions, and be awfully profane, in the hour of ungoverned passion,

when his avaricious feelings are not gratified. But he who is not a Christian in private, is not really one in public, and the bird of the air will cause his secret sins to be suspected. Such, in the opinion of the world, cannot have any Christian light belonging to them.

THERE are others, who carefully abstain from crimes, but are not attentive to comamnded external duties. If they can avoid remarkable sins of commission, they make light of the sins of omission, and constantly live in them. These are not Christians, neither doth their light shine before men, so that they will glorify our Father who is in heaven. A true Christian is as careful to perform the duties which are enjoined, and the ordinances which are instituted; as he is to abstain from forbidden crimes. His abstinence from crimes arises from a love of God; and where God is admired, the duties which he hath directed, and which promote his visible honor will not be omitted. The principle of love, which governs the heart, will lead men carefully to obey the whole law; and where such obedience is wanting, there is no Christian light. What then shall we say of those professors, and indeed there are many of this description; who, in the language of the world, live harmless lives, but omit many Christian duties? They are remiss in their attendance on the worship of the sanctuary; but more remiss in the worship of the family and closet. They are altogether neglectful of gospel ordinances. It might be thought presumptuous absolutely to say they are no Christians; still it is safe to assert, that they are either awfully deceived, or in such a state of backsliding, that they rather shame than honor the Christian name. Are there any such who read? Do you think that you are Christians indeed?

Is it not presumptuous for you to hope on such low evidence? Or if you have a spark of love, are you not grieved, and do you not mourn over yourselves, that there is so little of the Christian in your character; and that the cause of CHRIST, who hath died to save men, is more injured than benefitted by your appearance? Or when you consider yourselves the block of stumbling, over which others fall, do you not condemn yourselves and commiserate their case? It cannot be doubted, but that grace saves some, over whose unchristian conduct, others have stumbled and fallen to ruin; still I believe that such will be saved with great difficulty. There is reason to think that they must meet with many sorrows; and that when they come to the world of glory, they will appear to be among the most eminent monuments of undeserved grace. Perhaps it will be said through eternity, although this man is saved that grace might be magnified, he was the guilty cause through which some of those who are now in misery came to their dreadful end. Nothing but the idea, that all salvation is of free grace, can render probable the final salvation of those, who with a Christian profession have been the instruments and means of destroying others.

2. THAT the Christian light may shine, it is necessary there should be evidence of real repentance, faith and love.

Where there is not the performance of external duties, the want of these graces is sufficiently evidenced. But there may be a performance of external duties, as these are commonly defined; and still one part of evidence for faith and repentance be wanting. It was before said, that through the medium of external actions or

signs the heart may be so seen, as to give us a satisfactory knowledge of its moral qualities, its pleasures and aversions. It is also certain, there may be proud and selfish motives for the performance of external duties. A man may be so placed, that the visible appearance of religion is necessary to preserve his reputation and make him influential among his neighbors; and although he hath no love of God, he may imitate the visible duties of those who have it, being moved by the love of reputation or some worldly advantage. Or his conscience may accuse, making him afraid of eternal death; and having by experience, no knowledge of the feelings there are in Christian love, he may suppose the performance of some visible duties is all that is meant in the divine law. Thus he may be very regular in certain duties. The want of these duties, would certainly evidence a want of grace; but the performance may come from pride and selfishness. These, and other causes may produce, that a person's visible conduct be such, there cannot be a charge of crimes, nor chargeable omission; but still, something is wanting to convince experienced persons, of a real love, repentance and faith.

THERE are a thousand minute circumstances in appearance, in actions and in words, which picture the heart to the knowledge and judgment of others, and especially of those who are deeply experienced in the temper and character that is described. For the clear shining of Christian light, the whole visible appearance ought to be such as shows the mind to be solemnized—the heart to be filled with reverence, humility and love, and the whole soul consecrated to the service of God.

ONE sacred description of the Christian's appearance is, "for our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the LORD JESUS CHRIST." Much is implied in the appearance of a conversation in heaven. It shows the soul to be joined in a vital union of love to GOD and the Redeemer; to be weaned from the world, and from self; that the hopes are taken off from present things and placed on things to come; and that the most delightful pleasures are found in a union with CHRIST, communion with GOD, and the daily and regular performance of religious duty.

ANOTHER description of the Christian's appearance in this world, may be gathered from the following words, "for here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

THERE is something in the men of the world, however regular their conversation may be, which intimates that they look to the things of time for their honor and happiness. If they be moral; if they be serious; or if they seem to have some regard of GOD and his providence, it is on worldly principles, and for a worldly cause, that this takes place. Their weanedness is from certain pleasures and expectations, rather than from the world itself. The man's appearance speaks great attachment to the world, in the midst of all his religion. Perhaps he will not be caught conversing on trifles, and nothing below great worldly interests engage his mind, and these by the selfish interests of all around him are sanctified as very important; but bring an eternity before him, he is as silent as though he never knew of a life to come. In this man there is no light. He doth not feel as though we have no continuing city here, nor doth he seek one

to come.—While he separates from the festive and gay, and is visibly on the side of religion, to give to himself dignity of character, and keep up that order, which is necessary for his worldly interest, the city to come is quite out of his view, and he seeketh not for it. Many of the aged, whose appetites are cooled by the decays of nature, or by disappointment and the worldly wisdom of experience; and some of those are in great authority, come under this description. They are not weaned from the world, although they do not enter into its extravagant follies. This may be called a sobriety of the world, and perhaps there is added to it a visible appearance on the side of religion; but with great cautiousness, lest it be a religion which hath too much warmth and fervor; and too much appearance of devotion. They fear too many seasons of worship, lest men should become dissipated by frequent praying to God, or lose too great a portion of their time from worldly concerns, or become gloomy by thinking of that eternity, which the scriptures call their home, and which all of them must soon, very soon inhabit. This is not seeking a city to come.

THE Christian whose light shines before men, is far different in his appearance. His whole appearance testifies that it is his delight to think of God—to consider him as a near, and all present Deity—and to feel himself by the flight of days, constantly approaching to the moment, when a clearer sight of divine holiness will possess his whole soul.—His whole appearance witnesses a weanedness from the world, and thorough conviction by having found a better good, that there is nothing on earth deserving his anxiety and servile labors; and if he can go through the world with competence, he hath received

the highest good it can ever give:—His whole appearance testifies deep humility, a constant sense of unworthiness and dependance on God, and that his affections are placed on things above, and not on things on the earth. These apparent breathings of soul for the fruition and holy enjoyments of heaven, when joined with a regular performance of all external duties, will make that Christian light, which the text enjoins.—A merely moral life, unless joined with the evident appearance of a sanctified heart, doth not constitute the shining light of a Christian life.

THERE are many things, not yet noticed, which might be instructively mentioned; but some of them are so necessary for a Christian conversation, and for convincing the world there is a reality in religion, that it would be criminal to pass them by without notice.

ALL the pious followers of CHRIST, do both feel and manifest an anxious desire, for the salvation of those, who appear to them to be going down the road to death. CHRIST gave himself to die for us, while we were yet enemies. He prayed for those who were crucifying him, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.” Paul, the most eminent apostle, in view of the perishing state of his own nation, who had rejected CHRIST, said, “I say the truth in CHRIST, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from CHRIST, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

AFTER the Israelites had sinned against God by most awful idolatry, Moses prayed for them, in the following remarkable words, “And Mo-

ses returned unto the Lord and said, oh, this people hath sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin,—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written.” Whatever may be said of these expressions, by some who do not feel the yearnings of benevolence over their perishing fellow creatures ; this may certainly be determined, that all the children of GOD have a strong desire for the salvation of those, whom they see to be perishing. They will express this desire freely, and use all the means placed within their power to rescue them. They will watch for an opportune season of speaking ; will instruct, instruct and pray. To them every soul will appear of infinite worth, and the bowels of their compassion, instead of being confined to brethren, children and friends, will move over all the perishing human race. They will not despise the soul of a distant Heathen, although he may be uncivilized ; but pray and use the appointed means of instruction, and liberally contribute their own mite to accomplish so blessed a design. There is a kind of benevolence, common in this day, where civilized refinement is substituted in the place of true piety, which pities and liberally supplies the wants of men, and mourns over the pains of their bodies, and seems, in some instances, to be like goodness itself ; but yet hath no concern for their souls. This care for the body and for temporal interests, is doubtless to be commended, and encouraged by all possible means ; and it shows as perfect a state of society, as can be, without a holy love of GOD and men. But it goes no further than Paul meant, when he said, “ though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be

burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

TRUE Christian charity extends to the souls of men, and is more anxious for their eternal, than for their temporal well being. While it overlooks not the good of time ; it is more anxious for the eternal good of men. Where the Christian light shines, there will always be this desire for the salvation of men, and every means will be pursued, which GOD may probably bless with the accompanying influences of the Spirit.

IT is also necessary for the shining of a Christian light, to have that fervor of love and fixed confidence in GOD, which will bear up the soul under reproach and trials, for the sake and cause of CHRIST.

CHRIST told his disciples, "if they have persecuted me they will persecute you." We are forewarned "all that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, shall suffer persecution." The present, and every past state of the Church, hath corresponded with this description. In every age, those who have fervently espoused the cause of practical and experimental godliness, have thereby found themselves exposed to many bitter attacks on their reputation, on their earthly peace, and often even on their lives. In such cases, the Christian who means to honor his profession, and illustrate the nature and power of religion in the heart, must not shrink before worldly evils. Thus to shrink before evil is denying CHRIST before men, and of such it is said, that CHRIST will deny them in the presence of his Father and of his holy angels. The power of a Christian example and light, shining in the manner I have described, is exceeding great to convince men, to awaken their guilty consciences, and allure

them to the practice of the truth. Such examples do often act more powerfully on the minds of mankind, than any thing which can be said from the press or the pulpit. They delineate Christian goodness, in a manner, which all must acknowledge to be excellent. They teach the reality and possibility of the virtues which are commanded; and while they alarm the consciences of the ungodly, and show the beauty of virtue; they have an attractive force to draw weaker Christians on to imitation. Therefore, CHRIST said to his disciples, “ye are the light of the world—ye are, by your profession, like a city placed on an hill, and cannot be hid. Your appearance will be seen at a distance, much farther than you imagine, and if the light shines, the good will be great to the souls of men; but *if* the light which is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness”—a darkness that will beguile your own steps, and bewilder others to an everlasting ruin. Therefore let your light shine.

III. IN describing how the Christian light ought to shine, we have often adverted to the consequences, that are depending upon the obedience of Christians; but it may be proper, more particularly to consider them.

THE text saith, *that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

1st. THUS GOD will be glorified.

THE essential, infinite and eternal glory of GOD, can be neither increased or diminished. The Lord is always the same; always infinitely full in glory, beauty and blessedness. But his declarative glory is not always the same, and may be increased or diminished by means. The declarative glory or manifestation of his fulness, is meant, whenever creatures are directed to glori-

fy him; for they cannot add to his natural fulness, moral rectitude and unchanging bliss. But the declarative glory of GOD may be advanced by the obedience, and shining light of his children, when they keep his commandments and walk in the steps of their Redeemer. By his grace he makes them conformed to himself in a low degree, and though the image be weak indeed, something may be learned from it of the nature of holiness. As he is, so they shall be according to the measure of their finite natures; and that work is now begun, which shall by the mighty power of grace, end in eternal and glorious perfection.

BUT the especial manner, in which GOD is glorified by the obedience of his saints, is from a sight of his mighty efficiency and grace, in making his children obedient, and in forgiving them.

PAUL in describing the day of judgment, said, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired in them who believe." In that day, there will be an admirable display of the power, wisdom and goodness of GOD, in forming his redeemed Church from among the guilty children of men, all of whom deserved to be consigned to eternal misery. Then will appear the glory of his wisdom, in concerting a way of salvation, by the expensive means of the incarnation, obedience, and blood of his own Son. Then will be seen the glory of his justice, in the piercing sword that awoke against the man who was his fellow—in the pains, pangs and death of a divine person, who in himself was spotless, but must suffer and die an ignominious death, when standing in the place of sinners. Then will be seen the glory of his goodness, O wonderful goodness! that could stoop so low as to chuse

sinners—die for sinners and enemies—follow rebellious creatures through their crooked ways, with the long offered grace of the gospel—and apply the benefits of his grace to their rebellious hearts. It will appear that this application was made when they were opposed and hating his government, and had never in their own hearts wished for such a heaven as he had long offered. Thus, at the great and final day, the efficacious grace of God, and his free and undeserved mercy, will be glorified in his saints and admired in those, who are found to be believers.

SOMETHING of the same glory of God may be seen in his called ones here on earth, if they are obedient and obey his commandment, *let your light shine before men.* There is the glory of free and efficacious grace, applied by a divine power to those, who are not only unworthy, but actually resisting the proffered mercy. There is the glory of offering salvation to the guilty—of making them consider, when they wished to put consideration at a distance—of convincing them that they are sinners—and bringing them to lie low at the foot of a sovereign God, self-condemned and justly condemned.—There is the glory of renewing their hearts, and giving them new views of the beauty of holiness, new views of God and themselves; new pleasures, hopes and desires.—The glory of spiritualizing their affections, and putting strength into them to overcome the world through the imparted aids of his grace.—If men have right apprehensions of the total depravity of human nature, they must see the glory of efficacious grace in turning evil hearts from sin to holiness; from the world to heaven, and from self and its advancement, to God and the promotion of his glory.

THE instance of Paul's conversion, hath often been improved as a display of the declarative glory of GOD, and of the efficacy of the Spirit of grace in the conversion of finners. It cannot be doubted that there were circumstances, in the manner of his effectual calling, which are most aptly adduced as a proof of Christianity, and which the infidel world can never answer ; but there is a proof of divine power and grace in the conversion of every sinner, which is similar in nature, though not attended with such remarkable circumstances. In all sinners, there must be the same cause of conversion ; the same exercise of Almighty power ; and the same wonderful transition of the affections from self to GOD, and from earth with its enjoyments to heaven and its holy praises. To behold sinners turning from sin and the world, to GOD ; to see them made heavenly in their affections and practice ; to observe how they are strengthened by divine grace, and by abiding in CHRIST, is an eminent display of the glorious power and wisdom of GOD. Thus he is glorified by the shining light, which there is in the good works of his people. One of the most convincing considerations which sinners find, and which awakens their consciences and makes them fear there may be a danger in their security and in their unholy lives, is to see the patient, holy, and rejoicing lives of true Christians. In view of this, they cannot but say, whence this doth happen, we cannot tell ! All men are undoubtedly alike by nature, and to see some delighting in GOD himself and his worship, appears as though the Lord really dwelt in their souls. Therefore GOD, and his power and love are glorified by the light which shines in the obedience of his people.

2dly. THE shining light of a good conversation, in the people of God, is one of those means which he blesses to make others glorify him.

THIS is expressed in the text, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The power of a Christian example to impress the minds of others, hath been repeatedly hinted in this discourse.

FIRST, it is a fit means to awaken the secure—to make them consider their own depravity and guilt—and to show them their own defects. Although the laws of CHRIST are the rule, by which all men ought to try and judge themselves, we find by experience that they often determine from a comparison with others. If they are not worse than others, or if they are going to no worse end than others, they feel secure, and think that a reformation in heart and life is not necessary. Especially if some who are called Christians, consort with them, in their worldly spirit and practice; they think themselves to be certainly safe. If they can equal the worst part of a Christian character, and be as circumspect as they be, in the time of their deepest backslidings, they suppose themselves to be on safe ground. This is one way, in which the evil conversation of professed Christians destroys the souls of others.

ANOTHER unhappy effect is, that the unholy, on seeing a low and worldly conduct in Christians, do wholly disbelieve the reality of religion. They say, "there is no such thing as piety, for though Christians explain their own law, as containing holy affections, we see nothing of this kind in them; and must believe the explanation to be wrong and the pretensions to be hypocritical." It is not strange, that such an improve-

ment should be made of improper conduct in professing Christians. Churches are a collection of people, gathered professedly according to the rules and laws of CHRIST, and the nature of the institution will be judged of by the appearance of those who compose it.

SECONDLY, it is made the duty of CHRIST'S people mutually to watch, each over the other; and to use those means, by which their hearts may be mutually warmed in love. They ought to stir up each other's pure minds, and there is no way in which it can more effectually be done, than by walking as children of the light. This is a means which GOD is pleased to bless. Therefore, we often see the flame of fervent piety, appearing to catch from mind to mind among the called in CHRIST JESUS. On this account it is good, often to speak and remind each other of our holy calling, and of the duties by which we may honor CHRIST and gather souls into his kingdom.

THE people of CHRIST ought to be seriously affected with this subject. There is none more necessary for them often to contemplate; as it regards the glory of GOD, their own peace and the salvation of others. Perhaps there is no other subject of so much importance as this, which is neglected by so many. The unchristian conduct of professors, is one of those causes, which have operated fatally to make men believe there is nothing in experimental godliness; and even to make it unfashionable, and in many places and companies disgraceful, to have the appearance of piety. However depraved the world, and however filled with enmity against the truth, the hearts of sinners may be; it is still a certain truth, that if the members of CHRIST'S Church

conducted agreeably to to their obligations, and to his holy laws and example, it would soon become, to all the ungodly and disbelieving, terrible as an army with banners. May the Lord hasten the days, when Zion shall arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord being risen upon her! AMEN.

S E R M O N VII.

On considering our ways.

PSALM, CXIX. 59, 60.

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

THE whole of this Psalm is filled with most important and interesting instruction. It contains many observations, which show that the writer had a deep and heart-feeling admiration of the statutes and judgments of the Lord; indeed, the general design of the psalm, seems to have been to celebrate the excellency of the divine law, and to express that admiration and delight in it, which is entertained by all those, who in truth and sincerity are the people of God. Almost every verse in the psalm accords in spirit, with that beautiful expression of delight in the divine commandments, which is found in the ninety-seventh verse. "O how I love thy

law ; it is my meditation all the day." A delight in the law of God is so excellent an exercise of grace, and this delight is so beautifully, so strongly, and so uniformly expressed, that it seems almost impossible for a hypocritical professor of religion, in an hour of serious consideration, to read the psalm, without feeling his insincerity detected and his disobedience reproved.

WHEN the law of GOD is the matter of consideration, we may ever observe his true people to be animated with the subject, and their happiness, in appearance, doth rise with their animation. In the law, they find the description of a character that is lovely in their sight—a rule which they delight to obey—a scheme of duties which are their daily pleasures—and a scheme of practice for honoring him, whom they wish to be forever glorified.

AMONG the great number of pious precepts and observations, which we find in this psalm, there are but few more instructive and interesting for practical consideration, than the words of the text. " I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

THESE words introduce two things to our consideration.

I. THE importance of considering our ways, and the manner in which it is to be done.

II. THAT it is the duty of those who consider, to become obedient without any delay.

WE are first to attend to the importance of considering our ways.

THE way of a man, as a subject to be considered, hath a most extensive comprehension. It may mean his present character, conduct and condition, with respect to happiness and misery; or it may mean all that he ever has been or ever will be in these respects.

THE same word, when applied to the Supreme GOD in the scriptures, means sometimes, his deep and inscrutable counsels, which are no other than the perfection and action of his infinite nature, as he determines all things in his own mind. Sometimes it means the law of the Lord, "I have kept the ways of the Lord." And it often means the conduct, and wonderful acting of his providence, in governing the condition of men. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Here the ways of GOD apparently mean, both his eternal counsels of providence, and his execution of them, in all the events which relate to the existence and state of men, whether as moral agents or as subjects of reward. So that by the ways of the Lord, are meant his whole infinite nature as he exists in counsel and execution, and as he is discovered to us by the effects of his will.

IN the same extensive sense, the ways of men are to be understood, when spoken of in the scripture. Their ways comprehend their moral character; their designs, feelings and desires; their conduct, as it hath regard to the lawgiver, and to others their brethren; their state and condition with respect to happiness and misery in times past, present, and to come. The subject of consideration which is proposed in the text, is

therefore vast indeed ! No less than the characters, actions and conditions of immortal beings. It is a subject, which embraces every thing that relates to the existence of finite creatures ; their duty and guilt, and their happiness or woe. It is a subject, which embraces all the present ; all that is past since the beginning of their existence ; and all that they will know and do, or enjoy or suffer through the endless duration of eternity.

ARE we prepared to enter on such a subject ? If our minds are not already solemnized ; if we do not feel how interesting it is ; if we do not feel desirous of instruction, and determined to be honest in self-application, we are not prepared. The expression in the text, " I thought on my ways," is exceedingly simple, but it extends to every thing that ought to solemnize our minds, interest our feelings, and warm our present devotion. Let us begin to see the greatness of this subject, and learn our duty with a humble desire that we may be enabled to perform it.

I. LET us consider ourselves and our ways, as creatures destined for immortality.

THE existence we have received will never cease. The intellectual flame, which hath begun to burn, will never be extinguished. Upheld by the Almighty power of the Creator, all the myriads of souls, that now are, and which shall begin to exist, will exist forever. We shall always be active minds. Shall always know, understand, desire, love and feel aversion, and be happy or miserable. Always belong to an innumerable number of beings, who stand in relation to each other, and feel a mutual influence of minds, producing peace or sorrow. Although the creature will ever be dependant on the will of a sovereign Creator and Judge, and infinitely small compar-

ed with him ; still there is something great in the contemplation of a mind, that is active, happy or miserable, and immortal. Who that realizes himself thus immortal, and to have a part in the great scenes opened to our understanding by revelation, can refrain from being solemnized ?

2. WE should consider ourselves and our ways, as creatures going to eternal happiness or eternal misery.

ALL this eternity, which is before us, will be a most pleasing state of existence, or one most sorrowful. How ardently do we seek for the happiness and how cautiously avoid the misery, of a day or an hour, those small points of time into which present duration is divided ? The immediate prospect of pleasure or pain, though for the shortest seasons, charms or terrifies us. We tremble at the thought of bearing heavy pain for a single hour, and the prospect of it will, to a degree, unman the firmest mind. Those who have no just apprehensions of eternity, are still exceedingly afraid of the few hours pain there is in the death of a corruptible body. How much more terrible would it appear to us, to spend the whole life which we have here on earth, in a state of misery ? Every man would tremble at the thought ! every man, if his tender mercies were not converted into cruelty, would weep over a fallen creature, if he knew this to be his case. But all these illustrations, fall infinitely short of the awful, the glorious subject we are considering.

THE pleasures or pains of a day, a year, or even of a whole life, vanish in comparison with eternity. As the duration of a life on earth, cannot be brought into just terms of comparison with eternity ; so neither can its pains or plea-

tures. We may thus gain a weak illustration of the subject; but it is done by showing the disproportion to be so immense, that no just terms of comparison can be instituted. Think then, O reader, of thine own ways, as leading to an eternity of blessedness or pain! These ways, which are begun on earth, must be eternal in their progress and in their consequences. Neither will the happiness or misery of that state be stationary. Whichever it may be, they will be ever growing. There will be an increase, a perpetual increase of the capacities of the mind to receive pleasure and to suffer pain. In that state, the mind will be filled either with one or the other. By an increase of capacity, the time will come, when every mind now on earth, will be capable of more pleasure or pain, in a duration equal to one of our present hours, than could, with our present capacities, be crowded into the whole life of man on earth; and still, this will be but the beginning of an infinite series, in the growing capacity to be pained or to be happy.

O CREATURE, although thou art but a creature, all this is before thee! thou canst not conceive the immensity of bliss or woe, for which thy mind is brought into existence by the creating power of God! One or the other of these is to be thy lot! If it be of good, thou wilt doubtless chuse it. If it be evil thou canst not escape it. Thou art now, and forever shalt remain in the hands of an Almighty Creator. He looks, with infinite view over a countless number of spirits like thine own, and all are like thee to be happy or miserable. The greatest possible quantity of happiness is the object of his love, and he will not be moved, either by supplications or moans, to be partial for the benefit of an individual to

the injury of the whole ; and the only way for any to be happy, consistent with the good of CHRIST'S kingdom, is to obey the law of GOD.

3. WE should consider the state of our eternity, to be entirely dependant on our ways, in the short space of human life.

THIS truth is first made probable by experience ; for we find that succeeding happiness or misery, generally depends on preceding dispositions and actions. In the pains and pleasures of life, we uniformly observe that men lay a foundation for what they receive. Although they do not merit any thing by their best endeavors, it is the general course of the divine government thus to bestow blessings and to appoint evils. Therefore experience and analogy from present things, make it probable that the state of our eternity, with respect to happiness or misery, will be dependant on our ways in the short space of human life.

BUT that which reason and experience only render probable, is assured to us by the word of infinite truth. GOD hath said in his holy word, that it shall be thus ; and when we consider the state of guilty men, we must allow it to be reasonable. They are fallen creatures.—They are enemies to the principles of the divine government.—It is not an accidental difference between GOD and them, merely through mistake and misconception of each other's characters. They do not love the moral character of GOD, nor his counsels, and in this they are unreasonable, and guilty. GOD might justly have left them to eternal misery, and the temper they possess would execute the sentence. In this case, the bestower of mercy may chuse his own manner, his own means, and his own time. He may eternally

pass by, or in sovereign goodness he may bring to a blessed life. If he determines to offer salvation, he may limit the offer to as short a period of probation as he determineth to be best. Sinners sometimes say, it is unreasonable, that the offer of salvation should be limited to this life; but if it would have been an infinite favor, for GOD only to say, concerning one day of this short life, "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;" how much greater the favor, to extend the offer of salvation through our whole earthly life! How much greater the favor to bear long, to be often affronted and ungratefully used, and still continue the call, "now is the accepted time!"

HAVING remarked upon the infinite grace of GOD, in giving so long a space for repentance; let us now return and consider the solemn thought, that the happiness or misery of eternity, with respect to every one of us, depends entirely on the short space of human life. When life is closed, the call of mercy sounds no more forever. Then the soul will be called into judgment and rewarded for all that it hath done; and although the day of general judgment may be at some distance; a particular judgment will fix their state without change. There can be no living their lives over again; no review in judgment to reverse the sentence; no repentance then to give a title to salvation through grace. They who are unjust, will be unjust still; they who are filthy, will be filthy still, and the sentence pronounced, will be true and permanent as the being of GOD. Then the soul will enter on a heaven of bliss, or a hell of woe; and all the promises of GOD will be consummated. And is it for this that we are now living, now acting, now hearing or reading? Is it for this that we are now

acting every year, every day, every moment? Are we now sowing the seeds of eternal glory or woe? Have all our actions, words and thoughts this relation to our eternal condition? Surely they have, for GOD hath said that every idle word shall be brought into judgment, and that every thought of the heart shall be rewarded. How interesting is human life! How interesting the power we have to move a hand, or speak a word! How dreadful every moment, when it is to be reviewed before the bar of GOD, and in the presence of millions of spirits! How solemn to think, that all shall be the children of glory or of destruction! How precious is every moment! How precious all those moments that we have spent in idleness, or in useless conversation, or in vain amusements! Perhaps our heaven hung suspended on the manner in which those moments were employed. If the creature did but feel these truths, how would he be afraid, even of his own time, lest a mispence should be the witness against him! How afraid he would be of those amusements which he is now assiduously planning and seeking! Ah, he would say concerning them, the seeds of death may here be spread! Yea, the seeds of death eternal! Every moment, in this short life, would appear to him of infinite value, and his present ways, as connected with eternity, of inconceivable importance. Men's lives on earth are of more importance to them than any other equal part of their existence. After the present state is passed away, the spirits of eternity will look back and say, "in that minute point of my existence which I lived on the earth, my all was determined; then I became through the grace of GOD, entitled to a heaven of endless glory; or then I lost the only possible offer of salvation, and became doubly

exposed to the pains of eternal death ; first, by transgressing a right law, and secondly, by rejecting the offered salvation of grace.”—By a daily reflection on these things, we ought to see the connection between our ways in time, and our ways in eternity. And we ought also to remember how uncertain it is, when we shall be called into the future world. It must be after a few days, or it may be instantly. If we considered this, it would lead us to a very different conduct from what is common with the greatest part of men.

4. WE ought to consider our ways with respect to the law which GOD hath given us, and the judgment in his presence to which we shall soon be called.

WE are accountable creatures, and a law is given us that extends to every thought, word and action, and for the whole we must be brought into judgment. It is by not habitually attending to these truths that many are so secure as they appear to be. No man who considers his relation to GOD; the law he is under ; and the certain and near consequences of obedience and disobedience, ever could live in deep security and in crimes, without a censure of his own conscience. We ought to consult the law, which is given for the direction of our hearts and visible practice. We ought to consider the duties which we owe to GOD, and enquire whether we have performed them ; the duties which we owe to men, and whether we have done them regularly and sincerely.

FURTHER, we should let no part of our disposition and practice pass unexamined, but compare the whole with the divine law. A serious sense of this accountableness should possess us continu-

ally ; when at home and abroad, in solitude or in company. The same solemn apprehension of an approaching judgment, ought also to possess our minds frequently. I know that many will think, it will make a gloomy life, habitually to think, that we are soon coming to judgment ; but the gloom arises wholly from guilt. If the law were loved and obeyed, it would be pleasant to think of its precepts, and of the account that we are soon to give before the judgment seat of CHRIST. Guilt is a dreadful companion and alters men's views of every thing ; of GOD the lawgiver ; of the law ; of the final day of judgment ; and of eternity. Guilt cuts off from the enjoyment of a blessed universe, and makes every thing gloomy and disquieting to the mind.

I HAVE mentioned some things, directing the manner and showing the importance of considering our ways, as they respect GOD, our duty, and an eternal state of rewards. And here I may properly mention some of the effects that would follow from faithfully performing the duty. With respect to the Psalmist, there was a most happy effect from considering his ways. This was blessed by GOD, as the means of making him turn to the divine testimonies, and of hastening and delaying not to keep the Lord's commandments. And here we will notice the effects that would hopefully follow, both in saints and sinners, from considering their ways.

1st. It would break the carnal ease and security of sinners.

ALTHOUGH it be the work of the Spirit to renew men's hearts, consideration would instruct them in their miserable and guilty condition, of which at present they appear to be altogether ignorant. It would bring them to feel their re-

lation to the lawgiver and his law ; instruct them in their own unholiness, when compared with the holy nature of GOD ; show them that they are condemned by the law, and that without grace they cannot escape its penalties ; but must endure them both in this, and in the world to come. It would teach them, that it is folly to expect peace of mind while remaining under the wrath of GOD, and that he in his power must prevail. It would make them sensible, that by all the material duties which they can perform, there is no effectual relief for an accusing conscience ; and that their former ideas of its being an easy thing to commence a life of religion, when they chuse, were altogether false and vain. It will give them a lively sense of the importance of eternal happiness, and the dreadful condition of such, as are forever subjected to the pains and terrors of an accusing conscience. Their thoughts would be much occupied with serious subjects—their conduct would be more circumspect—they would be more attentive to means and seasons of instruction—and the outrageous passions of sin would be restrained. And although they might be disposed, in many respects, to dislike the gospel scheme of salvation as they become acquainted with it, yet they would retain a deep conviction, that a Saviour is necessary, and become firm doctrinal believers, although they continued to rebel by not exercising repentance towards GOD and faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

MEN cannot consider their ways, in the manner that has been described, and be thoughtless, or devoted wholly to sensuality, or wholly reject the public means of instruction. If they have no love, fear will compel them to do many things gladly, that they may if possible escape

eternal death. After the day of grace and time of probation are ended, a sight and sense of the truths that have been mentioned, will create the despair of another world.

WHEN by consideration in this world, these truths are made real, there are two different states into which the mind may fall; for there is no safety without faith and repentance. The guilty creature may sink into despair and remain, as a prelude to the eternal despair into which the rolling of time is hastening him. Or what is more probable, he may outrageously determine, to put away consideration; to resist the Spirit of GOD; to give himself up to work iniquity with greediness, and brave the consequences of meeting an offended Jehovah. When this rash and awful conclusion is made, it is not uncommon for GOD to deny all farther awakening influence from himself, and give up the opposer to hardness of heart and blindness of mind; and now he will become more inconsiderate than ever, and with closed eyes and a seared conscience, sink down to the pains of a woeful eternity.

BUT when we see a state of consideration thoroughly commenced, we strongly hope a better issue. It is the method of sovereign grace to convince and awaken sinners by consideration, before he renews, converts and comforts them. — There is much more reason to hope that sovereign grace will pity the considerate than the inconsiderate; indeed in the case of the latter, every symptom indicates, that they must go down to eternal death. When GOD, who knows the counsels of his own will, intends, by his grace, to conquer the rebellious hearts of sinners, and give them grace unto eternal life, it is his common manner to awaken and convince them of

fin ; of a condemning law and certain destruction before them ; and of their own impotence, by any means which they use, to deliver themselves from a sinful and guilty heart. These convictions are not holiness, nor are they the beginning of holiness ; but in some cases, they are designed by infinite wisdom, to prepare the sinner to be sensible of the blessing when it is granted, and to aid him in the future exercise of gracious affections.

IN other cases, where these convictions, which are the effect of consideration, are lost, the consequences will be an awful increase of guilt ; an exemplary manifestation that it is the nature of sin to oppose reason and the Spirit of GOD ; and a more terrible punishment in the state of retribution. But because a considerate state of mind, through the grace of GOD, often ends in effectual piety, it ought not to be concluded, that consideration is holiness and salvation actually taken place. For we see many cases, in which the considerate, the convinced and the awakened, for a season, relapse and become the most hardened and vicious of men. On the other hand, let none think that it is probable, they shall be saved through grace, unless they exercise much consideration.

It is believed, that both scripture and experience in the Church of CHRIST confirm the observations that have been made upon this part of the subject ; and if they be true, it shows in a most clear manner, the folly, the danger and almost certain ruin of those who are inconsiderate. They shut themselves out from the kingdom of heaven. They put themselves away from that situation, on which GOD most usually bestows his sanctifying grace. Let none think they can merit by considering or performing any duties

which fall short of faith and repentance ; or that a divine promise is made to any thing short of evangelical holiness.—Let all remember, that until they exercise repentance towards God, and faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, they are in the number of the condemned, and may sink speedily to eternal ruin. Still let the inconsiderate know, that they are more eminently in the broad path to ruin.

WE will next consider the effects, that would hopefully follow in the people of God, from faithfully considering their ways.

WE are taught by experience, that the people of God are liable to great backslidings. The fervor and strength of Christian exercise are very different at different times. Christians ought, therefore, to use means to enliven their own faith and love, and preserve themselves from the ensnaring allurements of the world. A consideration of their own ways, is one of the most effectual means to preserve alive the power of gracious affections in the heart. Inconsideration is the most common cause of backsliding in those who have been brought to see and love the truth. They are inadvertently ensnared. As their sight of divine glory diminishes, some worldly object engages the attention, and they insensibly become cold in their duty, and warm in worldly pursuits. This often happens, while they have not any idea of much change in their state. If they had been faithful, daily to consider their state, their feelings to divine things, and their punctuality in duty ; and if they had compared themselves with the rules of holy living, found in the word of God, they would not have fallen so low in the exercises and comforts of the divine life. - The great Lord of his people is faithful to his cove-

nant, and gives the continued aids of his Spirit, to those who faithfully use the means, which he hath appointed for preserving the life of communion with himself. No Christian will ever have occasion, to accuse the covenant faithfulness of God in this respect. When the grace of God reclaims them, they will find the fault to have been all their own; and very probably, that the whole proceeded from a lukewarmness in considering their ways.—We will now proceed to the next general branch of discourse.

II. THAT it is the duty of those who consider, to become obedient without any delay.

“ I MADE haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.”

THERE is a very unhappy disposition in men, to think that by a beginning consideration and visible amendment of life, they have done the whole of their present duty; although they have not obeyed according to the precepts of the gospel. They hear it said that sanctification is a progressive work; and would fain hope, that for the time of their consideration, they have done as much as either the law of God or gospel of CHRIST requires of them. To correct this common mistake, let us attend to the subject.

1st. NOTHING that is short of a saving repentance and faith, amounts to evangelical obedience. Loving God supremely, or with the whole heart, strength and mind, is both law and gospel; and the lowest requirement to which there is any promise. All which comes short of this is disobedience; and a continuance in such a state, is adding sin to sin. But a man may consider much; he may do many things through the influence of education, or custom, or an awakened conscience; he may consider his present ways in

comparifon with the law ; may think much of his condition, of death, judgment and eternity, and in many refpects be greatly reformed in the opinion of worldly obfervers ; and ftill through the want of love, repentance and faith, he may be in a ftate of entire difobedience. With all thefe external things, all his duties, all his meditations, he doth not keep the commandments of **GOD**. It was not thus with the Pfalmift, for he fays, that when he confidered, “ he made hafte, and delayed not to keep **GOD**’s commandments.” He immediately and without any delay obeyed **GOD** ; mourned on the pureft motives for his fin ; and kept the commandment by loving the Lord with his whole heart, ftrength and mind. Nor is there any other way of obeying without delay, or keeping the commandments of **GOD**. **GOD** doth not any where fay to men, you may fafely continue confidering your miserable cafe, and as you fuppofe, amending on your own principles, and this all be done without loving my character and law. Evangelical obedience is the loweft term to which falvation and fafety are promifed ; and without thefe, all men are expofed to the juft difpleafure of **GOD**.

2dly. **THE** truth that hath juft been mentioned, reproves feveral conditions of people.

FIRST, it fhowes the danger of all formalifts in the performance of external duties. With all their formality, they are not obedient. They are deftitute of a right heart, which is the moft effential part of obedience. The confideration of their ways extends not to thofe firft principles of moral action in the heart, by which they muft be judged. Thofe who attend externally to fome moral duties of life, and perform fome fervices

which are called religious, but without any fixed delight in the holiness of God, are perhaps the most numerous class of persons who will be lost from under gospel light. In the time of CHRIST, he found and reprov'd them in the character of the Pharisees, and they have been found in every age. Men will chuse the form without the power of godliness, much sooner than they will chuse the piety of humble, believing and repenting followers of CHRIST.

SECONDLY, the subject shows the danger of resting in a conviction of sin, and in such reformation as proceeds from it, without true repentance.

MANY go no further than to become convinced, and greatly concerned for their state, at certain times. Feeling this, they rest in it as some evidence, that they have the beginning of a work of grace in their hearts. In this way convictions of sin, which at first appear hopeful, do often wear off, and the unhappy person sinks back again into a state of security, more deep than that from which the mind did at first emerge. In each of these cases, the difficulty arises from delaying and not making haste to keep GOD'S commandments. The formalist, through a general conviction of his own danger and of the duty which is required from him, rests in such external duties, as ought to be the fruit of a good, an humble and an holy heart. He is like the Pharisee, who prayed, "GOD I thank thee that I am not as other men." The convinced but relapsing sinner, for a time trembles over his own case, and makes a reformation in many things. His house is emptied of flagitious vices; it is swept and garnished with some visible duties; he walks through the exterior of religion, which,

as dry places, afford him no comfort, and then he returneth to his old state of security, and taketh with him seven other spirits worse than himself. His last state is worse than his first. He is become more secure, and his eyes more closed on truth and on his own true condition, than before he was awakened to think of his state.

THE evil and misery of all such as I have mentioned was, that they did not make haste to keep GOD'S commandments. They delayed in the great essentials of piety and godliness, and the visible duties which they performed, were from fear, or in the spirit of self-righteousness ; and not from a love of GOD, or his law, or a delight in duty. It is very dangerous for those, who are called to converse much with anxious minds, to treat them in such a manner as will lead them to suppose, that they are in a probable state of safety, because they are considerate and convinced. Such persons ought to be instructed that without consideration there is no probability of escaping the punishment of sin ; and that when they consider, the first thing should be, to make haste and delay not to keep GOD'S commandments.

I SHALL conclude this discourse with noticing the very imminent danger of two kinds of finners.

1. THOSE, who, in the face of a sensible conviction of their own dangerous state, delay repentance towards GOD and faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, which are the only evangelical obedience.

SUCH persons, when they do not repent and believe, are sinning with open eyes. They transgress directly against the dictates of reason and conscience. It is merciful in GOD, by a special

awakening influence, to open their eyes, that they may see their danger; but there is reason to fear, that if they continue to oppose him, he will say, that his Spirit shall strive with them no longer, and when this shall be the case, they will sink down in blindness to utter ruin. Those who have sinned away seasons of extraordinary conviction, have no reason to expect, that they shall ever have another so favorable a time, for securing their salvation.

2. THIS subject shows the exceeding great danger of living an inconsiderate life.

IT cannot pass unnoticed that many do it. They are wholly engaged and amused with the things of sense, and seem scarcely to reflect on an unseen world. While death is continually around them, and they know that their own turn must soon come; they conduct as though they were to live here forever, and do not appear to have any sense of the consequences of exchanging worlds. They do not appear to make any preparation, for a peaceful appearance in the presence of a most holy God; either by faith, repentance, or good works. All their talents and all their time are given up to the pursuits of interest, or the joyous scenes of sensuality and amusement. From seeing them, no one would suppose their actions to indicate a speedy farewell to the world and all its enjoyments; or that they are going to a holy world; or that they have any preparation to make for obtaining eternal blessedness, and to escape everlasting sorrow.—Behold the multitudes of men, which are within the lands of Christian light, for this address cannot be supposed to reach any other. The greater part are sedulously engaged in earthly pursuits; busy to gain some honor, pleasure or wealth; but how few appear to consider another world, or to make

any use of prayer or the other appointed means of religion. The whole here on earth is a vast busy scene, in which a multitude of actors are greedily pursuing a multitude of objects. Some in pursuit of one, some of another, and some of many; and all crowding forward, as though they had not yet attained happiness, but with raised expectations, as if they were in near prospect of it. Among all this multitude, there are only a few whose prospect for happiness appears to extend into eternity. Their views are fixed on something short of this; nor do they appear to have a real sense that they are very near going into another world. They are scarcely anxious for a preparation. When death, and the need of an immediate preparation are presented to their view, they are anxious to put such afflicting subjects out of sight; and when this point is gained, they have no anxiety for the end. A sight of the world of mankind witnesses this to be a true description. And to what an end can such inconsiderate persons come? Can it be a good and happy end? When they have been informed, that without holiness no man can see God; that to be saved they must love the Lord with the whole heart, strength and mind. What can be expected when a Saviour is provided, and all the benefits of his mediation offered to their acceptance, and they chuse the road that leads to death? Will not their sentence of exclusion from the presence of GOD be just, and will not their own consciences witness the infinite rectitude of the Judge? Can those, who have turned their backs on the gospel call, find any excuse, which being their own judges, they can deem a sufficient one? Or can the inconsiderate think that they are in the fair way to eternal life? No surely, for while they are so completely preoccupied with what is

present, they cannot be wise for that which is to come. No man can serve God and Mammon ; or the things of this world, and of that which is to come. The inconsiderate must be in a state of the most extreme danger. They have no right to heaven, because they have never repented and believed ; no preparation, because they do not love and seek and serve the Lord ; and no pleasure in the thought of coming to a most holy world of praise. May the Lord save us all from the judgment of the condemned, and bring us to attend to the things of our peace before they shall be hidden from our eyes ! AMEN.

S E R M O N VIII.

On giving the heart to God.

PROVERBS, xxiii. 26.

Mr son, give me thine heart,—.

THE Proverbs and precepts of this book, most excellently illustrate the benefits of a religious practice ; also, the miserable end of a vicious life, in the evils naturally connected with sin, and the just displeasure of a holy God. The writer was instructed in good and evil, by a long experience ; and by the inspiration of the Almighty, who improved him to give most excellent lessons of wisdom to men. The stile of instruction is different from what is found in any other of the sacred writers, and appears to be influenced by a deep experimental sense of the truth which is expressed. From the history which we have of the life of Solomon, we should suppose this would be the case ; for his situation was in all respects, so ordered by a wise providence, that he might have an opportunity to

verify the truth by experience. He did not want for power or riches to make the trial, and he tells us, that he "gave his heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly." To add energy to the instruction of his own word, and to the voice of divine wisdom which Solomon penned, God permitted him to make an experiment of what all men naturally wish, to show how far worldly and sensual indulgences will give happiness. On every thing, which can be had in this world without true religion, he wrote the humbling motto, "Vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit." Multitudes live in dissipation without giving themselves opportunity to consider; and multitudes live on hope, thinking if they could obtain certain earthly things, which are in prospect, they should be happy; but to each of these the wise man gives a timely warning, that their madness will end in pain, and their false hopes in disappointment. After he had run through the whole course of expectation and sensuality, he passes one and the same sentence on all the sinful courses of men, "Vanity of vanities."

AN experience of the blessedness of religion, with the reflection which it produces, taught him that the supreme good of man is to have God for his friend and portion; and he appeared with high delight to pen the invitations and precepts of religion; to tell us that the "ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and all her paths the paths of peace;" and that God's principal requirement is, "my son, give me thine heart." The testimony in favor of religion and strict godliness, given by a man, who had the advantages which he possessed to gain a worldly happiness, if it be in the nature of things possible, ought to have great

influence, with all who deny the happy power of religion in the heart, and are made mad by the pursuit of peace in earthly and unlawful courses. The condition of life, in which many Christians are placed, permits it to be said that they are denied to the world, because they cannot gain their wishes; and that it is in despair of success, when they say, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Some seem never to have an opportunity of spreading their earthly expectations wide; and some, where prospects for a season bloom, are borne down by irresistible disappointments in unexpected ways. Of such the world will say, however sincere their faith and practice may be, that they despair of gaining, and therefore condemn the prize of the world as unsatisfactory. It is well known that a good providence, often blasts the temporal prospects of men, to turn their affections from sensual objects, and call their thoughts to duty and a higher interest. As means in the divine government this is excellent; but it may not from hence be determined, that worldly happiness is superior to the pleasures of religion; nor may it be determined that the world can give any true and satisfactory good. It seems, that in the case of Solomon, a boundless prosperity, was blessed as a means of showing him the vanity of the world and men's need of religion to make them happy now and hereafter. It matters little what means are used by infinite wisdom, to teach them the all-concerning lesson, that religion is the duty and happiness of man; and that a supreme love of the world reigning in his heart, is his misery, and the practice his punishment. The important thing is to learn the truth and be conformed to it. But still this lesson, learned in the way that Solomon was instructed, may most impressively teach some minds:

which are fired with an earthly ambition. They see the experiment made, under the best advantages for success; and still the experimenter repairing to the principles and practice of religion for his comfort, when all other things are found unsatisfying. We hear him calling on men to give their hearts to God, and to walk in wisdom's ways, that they may be happy.

THE precept of our text, contains in epitome the law of Christian holiness. "My son, give me thine heart."

IN the following discourse I shall endeavor to explain and enforce the precept; to show the nature of the duty required; its reasonableness; the happiness of obedience; the guilt and misery of disobedience; and end with a serious inquiry and exhortation with our own consciences, whether we have complied with the command.

I. I AM to describe the nature of the duty required in the precept, "My son, give me thine heart."

THIS inspired book is introduced, as the address of infinite wisdom to the miserable and perishing children of men. It is God himself who speaks under the name of wisdom, advising, intreating, and kindly giving his promise to the obedient. The name which is assumed, implies a most affectionate regard to our well-being, and an ability to guide us to the highest good which our natures are capable of receiving. It is not the wisdom of man, which is often deceived by taking darkness for light; but the wisdom of God who hath infinite knowledge, goodness and truth, and can bring his obedient sons to the highest glory.

UNDER the appellation of son, to whom the precept is addressed, is included every creature who hears, of whatever age, language or nation. Although many will perish by their disobedience, probably from every age, and from every Christian denomination; there are none exempted from this call and command. To every one GOD saith, "My son, give me thine heart." To every one he saith, be wise for thyself; be wise for eternity; be wise in this thy day to know the things of thy peace.—Continued unholiness, wherever it be found, will cut off from salvation; but there are none who hear in the spirit of love, become holy and comply with the command, "My son, give me thine heart," who will be cut off from the blessedness of eternal life. Although there be many disputes raised on this subject, and many attempts to throw the blame of eternal misery on GOD, there will never be but one cause that can shut men out from eternal life; and that is their disobedience to the divine requirements.

THE heart, which is to be given, is expressive of our supreme love and affection.

THE heart which is to be given to GOD, both in sacred and common language, and it is a language understood by all, means our love, delight and approbation, in the highest degree of exercise, and more than we bestow on any other object. To love GOD supremely; to delight in him more than in any other; and to approve all that we see in his nature and counsels, is to give him our hearts: But while any other object is more beloved; more delightful to us; and more approved, he hath not our hearts. Whatever it be which intervenes and holds possession of our hearts in preference to him; whether

the honors, pleasures or profits of time, are the idols, which we are accused of serving and trusting. Such idols are worshipped by every one, who hath strayed from GOD in affection. They are many, and perhaps it would be difficult to find an object, either so frail or so base, that is not idolized by affection or trust, among the multitude of depraved minds in this sinful world. Having strayed from the true Lord, every creature attempts to find in the things around him, a portion and a defence in which he may confide; and all this is done, that by the help of such means, he may put himself in the place of GOD; be his own lord, his own defender, and the author of his own peace.

CONFORMABLE with this representation, we find to be the sacred descriptions of human depravity, and the law of holiness and of a return to GOD. Men's sin and depravity, are that they have loved and served the creature, more than the Creator.—The law of holiness, as given both by Moses and CHRIST, is, that love is the fulfilling of the law. Thou shalt love the Lord thy GOD, with all thy heart, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Giving the heart is giving the whole man. Where this is done, there is no reserve either of self, or of any object that can be commanded. All is given back cheerfully to him as the original and highest proprietor; all is consecrated to his service and the advancement of his kingdom; every power of existence becomes an organ of praising and serving him, and the whole man, both body and spirit, is consciously given up to the Lord. Whatever object we supremely love, to that object we are devoted in service. If it be the world, we serve the world. If it be honor, or profit, or pleasure,

there is a slavery to these. So universal is this law of nature, that we never knew an exception in all the conduct of men. Hence we find a key of instruction to explain the labors of a busy world. All are immortal—all wish to be happy—all are going into eternity, but they are divided in their pursuits according to the state of their hearts. Some give their hearts to the world, and it is the idol which reigns in their affections. Some are reclaimed by the grace of **GOD** to love him, and we find them engaged in his service, frequent in prayer, much in praise and abounding in the good deeds commanded by his law.

FURTHER, Men naturally trust in the objects of their supreme love.

UNDER the feelings of distress or impotence of any kind, we naturally go for help to the things on which we have relied to make us happy, and the habit of doing thus becomes so much a law of action, that the moral state of the heart may generally be thus discovered.

THE plainest rule, by which we may determine whether our hearts be given to **GOD**, is to find what objects appear most beautiful to us, and what employments give us the most pleasure. If we have given our hearts to **GOD**, his character will appear clothed with an infinite beauty—all glorious—all lovely—all worthy of service and praise.—Whatever hides or separates from him will be carefully avoided. Whatever displays or gives a sense of being near to him, will be sought with great desire; and the law will be loved, not only as a rule of duty, and the gospel as a way of deliverance from misery, but as means of displaying the glorious perfections of his nature. Consequently, the employments of reli-

religious worship will be delightful, as they tend to bring his character into the fairest view of the mind. Thus all religious services, and seasons for social worship will be sought with ardor, and enjoyed with a most sensible delight. When those who have chosen God and given him their hearts, are rejoiced in seasons of worship, there is a communional sense of delight in the same glorious object, and in a uniformity of moral character; but their principal pleasure in such seasons, is by considering them the instituted means of obtaining a sight of the glory of God. He is often pleased, in honor to his own appointment, to communicate himself most delightfully, and make all his glories shine in on the souls of those, who gather in union of heart to pray and praise.

THAT religion, doth most essentially consist in loving and giving the heart to God, may be learned from all the descriptions which we find in his word. It is the express precept of his law. It is the description of a christian temper. Love is in its nature and effects comprehensive of all those gracious affections, to which the promises are made. It is described to be the temper and delight of heaven—the source of happiness to the saints now and hereafter, and the completion of the Spirit of CHRIST in the hearts of his redeemed. It is this, also, which renders obedience pleasant, nor can any other principle in nature be found, which will bind a free and rational soul to obey and make him happy in the service. Thus reason, experience and revelation combine to teach us the nature of that true religion, which is accepted by the Father of mercies, and prepares us for heaven.

HAVING described the nature and exercise of the duty enjoined in the text, I am,

II. To speak of its reasonableness.

WHEN the apostle exhorts, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," he adds, "which is your reasonable service." Giving our hearts to God, and presenting our bodies a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to him, are the same duty, and imply giving up our whole being to his glory, service and praise. This is reasonable on many accounts, and those who neglect the duty, are irrationally sinning against God and themselves. Although some such, may vainly boast in their own reason, and think themselves the wisest of men, they are practically denying the intelligent nature God hath given them. The great author of our being, never considers us as acting reasonably, unless we comply with our duty by giving him our hearts, or loving him supremely; and doing our duty to our neighbors by loving them as we do ourselves. This is the divine law of holiness, and that it is reasonable will appear by the following considerations.

I. WE are, in the highest sense, the divine property, and our service is due to the author and preserver of our being.

RENDERING our hearts to God is the best service we can yield to him, and without this, in his Omniscient sight, all other service is hypocritical. Is it not reasonable that the creature should be devoted to a good Creator? That those, who are upheld by a constant agency of the Almighty, should be wholly consecrated to the service of him who upholds? If there were

no such thing as obligation arising from the moral excellency of God, and he were considered only in the character of an Almighty Creator, who constantly upholds his own work, on the principles which appear generally to govern sinful men, they must acknowledge it reasonable that we should give our hearts to God. I am sensible that this argument is addressed to certain opinions of the world and principles of human nature, which perhaps arise from selfish considerations; but still it ought to silence all those who are disposed to fault the divine requirement, "my son, give me thine heart." Such persons, treating God as they claim a right to be treated, must own that he who gives and upholds being, may reasonably require their service, in the most extensive sense.

To all those who have attained a sight of the infinite moral excellence there is in God, the argument must appear of sufficient weight to control all objections. An infinitely glorious and perfect Creator hath an undoubted right to the whole service of the creature, whom he made and upholds in being; and pious persons who consider themselves as divine property, and behold the excellence of the Creator, will feel the deepest conviction that it is reasonable to love God with the whole heart, strength and mind.

2dly. THE infinite excellence and worthiness of God is another consideration, which shows the reasonableness of giving him our hearts.

THIS is the principal ground of that moral obligation, which will forever make it the duty of all creatures to serve, obey and love the Lord with their whole heart, strength and mind.—Whatever may be thought of the argument last mentioned, which is drawn from our being the

property of God, it must be allowed, that the infinite excellency of his nature and his unchangeable glory deserve the chief affection of every heart. The greatness and goodness of his being are adorable and lovely—forever to be admired, esteemed and praised. The reasonableness of giving our hearts to God, doth not depend on our particular relations to him; for whatever these may be, his innate, self-possessed and self-supported glory is worthy of all praise and love, and no creature, in any situation, can be excused from the obligation. Infinite truth, righteousness and goodness must be lovely—it must be our duty to admire and delight in them—it must be right to serve and obey them. This is the great argument, which will forever convince and condemn sinners of being unreasonable when they deny their love to God. To deny our love is a denial of his rights and merits, and of the unchangeable glory that is ever in his nature. Where there is moral excellency, a moral obligation to love and esteem doth arise of course, and there is no cause by which it can be annulled. The angels and spirits of just men made perfect, who are around the throne of God and the Lamb, offer up their incessant praise for what they see in his infinite nature. The benefits they receive may be evidence of his moral goodness and create an obligation to gratitude; but the unchangeable excellence of his nature makes it reasonable, they should love him supremely. As this obligation arises from the nature of God, and not from the particular benefits we receive by him, it is universal, and reasonably imposed on all. It is as really the duty of sinners, who are unforgiven and under the penalty of the law, to give their hearts to God, as it is of those who are pardoned and sanctified by his grace; for

the obligation in both cases, arises from the glory of his infinite nature, and not from their willingness or unwillingness to love and serve him.

THE reasonableness of this duty will abide forever, in every condition of life, whether in pleasure or pain, prosperity or adversity. Neither will the obligation be dissolved or the duty less reasonable, even in the mansions of sorrow, where there is no forgiveness. If the Lord our God be excellent in his own nature; if all his excellency be self-originated and self-supported; the friendship or enmity of our minds towards him can make no change in the obligation. If we give him our hearts we act reasonably; or if we deny our love we are unreasonable and deserving of punishment. Those sinners, who in impenitence outlive the calls of grace, will be forever fixed in an unreasonable state of mind; and their sin, guilt, and desert of divine punishment will increase with the duration of their existence; because God will forever continue to be lovely, and they to be opposed to him.

3dly. **WHATEVER** prevents the highest happiness and perfection of our natures is unreasonable.

DIVINE goodness, not only permits but directs us to seek the perfection of our minds in moral virtue, and the greatest possible increase in knowledge and understanding. To disobey is unnatural and contradicts at once the principles of right reason, and of self-preservation. We have no right to destroy ourselves, or by a perverse temper to come short of that perfection, which we are capable of attaining by a good heart and right practice. Those who refuse to give their hearts to God, are unreasonably preventing their own

happinefs, and thus mar the divine works in their exiftence, and their ufeulnefs in the kingdom of CHRIST. But their unreafonablenefs in this refpect, will more clearly appear from the next branch of difcourfe.

III. WE are to confider the happinefs that arifes from giving our hearts to GOD.

THERE is a common defire in men to be happy, and a common dread of mifery. Thofe who refufe their love and obedience, do not intend to make themfelves miferable, and they are seeking happinefs even in the midft of their vices, although every ftep directly brings forrow, or expofes them in future to its power.—There are various reafoas, why fo little fenfe of this is found among mankind. Sin is blinding in its nature, and while it reigns in the heart, entirely prevents religious enjoyment and peace. It darkens the underftanding to the glory of GOD; fo that there appears nothing in him to be defired; hence the irreligious do not conceive any thing, either of the nature or degree of that bleffednefs, which is enjoyed by the faints of GOD, when they live in near communion with him. They hear this bleffednefs mentioned; they fometimes obferve Chriftians filled with joy in their communional poffeffion of the common and glorious good; but being blind themfelves and having never experienced the happinefs, they think it to be a delufion, and altogether the effect of an enthufiaftic zeal. Neither will they be convinced though often told of its reality.—Hence, fome appear to fall into a ftate of deep inconfideration, and to be fo wholly fwallowed up in worldlinefs and fenfuality, as to form no opinion whatever, concerning piety and godlinefs.—Others fall into the deepeft and moft danger-

ous errors of opinion, concerning those truths that are essential to salvation. They imbibe the greatest errors concerning the deep things of God's character and counsels; concerning the moral requirements of the law; concerning the doctrines of redemption by the grace of God, and the extent of salvation; and concerning that holiness of temper and practice to which the promises of salvation and admission to heaven are made.

AGAIN there are others, who seeming to pass by all matter of opinion, on the subject, and giving themselves no concern about truth or falsehood, but following the present impulse of appetite, practise iniquity with greediness, and do not conceive that there is any happiness but that of sinning. All these are actuated by the corruption of human nature, and being blinded by sin, while seeking happiness are going down to misery. —But there is a happiness in giving the heart to God which transcends all imagined felicity in the practice of sin.

I. THERE is the happiness of contemplating the divine character.

THIS observation will be unintelligible to all un sanctified minds, because their sight of God is productive of pain and fear; but the same prospect which pains the unholy, through a change in their hearts, becomes the pleasure of the pious. There is always happiness in beholding an admired and beloved object; and the degree of happiness will be in proportion to the capacity of the beholder and the excellence of the object that is seen. When a perfectly good mind beholds infinite excellency, the happiness is the greatest that it can be; and thus the angels of heaven and the spirits of just men made perfect, are

completely blessed in seeing and praising God. They are free from sin ; their minds are holy ; they behold a GOD of infinite glory ; and thus their heaven is begun—a heaven of light and peace to increase forever. A true sight of the glory of GOD is the beginning of happiness in the saints on earth, and the degree of their bliss will be in proportion to their sanctification and to their sight of God. When by a spiritual enlightening, the glory of the Lord shines in on the mind, they find a felicity new in degree and kind.—The felicity of beholding him—of seeing and admiring his perfections. The same character which once was seen with fear, is now contemplated with delight ; and every divine perfection, in every mode of display, through all the works of nature and grace, gives a transporting pleasure to the soul. To this sense of happiness, in loving or giving the heart to God, there is no alloy, for it is approved by conscience and a sound judgment ; but this is not the case with the pleasures of sinning. These are alloyed in every considerate hour by a disapproving judgment and by the presages of natural conscience, that there is a judgment to be hereafter executed. Blessed are those, whose happiness hath no alloy ! There is no alloy to those, who have given their hearts to God, but what arises from remaining sin, and the corrections of GOD which are administered in covenant faithfulness, to preserve them from sinning and to keep them near to himself. And when their sin is perfectly removed, there will be nothing to mar their peace.

2. THOSE who have given their hearts to God, have the happiness of approving the divine law

and government, under which their existence must always continue.

To exist where the principles of a government are opposed, and where the law is disliked, must be an unhappy state of mind. This unhappiness will forever come on those, who are sinful in temper and practice. As the character of the lawgiver is opposed; so his precepts and administration will be a constant wound to the heart. There cannot be a more undesirable state of existence, than where the lawgiver, law and government are contradictory to the heart. Here originates that necessity of pain, which is to the ungodly, and those who do not believe in our Lord JESUS. They are opposed to the law; to the government of GOD; and to the gospel of JESUS, according to which men shall be judged, and therefore they must be unhappy. On these natural principles stand the necessity of a place of punishment to the unholy. Wherever they exist, to such minds, must be a state of misery; and the state of their hearts constitute a condition of woe. These are grounds of terror, inwrought with the principles of nature itself, which ought to be freely told to the disobedient and unbelieving. But to the godly and believing all is contrary—all is full of hope by the promises of the gospel—all is full of glory by their enjoyment of GOD—all is full of peace by their acquiescence in the law and government of GOD under which they shall forever exist. They view the commandment as holy, just and good, and if they had a power given, they would not reverse any present law which they are now bound to obey, nor change a single event in the divine government. In their view, all is right, and therefore all is happy—all is heaven both within and around them, and will be so forever! For

the law and government of GOD are as unchangeable as his nature, and the power of his grace will maintain these dispositions, without a possibility of apostacy !

3dly. THOSE who have given their hearts to GOD, have the happiness of an approving conscience.

IT is impossible for any mind to be happy, which is at war with itself. Where there is a direct disagreement between the existing powers of an intelligent mind, there must be misery. The counsels and government of infinite wisdom are so perfect, it will be clear to the most unholy minds, that they cannot in equity be changed, and hence will come a contention between their reason and their consciences. The conflict will be a fountain of evil springing up into everlasting misery—a misery that is caused, formed and felt within the mind itself. The opposite state to this is peaceful. To approve ourselves—to have the testimony of a good conscience—to feel the sweet accord of reason and conscience—to know that we are pursuing the most excellent things, and have the full enjoyment of them—to feel ourselves emboldened in our approach to GOD and delivered from the expectation of a fiery indignation to come, must give peace to the mind.

4thly. THERE is the blessedness of a most sweet communion between those who have given their hearts to GOD.

MEN exist with a social nature that is prepared to be made happy by the enjoyment of a common good. We see this in society, that is not regulated by the rules of moral virtue. All the friends of CHRIST know by experience the hap-

pinefs of communion in the enjoyment of **God**; of trust in the Saviour; friendship to his kingdom, and to the souls of men; delight in his law; and pleasure in his praise and worship. The blessedness of present communion is increased by an anticipation of its eternal continuance in the kingdom of heaven, where all the holy shall join in the enjoyment of a common good. And the infinite nature of the good enjoyed, will prevent all jealousy and the influence of opposing interests. A sight of divine glory is the principal object of Christian blessedness, and all who can see may enjoy it. With this communional blessedness heaven will be forever filled.

5thly. **THOSE** who have given their hearts to **God** may hope, by a divine influence from the Father of mercies, to be filled with a sense of that peace which passeth understanding.

A **SENSE** of divine love; a communicated view of **God's** glory ravishing the soul; and the sensible return of his love into the heart, which he at times gives to his people, to solace them under the afflictions of the world, and draw them forward to a heaven of holiness and peace, ought to be considered as a high ingredient in the happiness of those who have given their hearts to **God**. And is there not happiness enough opened to the understanding of men, to call them back from the world and incline them to give their hearts to **God**? What more can they demand? In return for the discharge of their duty, **God** giveth to them a sight and enjoyment of himself in all his glory, and a state of happiness begun on earth, and by the assurance of a divine promise to be completed in heaven. The reward is sufficient, and our sense of its greatness will be increased by considering,

IV. THE guilt and misery of disobedience.

ON this part of the subject there is less need of my enlarging, as we have already, in reflecting on the sources of happiness to the obedient, occasionally noticed the many openings for misery to those who disobey. As the temper of the holy and unholy are opposed; so the same truths, which make the former happy will give pain to the latter. They will be pained by a sight of GOD; and if what is seen of him in this world of darkness, distresses their guilty minds, how much more will they be distressed in the world of clear light? They will be pained by the law and government of GOD, for these must ever continue of the same nature they now be. By the disappointments that will be experienced in the objects of their affection and trust; by the remorse of their own consciences; by the affliction caused through the instrumentality of their own companions in sin and guilt; and by an infused sense of the just indignation of an injured and offended GOD. These sources of pain will forever lie open to those, who have not given their hearts to their rightful Sovereign and to his kingdom. Added to these sources of unhappiness, there will be a thousand circumstances to aggravate the bitterness of reflection. It will be said to them by their own consciences, when the day of recovery is past, “remember that in thy life, thou
“ hadst thy good things, while those who are
“ now enraptured in the glory of heaven and
“ most blissfully praising GOD around his throne,
“ had their evil things. They wisely improved
“ the probation season, which by thee was mis-
“ improved. Now they are comforted, whilst
“ thou art tormented—punished by thy GOD,
“ and tormented by thyself. Thy birth was in
“ a land of Christian light—thou wast taught

“ GOD’S law, and the holy doctrines of his grace.
 “ Thou hast heard his word in the sanctuary;
 “ thy conscience hath often made thee tremble;
 “ and thou wast at times awakened by the Holy
 “ Spirit; but thou didst resist. Serious people
 “ were all around thee, and thou didst despise
 “ them, and neglect the seasons of their commun-
 “ ion in prayer and praise to GOD.—The nature
 “ of religion as explained in the word of GOD,
 “ and enforced by considerations of reason and
 “ experience, was disagreeable, and piety was
 “ rejected.—Life and death, heaven and hell,
 “ were set before thee, and the choice was thine
 “ own, and the bitter pangs of remorse and pain,
 “ which are now suffered, are the fruits of thy
 “ own voluntary choice, and GOD and thine
 “ own conscience are the witnesses to these
 “ truths.”

WHAT can the self-condemned mind answer to such reflections as these, for truly they are *the worm that dieth not*.

HATH not enough been said, to show the unreasonableness and folly of those, who disobey the command, *My son give me thine heart*. And to whom is the command given? Is there one, who hears or reads to whom the subject is uninteresting? Not one!—However diversified our conditions may be, in many temporal respects, we are all coming to the hour of trial—to the presence and the judgment of GOD. There the rich will meet the poor, and the honorable will be a companion on the same level with the mean man. No distinction of preference in the rewards of divine grace, will be made on account of earthly advantages, which were not well improved.

THEN those who improved their present advantages in impiety, will wonder to find themselves stripped of those earthly confidences, which

made them boast against GOD! They will find themselves weak as the weakest,—helpless as those whom they used to oppress, and more mean in the divine sight, than the meanest of those on whom they used to tread. Then they will wonder that they could once be filled with proud opinions of themselves, seeing that GOD hath so little regard to the pride and glory of sinful men. It will be surprising to them that they were not wise, when there was an accepted time and a day of salvation. All men are approaching to the time of trial, in the presence of Omniscience, and may GOD give to those who read, grace to be prepared, that they may be accepted in his sight.
AMEN.

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S E R M O N IX.

On the duty of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

MATTHEW, xxii. 39.

—*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

OUR blessed Saviour was induced to give this precept, by one coming and asking him, “which is the great commandment of the law?” To which he gave the following instructive answer. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”—In this latter verse he meant that the love to God and men here commanded is the sum of religion—the whole of the duty we owe to our Maker, and his creatures; whether they be the inhabitants of this world, or creatures in other worlds. Also, that it is a complete rule

of happiness for ourselves, and through our obedience will bring us to glory.

“THE whole of the law and the prophets.”
—The whole sum of virtue and holiness as it is enjoined in the moral law, that was given by Moses ; also the whole of that evangelical temper, of which the prophets spake in their descriptions of the Redeemer’s kingdom.

No mere man hath fulfilled this law in his temper and practice. All have fallen short, and are therefore guilty, and need a Redeemer. The work of the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of **GOD**, in calling his people to himself, is to beget in them the exercise of love to **GOD** and men ; and after the exercise is begun to further it in strength, and bring it to a degree of maturity, by which the whole man will be eternally filled and governed.

It is generally allowed, even by those who are remote from Christian holiness, that supreme love to **GOD**, and our neighbor as ourselves, are the common duty of mankind ; but when they come to a practical application of the law, they fail both in their ideas of its spirituality, and in the exercise to others. We should think from the general confession, which is made, of the rectitude of the law, that it was obeyed ; but when we come to see the practice of men, if we were to determine from this alone, we should suppose they had not even a knowledge of the commandment. The commandment in words, is allowed to be good ; but it is dispensed with in practice, and there are no evident signs that it reigns in the heart. And if we charge such practice as a sin, then all the powers of the mind are exerted to exculpate—to extenuate—to lower down the meaning of the commandment—to justify the sin, and to reconcile a precept and a

practice which are utterly and will be eternally irreconcilable. It is thus that men treat the law of GOD, by carelessly and complaisantly owning it to be good ; while they disobey, and on being reproved, justify the disobedience. In this they seem to think that GOD is like men, pleased with words where there is no sincerity—imposed on by merely verbal pretences—and that they can make a kind of composition with GOD, by allowing the fitness of duty, and speaking kindly concerning it, while there is no obedience in the heart. But O how little do they, in this state, know of the infinite holiness of the Lawgiver!—how little of the spirituality of the commandment ! how little of the sin of their own hearts, and of their unlikeness to GOD, and of their defects in his sight!—how little of that strict account, which they must render before the tribunal of the LORD JESUS CHRIST!—How little do they know of the true spirit of a Christian, who hath some degree of the same kind of love to men, that was in all fulness in CHRIST JESUS ! If such careless and complaisant confessors of the rectitude of the law, are ever brought to see their own hearts truly, and to repent with a Christian sorrow ; they will be convinced and will confess, that they never loved GOD with the whole heart, nor their neighbor as themselves. They will be made sensible that they were ignorant of the true meaning of the commandment, and of the nature of that love to our neighbor which is required.

IN further attending to this subject the following things will be attempted.

I. To describe who is meant by our neighbor, whom we are to love as we do ourselves.

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II. THE reasons why we ought thus to love our neighbor.

III. THE degree of love which is here enjoined.

IV. THE fruits or effects which will follow, where this love is formed in the heart by the sanctifying power of God.

I. WE inquire who is meant by our neighbor, whom we are to love as we do ourselves.

THE nature and objects of love, are the first things to be determined, in this important point. Although the command be so explicit, that none can deny the letter, its meaning and extension may be greatly misconceived. The extension of the commandment appears to have been a matter of inquiry, with the person to whom CHRIST was speaking. The evangelist Luke gives us a further account of the conversation. After the inquirer had heard his answer, and acknowledged it to be just, still it is said, "that being willing to justify himself, he said unto JESUS, and who is my neighbor?" This question comes to one of the points, where men disagree with God, and generally first find themselves to be deficient. Their selfish affections to those, with whom they are nearly connected, are mistaken for a holy love in obedience to the law; and where these selfish affections cease to operate, they endeavor to persuade themselves that the law doth not extend. As in the case of personal enemies, they may be convinced, that actual and bitter revenge is not lawful; but that the law means they should as sincerely love the souls of their enemies, as they do their near connections, is thought to be unnatural and incredible;

therefore they will suppose the commandment to be figuratively expressed, and lower down its meaning until it becomes more accommodated to their feelings. And though all their feelings are selfish, they would hope them to be so far in obedience, as to be accepted by God.

AGAIN, in the common use of the word neighbor, it often means appropriately, proximity in place of residence ; or some connection and relation of interests, by which men are brought near to each other. This appropriate meaning of the word neighbor, is well adapted to the feelings of a sinful heart. The unholy have not diffusive benevolent feelings—their affections are confined to themselves, and the little circle in connection with them. Their kind wishes extend no farther than the sight, interest and influence of self-love ; and beyond this men do not appear to them to be neighbors. Therefore they feel no affection for those, who are not of their party, not of their nation, or who are in a distant part of the world. It seems to them, that there is no obligation to love such ; and that as they are placed beyond the reach of personal connection, their interests, joys and sorrows are of no importance to them, and no proper object of their concern. Here the selfish heart is betrayed, for such are disregarded in affection, because they are in a condition that no personal benefit is expected from them,

It was with such feelings as those mentioned, that the person inquired of CHRIST, “but who is my neighbor?” He allowed that his neighbor ought to be loved—that the law was good—and even his selfishness did not wish to dispute it ; but after the commandment was fixed, in order for self-justification, lest, as it was expressed, some of his own enmities should be condemned and he

thereby be brought into danger, he was disposed to limit it.

HE was willing to receive as neighbors, his friends, his own party, and his own nation in distinction from the rest of mankind ; but farther than this it is probable his affections did not extend. This is the common limit of unholy affections, and when we come to examine them, they may all be traced back to the regard which men have for their own persons and interests.

IT is a most happy circumstance, that we have the meaning of the word neighbor, as it is used in the divine law, defined by CHRIST, the law-giver himself. It is defined in a parable, and in a manner that none but the great Lord of the Church himself could have done, in answer to the question " who is my neighbor ?" It is the parable of the good Samaritan, recorded in Luke x ; and contains complete practical instruction on this point.

THE Jews and Samaritans were not only of two nations ; but from a variety of causes, which had long operated, their hatred and resentment were wrought to the highest pitch. They were personal and national enemies, in civil policy and in religion. This was so generally the case, in both nations, that nothing but the reign of divine grace in the heart could triumph over the animosity, and make Jewish and Samaritan hearts love each other, and do good deeds.

THE substance of the parable is this. A Jew in journeying fell among thieves, who stripped, wounded and left him half dead. A priest of his own nation, who was bound by all the obligations of religion and office, humanely to give him help, saw him and passed by on the other side. The minister of religion was not a minister of humanity,—he could not be a good man, and

the love of God and mercy of the Saviour was not in his heart.—A Levite, another person of sacred profession and of his own nation, saw him and looked on him, and then passed by on the other side. He gave no help, for the love of benevolence was not in his heart. He was not like CHRIST to pity the miserable. Neither was this a good man. It was reserved for divine grace to triumph in the heart and practice of a Samaritan. This Samaritan, as he was passing, saw the wounded, half dying man and had compassion on him. He stayed not to inquire or even to think of what party, nation, or condition in life is this man? The bowels of his compassion answered to the sight of his eyes, here is a miserable man, I will try to relieve him—here is one wounded, I will pour the oil of joy into his wounds and bind them up—here is a fellow creature, made by our common Creator, with a capacity to be happy, but now miserable and in danger of death; let it be mine, if possible, to save his life, to heal his wounds, and to restore him to that happiness of which he may be capable. Having dressed his wounds, he placed him on his own beast, and conducting him to an inn, left him not, until he had paid the price of his future recovery. The whole story pictures a benevolent heart, and that love which discovers a neighbor in every one who is capable of being relieved and made happy. Christian love triumphed over Samaritan hatred, under such circumstances, as seemed the nearest impossible to be overcome in this selfish state of men, and the victory was greater than to conquer a world.

HAVING told the story, CHRIST left it to the conscience of the inquirer, to answer his own question “who is my neighbor?” by asking him “which now of these three thinkest thou was

neighbor to him, who fell among thieves?" His conscience was touched, and convicted for a moment, and he could not but answer rightly, "He that showed mercy on him." To this CHRIST replied, "Go and do thou likewise." Thou hast inquired who is my neighbor, and thine own conscience, when party enmity was for a moment hushed, hath answered thee. In the awful presence of GOD, thy party enmities—thy soothing excuses—thy vain pretences to limit and lower down the commandment will all vanish. Although thy heart may not be changed, it will be seen by thee and by all who are in the same unholy condition, that every man, who is capable of happiness and of being made better, is thy neighbor in the benevolent construction of the law, and understanding of the lawgiver. When thou comest into the judgment of the great day, where saints and sinners will be brought together in one great assembly, the meaning of the law will not be doubtful.

"Go and do thou likewise"—how admirable the precept, when we consider it as founded upon the instruction of the parable!—how explanatory of the nature of true Christian love and benevolence! How would happiness abound in this world of sorrow, if all acted according to the spirit of this law? "Go and do thou likewise." Go and be neighbor to all mankind. Pity misery wherever it is seen. Restore to peace and happiness wherever it can be done. Regard not nation, age nor party; but be good to all. Where thou seekest those rational capacities, that are able to receive happiness, let it be thy work to communicate; and if thou canst not give, to pray that GOD would give, and thank him where he hath imparted it. Let not thy good works be limited

by any thing short of thine utmost abilities ; nor thy good wishes by any thing short of immensity and eternity. Let it belong to GOD to determine the times and the seasons—the way, the manner and the subjects of blessedness, for he can make it the greatest possible ; but let it be thine to wish the utmost possible diffusion of blessedness and glory. Let thy good works here, show the holy benevolence of thy heart ; yet let not thy views or wishes be confined to this short time, or this narrow earth. These with all thy brethren in the world are children of eternity. Wish the same eternity of holiness and glory to them, as thou dost desire for thyself. To call them brethren here only, will be transient ; but to call them brethren hereafter, will be glorious indeed, yea even a weight of glory.—To do them good, only in time, will be a momentary beneficence ; but to do them good through the vast futurity of being, will be forever becoming more and more like to the infinite source of being and fountain of love. Thus we might go on forever, to explain, enforce and show the extent of the exhortation “go and do thou likewise.”

WE learn from the parable, which CHRIST spake in answer to the question, “who is my neighbor?” that the meaning of the word in the divine law is every possible subject of GOD’S goodness and of happiness. There is but one possible limitation to our benevolence which is lawful, and that is, where the word of infinite knowledge, truth and holiness hath informed us that goodness and mercy cannot reach to individuals, in consistency with his design of greater good to the whole. Where God hath limited the bestowment of his mercy, we may limit our neighborly feelings, and at no point short of this.

And when limited here, there is no door opened for the passion which we commonly call revenge. This word is used and applied to the divine character, because human language contains no other; and only to teach us his displeasure and punishment of sin in the best manner we are able to conceive. But there is nothing in the vengeance of GOD, that is like to the revenge of unholy minds. He punishes as well as rewards in benevolence, and will do so eternally.

FROM this explanation of the word neighbor, we find why we are commanded, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father that is in heaven."—If our enemies be of a wrong temper, although they know it not, they are miserable by the very exercise of their sin, and are exposed to eternal misery. True Christian love will wish their deliverance, and not the less because we may be the objects of their injury.—Had CHRIST denied his love to enemies, where should we all have been at this moment? Those who are in the exercise of Christian love, do as sincerely wish happiness to their enemies as to others; and the exercise of an evil temper against themselves, doth not appear to them to be a greater sin than if it were against another. If grace be in triumphant exercise, they can pray as cheerfully, as fervently, as incessantly for an enemy, as for a worldly friend. In their closets, they can bear their enemies on their hearts before GOD, and pray with groanings which cannot be uttered, that GOD would sanctify, forgive and glorify them to the praise of his grace. Personal acquaintance may cause them to think of-

tener of sinners in their near connection, and may give them an opportunity to instruct, to advise, and to warn; but the soul of a Heathen, even of the most distant fellow creature, is as precious in their thoughts, as of a nearer connection. Temporal connections do actually lay the foundation for particular duties to individual men; but they are not the basis or reasons for the moral and Christian law, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This law stands on a broader basis—on the command of GOD, and on the capacity of creatures to be holy and happy.

II. WE are next, more particularly to consider the reasons, why we ought thus to love our neighbor.

HAVING ascertained the extent of the commandment; and that the word neighbor, doth in the divine law include all rational creatures, who are capable of happiness, and who are not known by the revealed counsel of GOD, to be left in perpetual sin and unhappiness: We will next consider the reasons of this obligation.

I. IT is a divine command.

THE command of GOD expressly revealed, creates a perfect obligation on creatures to obey. Our Lord condescends, in most instances to inform us of the reasons of his commandments, and hath given us intellect to know them, and conscience to feel their force; but still his law, when made known, forms a complete obligation to obedience. If we never knew any other reason, this would be enough to silence all objections. The Lord may have reasons in his infinite wisdom and holiness for commanding, which never can be known in this world, and perhaps

not known in eternity. It is both fitting and good that we have a real sense of this right in infinite sovereignty, wisdom and goodness. And while for our delight, we diligently seek the reasons of divine counsel, it is fitting that we have such a habit of submission and confidence in the adorable perfections of Jehovah, as will lead us to say, whatever he commands must be right—whatever he enjoins I will endeavor to obey; and I will believe that the law of his mouth is the only rule for his highest glory and the greatest good of his creation.

2. ANOTHER reason why we should love our neighbor as ourselves, is this, that he is as capable of happiness as we be ourselves; and happiness is as valuable to him as it is to us.

A CAPACITY for happiness is what makes rational being valuable. A rational existence, without any capacity for happiness, would be of no value to the possessors, and its value is in proportion to the happiness which can be obtained. The happiness of another is of the same value as our own; his existence and his blessings, are therefore as desirable and as fit an object of benevolent desire as our own. The laws of moral virtue are excellent, because they prescribe that temper and practice, in all cases of moral action, which admits the greatest, even an infinite degree of happiness in God the Creator and preserver, and in creatures his subjects. If moral virtue did not tend to the greatest degree of happiness, it would no longer be fit and reasonable.

It is allowed, that there is a kind and measure of happiness in sin, to those who love and live prosperously in it; but still it is a happiness infinitely less, than what may be gained by holiness and virtue, and therefore it is base, wrong and

unreasonable. On these reasons, a GOD of infinite benevolence, who hath an infinite friendship to happiness, is perfectly opposed to sin.— On these reasons his will is determined—his law ordained—his government conducted—and his penalties executed. On these reasons the law of benevolence forms a moral obligation on creatures, and we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. On these reasons it is a crime to hate our enemies, and wish they may be miserable, or to do any thing which tends to make them miserable ; unless it be by the direction of infinite wisdom which knows how to direct for the greatest good. On these reasons the whole system of moral laws and obligations stands, and can never be reasonably altered, while the nature of creatures and the constitution of being remains as it is at present. We therefore, ought to love our neighbor as we do ourselves, because his happiness may be as great, and is in itself as valuable and as fit an object of benevolent desire as our own.

ALL selfish reasoning must be excluded on this subject, for selfishness is unholiness ; and selfishness being excluded, the law is justified.— But when the writer says that selfishness must be excluded, he doth not expect that any thing but the sanctifying grace of GOD will do the work ; neither doth he expect that any other cause will silence a rebelling heart, or cause blind minds to see the beauty, and feel the excellency of the commandment and practically comply with it. The minds of sinful men, are so accustomed from their beginning, to view things and to reason on selfish principles ; it is so congenial to the whole scheme of their affections, and to the common practice of mankind, in all ages, parties and individuals ; and virtue is so

abhorrent from their practice, that there will be the most stout resistance to the commandment. This is a resistance, which will never be overcome, but by the mighty grace of God changing the heart, or by his mighty power awing and crushing the rebel. Unholy men are so accustomed to their sinful manner of feeling, that in the blindness of their minds they will think their disobedience to be innocent, and that those who enforce this explanation of the law are strangely beside themselves.

3. IT may illustrate and serve as a reason for loving our neighbor as ourselves, to show how obedience makes the greatest possible happiness.

THE degree of happiness in any mind, may be influenced by many things ; but for a general rule, it is proportioned to the degree of love and to the excellency of the object beloved. That moral temper, by which men love their neighbor as themselves, always contains a supreme love and affection to God himself. As God is the most excellent of all objects, yea infinitely excellent, a love of him must give the highest happiness to the mind. How much more happy a person must be, to love God supremely and be delighted with his infinite perfection ; than to be swallowed up in his own littleness, imperfection, sin, and in the momentary interests of a perishing world. The two commandments to love God with the whole heart, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, are joined in the discourse of CHRIST, and an obedience to them goes together, and is never separated. When the heart is so denied to self as to love God supremely, it will have the most honest and benevolent affection to all his creatures. And when we can look with a diffusive and holy delight,

on the bliss of innumerable minds around us, is it not more delightful, than to have our affections limited to our own selves? Are not complacential feelings in all which is enjoyed by the whole, greater than what can be had by a confined delight in our own private good? It certainly must be; so that the disposition, which delights in the good of a neighbor gives the most happiness to the person who possesses it.

FURTHER, it cannot be denied, that the love of our neighbor as it hath been described, is most conducive to happiness in all the social relations of life.

OUR supreme and ultimate dependance is on GOD; but things are so constituted and ordered by his creating and governing wisdom; that we are dependant for happiness one on another. We can do good, and we can do injury—we can mutually impart joys and sorrows—indeed, we are mutually dependant. The idea of being independent of men in this world, is wholly fanciful. Those who call themselves independent, because they have great riches and much power, are, in fact, more dependant for happiness than any others. Their situation creates a multitude of wants, which cannot be satisfied without the aid of others; and all that can be meant by their independence is, that by the laws and customs of our society they have that in their hands, which will tempt others to become subservient to the satisfaction of their desires.

THE most excellent state of society, is that, in which men have the fewest wants arising from their own evil dispositions; and where there is a common governing principle of the heart, which inclines them to minister in every possible way to the real wants of others. By answering

both of these ends, that holy benevolence commanded in the law, conduces to happiness in all the social relations of life. By an expansion of the affections, the mind is taken from itself whereby the number of personal wants from the world is lessened; also, by a love of our neighbor as ourselves, there is a fixed moral principle, which inclines in every possible way to minister to the wants of others. Hence, by the spirit of obedience, men are disposed to require less of others, for their own sake, and to do more for their advantage. Hence all the social virtues are promoted—truth, justice and beneficence are observed—the heart becomes feeling to the wants and miseries of others, and the hand is opened to communicate and do good. The benevolent neighbor rejoices with those who rejoice, and mourns with those who mourn. Peace is sought and pursued. To do good and to communicate is not forgotten. There is fidelity in all the relations of life. Their benevolent desires are not limited to time, but extended to eternity, and the consequence is a most happy communion of pleasure and interests.

FURTHER, the law of love to GOD and men is the only one, by which a most perfect and glorious happiness can be formed in the divine kingdom.

MEN can be happy in obeying a sovereign Lord and King, only by loving him with the whole heart, strength and mind. The obligation of love and duty to our neighbor will be an affliction, unless our hearts are conformed to the spirit of the precept. In these bonds of love the Almighty and his holy kingdom will be forever united, and the blessedness of his sanctified ones will be forever growing.

THE reasons that have been given, justify the commandment, and show the wisdom of the Lawgiver. Although the selfishness of the sinful heart rises against the commandment, it is most clear by attending to the subject, that GOD in giving it, acted as a friend to his creatures, and as a sovereign possessed of infinite benevolence. A true obedience will make all the individuals who have it, and the whole holy kingdom, the most happy that they can be. And while the sinner is induced by self-love to transgress the commandment, he is acting directly against his own aims and desires. He aims and desires to be the most blessed that is possible, but by concentrating his affections on himself, he is deprived of inward peace, and cut off from the communal felicity of holy minds. AMEN.

S E R M O N X.

On the duty of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

MATTHEW, xxii. 39.

—*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

IT is found that men most habitually disobey those precepts of religion and morality, which are the most important. To love GOD with the whole heart, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, are the two great commandments, on which hang all the law and the prophets; and it is these which are more faulted when we explain them strictly, than any other precepts of revelation. In speculation they are allowed to be good, while in practice they are continually denied; and when men are reprov'd for the breach and we examine their actions by the law, to justify themselves, they will immediately attempt to explain it into a consistency with their own hearts. They, also, do this by attempting to substitute selfish affections, in the place of those

which are holy. If it be inquired who is my neighbor? they are disposed to confine the duty to some near connections, or to persons in the most direct intimacy with themselves, leaving the rest of the world to such accidental or partial regards, as may arise from the occurrences of life.

IN a preceding discourse on this subject, we have considered the question, "who is my neighbor?" To this inquiry we find CHRIST'S answer, in the parable of the good Samaritan, by which it appears that the meaning of the word neighbor, in the divine commandment, is all those who are capable of a rational and holy felicity. None are excluded from our benevolence, while it remains possible they should become blessed. The law as truly binds us to love men of all nations and parties, and even our personal enemies, as it doth those, who are most intimately connected with us, in the ties of nature and acquaintance. We may have more opportunities to do good to the latter; but this does not free us from an obligation of perfect benevolence to the former, and from doing them good whenever opportunity is offered.

A SECOND point to which we attended in the former discourse, was, the reasons of the law, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

THE sovereign command of GOD was mentioned as a sufficient reason if there were no other known to us. But as the Lord indulgently displays to us, in most cases, the reasons of his will and of his revealed law, we found other very important considerations to justify the commandment. The happiness of our neighbors is as valuable as our own, and all contrary apprehensions are the effect of a partial bias, in favor

of ourselves. If we possessed the temper which the law commands we should instantly see the truth of this observation; but while men are wholly destitute of a holy love of their neighbor, the moral beauty of the commandment will be hid from their knowledge. Our neighbor hath an equal capacity with ourselves to be made happy; and if his capacity of receiving be as great, and his happiness be as valuable, no reason can be assigned, which will justify us in denying him an equal degree of benevolent affection.

As a farther reason of the law we considered, that the benevolence enjoined, will produce a greater happiness in the mind where it reigns, than can be enjoyed from any limited and selfish affection whatever. It must be more blessed to enjoy God and all the good which he gives to all his creatures, than simply to enjoy what we are capable of receiving. And we need only to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, and his good will be as much matter of enjoyment to us as our own.

FURTHER, it cannot be denied by the most ignorant and stubborn opposer of the divine law, that the love commanded will produce the most perfect and happy state of society, which can exist in the world.

IN prosecution of the plan, which was proposed in the former discourse, we now come,

III. To consider the degree of love enjoined in the commandment, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

AND what hath been said of the reasons for this duty, if they appeared sufficient, must already have determined the mind of every consider-

ate reader, that the degree of love ought to be the same to our neighbor as to ourselves.

IT is known that much hath been said, to detract from this extent of the commandment. It hath been said, that this love ought to be of the same kind as what we have for ourselves, but not the same in degree; and that if we have the same kind of love, the law with respect to our neighbor is fulfilled. But a person, who is filled with the love of selfishness, hath no holy love even of himself, and therefore the same kind of love to his neighbor would be no instance of obedience, for it is a holy affection of the heart which is required.

IT hath been said that we ought to love our neighbor as sincerely as we do ourselves; but it is conceived the sincerity of love doth, in a great measure, depend on the degree of exercise, and that without the same degree there cannot be the same sincerity.

ALL those considerations which have been mentioned as reasons or arguments, why we should love our neighbor, do equally apply as reasons for loving him in the same degree. It is the command of GOD who hath a sovereign right to direct. If we were not very depraved creatures, and hard to understand and blind to see, the very letter of the commandment would be esteemed a conclusive argument on the point.

WE cannot deny the value of a neighbor's happiness, nor his capacity to receive; for in these respects he is like ourselves. If our own happiness be a valuable object in the divine sight, so must be the happiness of others. There is no argument against loving others as we do ourselves, which would not apply with equal strength, to show that GOD ought not to be as kind and good to them as he is to us.

To obviate a difficulty which may arise in some minds from the rule which is given, I observe,

THAT from the required degree of love to our neighbor, being the same as to ourselves, it doth not follow, that we either can or ought to exercise the same care over him in all respects as we do over ourselves. For, first, every man is by GOD, committed to his own care. Under GOD he is appointed to be his own preserver; to watch over his own interests; and to seek his own salvation. Secondly, it is in the nature of things impossible, that we should exercise the same care over others, as we do over ourselves. We cannot in their stead love GOD, exercise faith in CHRIST, or repent of sin. They must love and repent for themselves, and neither our agency nor moral desert can become theirs. We cannot know what they do or want, or what their state is in many respects; neither can we apply the means of instruction to them, in the manner we may to our own minds. So that we cannot exercise the same care, or do the same duties for them, as we do for ourselves.

FURTHER, our attention cannot be so fixed on their interests, as it may and ought to be on our own. We are very finite in our abilities, and our attention must be chiefly fixed, where our duty is principally to be done. Still it is true, that as there are certain duties which we can and ought to perform for the benefit of our neighbor, we should be as careful at all times to perform them, as if they were for ourselves.— They ought to be done as punctually, and with as much pleasure and constancy, as if they were done for ourselves. A Christian temper would soon make our doctrinal opinions on this subject right, and give a totally new appearance to the practice of mankind.

THE meaning of the divine law is not that we exercise the same care or do the same duties for others in all respects as we do for ourselves; but it is this: A certain degree of care and duty, by the appointment of God, is due to our neighbor, and by the same appointment, a certain degree is due to ourselves. By God's direction, which is founded on the best of reasons, we are to have as real and as strong a desire for his best interests and for the salvation of his soul, as we have for our own souls. Further, we are to be as willing, chearful and exact, in doing the duties assigned to us, on which his happiness is dependant; as we be in doing those things, with which our own felicity is connected. A duty, which is equally plain and clear, should be as exactly performed, as if it had a sole relation to ourselves; and this is to be done because the well-being of others is as valuable as our own, and in the performance of duty, we ought never to be governed by a selfish motive. Such a motive would destroy the rectitude and holiness of the action.

BUT it is further objected, that by this rule, all distinction is taken away, between that love which we owe to the virtuous and vicious. We are commanded to love the brethren as a peculiar duty, and this is made a rule of trial, whether we be the children of God. Among our neighbors both characters are included, and are we to love them equally?

IN answer to this objection and question, it is replied; that in the sense of the commandment, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," we are to love them equally. It is the love of benevolence, which we owe to all men, whether they be good or evil; and their capacity for hap-

pieness and ability to serve GOD and his kingdom, are the measure of the love that is due to them. It is the love of complacence or delight in their character, temper and practice, which is peculiarly due to the people of GOD. They are to be loved for their holiness, conformity to GOD, and devotion to his glory and kingdom ; and it is by the presence or want of this complacence, that we derive a rule for determining our own state. If we are made holy by the sanctifying grace of GOD, we shall delight in all holy objects—in the character and law of GOD—and in the communicated holiness of temper and practice, which we see in his people. Also, we shall delight in them, considered as members of the glorious and holy body, of which CHRIST is the head. It is therefore a love of holiness that is seen, either in the glorious fountain of rectitude, or as it exists by the communications of his grace in his people, which is the object of Christian complacence and communion. This love furnishes the rule of examination for the people of GOD, whether they are in the faith savingly and sanctified by the spirit of CHRIST, unto the enjoyment of his kingdom. If we are Christians indeed, we shall delight in that image of GOD and CHRIST, which his people possess, and with a peculiar delight we shall love them as sanctified members of the body of JESUS. Also, our hours of communion with them will be sweet, in beholding and praising the glory of a common Lord—in calling upon him—in worshipping him—and in anticipating an eternity to be passed together in love and praise. These complacential and communal exercises furnish the rule by which we are to try the gracious sincerity of our own hearts ; and if we do not find something of this nature, we do not love the brethren pecu-

liarily, which the objection supposes to be the rule of trial.

BUT the law we are now considering, particularly means the love of benevolence, or wishing well to the being and happiness of men. Although a good man cannot delight in the sinful character and practice of those who habitually transgress the law of GOD; yet he may most sincerely wish them to become holy and happy. If GOD be pleased to remove their sin and make them holy, they will become amiable, and the stamp of conformity to his character on their hearts, will render them lovely in the sight of GOD and men. If he be pleased to take away their sin, they will be new creatures—the odiousness of temper and practice which good people dislike, will be gone—the abilities which they possess will be converted to new purposes—and although they are now wretched and deformed, they will be as happy and glorious as we now behold the most sanctified to be.—Further, if GOD be pleased to take away their sin they will be as active in obeying, as they now are in disobeying; as active in honoring GOD, as they now be in dishonoring him; as zealous for the cause of CHRIST, as they are now opposed to it; and as much filled with love to the children of GOD, as they now are with antipathy and the spirit of persecution.

IF this be the case, there is no reason can be assigned, why those who are pious, ought not to wish them as well, be as anxious for their well-being, as faithful in all means to promote so desirable an end; as they would be in the case of those who have become obedient in CHRIST JESUS. It is not uncommon, on beholding the crimes of the vicious, to feel a detestation extending to their persons as well as to their sins;

but this is an unchristian spirit and disobedience to the laws of CHRIST. No man's person, which consists in his intelligent powers and in his capacity for happiness, can be, in any case, a fit object of detestation. Detestation is due to their sinful improvement of talents and to the crimes which are committed; but not to the man considered as a being intelligent, active, capable of happiness, and able with a right temper to do much for the glory of GOD.

IF this subject were considered by Christians, it would reprove their want of concern for the souls of others, and make them more anxious, more prayerful, and more indefatigable in the use of means for the conversion of sinners.

IV. WE are next to consider the fruits or effects that will follow, where this love is formed in the heart by the sanctifying power of GOD.

THERE is no more effectual way to convince our minds of the wisdom and excellence of a commandment, than to attend to its effects in society. If we find these effects to be immediately and permanently bad, we condemn the commandment. If, on the contrary, we find them to be good, we approve the commandment, and viewing it with right hearts shall esteem it to be excellent.

SUCH is the depraved conduct of men, and so imperfect is their obedience, even in those who are the most observant of themselves and of the rule of duty; that we cannot have a fair trial in this imperfect world. The full excellency of CHRIST'S law hath never been seen, for his people have had many sins and imperfections mingled with their virtues and graces; so as to obscure the excellence of a Christian character. The example of CHRIST was a perfect one, to show the

goodness of his law. The example of his people hath been very imperfect; and it is only some traces of the fitness and excellence of virtue and of the evangelical law, which can be learned from their conduct. If all men were to keep the law, it would immediately give a new evidence of the excellency of divine wisdom. A new face would appear on the things of the world, and on the state of society, and the earth would become like heaven, in many respects.

I. ALL evil works would cease, and men would no longer injure each other's persons, reputation or interests.

A VERY great share of the evils, which betide us here, are through human instrumentality. There are many acts of open violence and injury, but these are not the whole; for iniquity is often established by a law, and those who are the organs of public justice, through an evil influence in society, become the very agents in doing things which are contrary to the law of GOD, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and do to him, as thou couldest reasonably desire him to do to thee."

THERE are, also, many injuries of a lesser nature, which, although they may not bear the name of open violence, partake of the same nature and show the utter want of neighborly love. There are unkind actions, which wound the feelings of a benevolent and tender heart; and these are often of such a kind and attended with such circumstances, that they cannot be described or complained of with prudence; but still they injure the heart that is susceptible of tenderness and love. The Christian law and practice is tender of the feelings of men, and the followers of CHRIST, while acting in his spirit, will never wound another's heart, unless it be requir-

ed by the law of holiness, truth and goodness. All evil, all injury, all unkindness, whether private, domestic or national, would cease if this law were obeyed; and men would no longer have cause to complain of being treated either unjustly or unkindly.

2dly. THE abstinence from evil works would be accompanied with the performance of all that are good.

THERE is a field of infinite extent opened for the exercise of kind and just actions to men. It is only a few of these, which can be enjoined by the authority of men; and even the divine law doth inculcate them only in general precepts. Those good deeds to others, that care of them and their interests, and that expression of love which GOD requires, vary with every different condition in life—with every new event in the domestic and social relations and intercourse of men—with every want, every sorrow, and with every opportunity, which is offered for lawfully making another happy or adding to the peace of his mind. Where there is a reigning spirit of love, the mind will not rest in the greater and more apparent and public duties of truth, justice, equity and beneficence; but there will be an universal kindness—a sweet manner of doing good—an attention to every want, and to every thing that will communicate happiness, in a way that is consistent with the law of GOD. The general precepts of goodness in the holy scriptures reach to the most minute parts of human action—to every word and to every expression of love, by which happiness can be communicated and mutually enjoyed, and grief prevented or assuaged. We are to mourn with those who mourn, and rejoice with those who rejoice—to do good

and communicate—to be courteous—to bear each others burdens—to seek the things which make for peace—to be of one mind—to walk together in love—and be as brethren, as children of one family, sons of one God, united in one interest, redeemed by the same precious blood, and journeying together to the same heaven of eternal communion. If every man loved his neighbor as himself, there could be but one common interest reigning in all hearts. The interest and the happiness of each would be the interest and happiness of all. This spirit of brotherly love would cement men together in peace, beyond what we now can conceive; and the desires of the heart to communicate and do good, would discover thousands of opportunities for kind and helping actions, which are neglected; yea not even conceived by such selfish hearts as we now possess. There would be no private burdens and wants, no individual and separate griefs; for every heart would claim to come in for its share, and the communion of affection would change the very burden into the joy and peace of brotherly love.

3dly. If men loved their neighbor as themselves, the very manner of doing good to others would be changed from what it now appears.

THERE would be a fervor and an apparent sincerity and warmth of affection, which would double the value of a benefit to the receiver. When doing good to ourselves we are animated and all sincere in the service. The whole appearance of the man is an expression of engagedness; but often it is not so in doing good to others, and there is an appearance as though conscience had more agency than the heart, in promoting beneficence. It would not be thus,

if we loved our neighbor as ourselves. Every look, gesture and word would show the heart to be sincere and animated with the kindest affection, and rejoiced with the opportunity of doing good, and made as happy in relieving as it would be in receiving relief. The joy of doing good would be great, and the happiness of receiving would be doubled. Now there is often a pain in receiving a benefit, from a fear that it gives pain to grant it, and this arises from a consciousness, of the weakness of brotherly love in the selfish hearts of men, even when the most sanctified that they ever are in the present state. O blessed state indeed, when all this shall be removed! Then indeed it will be blessedness either to give or receive, and a confidence in the love and willingness of the giver, and in the happiness that he takes in doing good, will make the benefit a double blessing! There will be a happiness in seeing him made happy by communicating. If such a spirit reigned on earth, and was in all souls, these pains and necessary natural evils which we now endure by the frail construction of present nature, would hardly be enough to make us call this an evil world. If moral evil were all removed from our hearts, and perfect moral virtue reigned in every breast, the state would be heavenly, even though all necessary natural evils remained. Sin was not only the cause of introducing natural evil; but the continued intermingling of sin in all we do, in all we feel, and even with all our graces, infixes a thousand new stings in these natural plagues, which a wise moral Governor hath introduced as a punishment of our rebellion against him.

4thly. By thus far following the effects of loving our neighbor as ourselves, we are led to

a still more glorious view of them ; and the doctrine opens to our understanding how the heavenly life and glory and peace will be formed.

It is now in a degree, mysterious to us how infinite goodness will form such a state of transcendant glory and peace, as is described in his word, and give it in full possession to such creatures as we are. Truly for such creatures as we now are, that is, for such sinning and unholy creatures as we now are, a heaven correspondent to the scriptural representations cannot be formed, and therefore cannot be given and possessed. But the difficulty is in us, and the impossibility arises from our sin. Let this sin be taken away, and the mind become informed in the fruits of perfect holiness, it would no longer remain a mystery, either how a heaven of glory is formed ; or in what it consists ; or how such creatures as we now are can be made to possess it. If GOD be able to sanctify sinners, and can do it consistently with the holiness of his government ; then he can bring them to a heaven as full of glory, as that which we find described in his word. That he can do it consistently with the rectitude of his government we learn from the gift, life, death and ascension of CHRIST. That he can sanctify sinners and take away their personal unholy, we learn from his promise that he will do it, and from the initial work of his grace in their hearts while they are in this world.— And it is here, that the mystery unfolds, how heaven will be formed ! how such sinners as we are can be brought into the possession of transcendant glory and peace ! We must be sanctified and delivered from sin, and then we shall be prepared to meet and to receive the promises in their fullest extent. A spirit of conformity to the two commandments, “ Thou shalt love the

Lord thy GOD with all thy heart ; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," will be the principal thing in forming and giving men possession of heavenly glory and peace. If we could but feel this temper, and have an opportunity to observe its effects in society, it would much assist our conception on this great and glorious subject. As the hearts of men are alienated from moral goodness and beauty, they look more to natural objects for their supreme happiness ; and when they endeavor to conceive a state of perfect glory and peace, they are too prone to conceive it consisting of natural beauty and entertainments. It is thus that many conceive of heaven ; as consisting wholly in natural good, beauty, convenience, lustre and glory. That there will be great alterations in nature—in the material universe—in its beauties and glories, which are expressive of the glory of the author—and in the bodies of those who shall be raised to glory, cannot be denied. In the holy scriptures it is said that this shall be the case. But all natural beauty will not make a heaven of glory and comfort to the mind. The miseries of one world and the blessedness and glory of the other, will arise principally from moral causes, and the exercise of moral and holy affections. There must be a change of heart to make men heavenly, and the blessedness of the state will arise from their holy affections and practice. A compliance with the two great commandments, to love GOD with the whole heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves, will essentially constitute that state of reward, which is promised to be the portion of the children of GOD.

FROM attending to the effects, that would flow from a compliance with the law, we ought to

be convinced that the strict explanation of its meaning which hath been given in this discourse, is the true one. This describes the extension of the commandment—it justifies the wisdom and goodness of God in giving it—and it shows that a state of perfect happiness in society, can subsist on no other principles. Heaven is described as a life and condition of perfect happiness and peace; but if we were to admit the least degree of selfishness into that holy and blessed world, the glorious condition of holy minds would be thus far corrupted and broken. There is a contradiction between men's desires. They desire to be perfectly happy and glorious; and they also desire to be happy and glorious by concentrating their affections to themselves. The latter desire is naturally impossible. Nature admits no place for its gratification. It is as much impossible to be perfectly happy, with the temper which they wish to indulge, *as it is to be and not to be*, at the same time, and impossibilities are not to be expected in the case. When men wish to escape from that broad extension of the commandment, that hath been described, they are departing from the only possible principles, which admit of everlasting blessedness. Thus the hearts of sinners are unreasonable in every respect. They unreasonably deny God his glory. They unreasonably wish to be happy in an impossible way, and that God would bring them to glory and peace, while they are themselves contradicting the principles by which glory and peace are produced. The communion between saints in heaven and in earth, is on the same principles, and if this blessed state of mind be not begun here, it will not exist hereafter.

FROM this subject we infer, men's present deficiency in obedience and in the benevolent affection which they owe to others.

THE only way, for us to form a true opinion of our own deficiency, is, first to examine the law and learn the extension of the duty which is commanded, and then bring our own dispositions and practice into comparison with its precepts. There is no exact model of virtue to be found among men. If we judge of ourselves by comparison with others, even taking the most virtuous and benificent, and finding ourselves by an impartial comparison better than they, it would be no proof of our obedience. The earth is filled with sin in the sight of God. There is no man who loves his neighbor as himself. There is none who doeth good in the strict and true sense of the law, no not one. How many whose affections are so centred on themselves, as constantly to violate those laws of society, which can be no more than a barrier against open and high handed injustice and maleficence? How many who have no idea of neighborly duty beyond the common customs of civility in the world, and these do not extend further than mere selfishness? At best, they are only a selfish code, modernized, polished, and dressed in the exterior of kindness, so far as kindness can be adopted without self-denial, or as it may minister to pride, or as there is a probability that one kind action will be repaid by another. How many whose hearts are utterly void of love—whose words are smooth as oil, while their feelings are like drawn swords—who deceive with words of kindness, that they may destroy—or who profess to be kind and good, merely for their own amusement, and to have their false words returned in the stile of flattery. There

is nothing of the honesty and love of heaven in all this. In all this there is no obedience to the commandment.

OR if we come to look on those, where the spirit of love hath created a spark of conformity to the divine benevolence: Here there is some love of others—some honesty—some little degree of true goodness, but how little! how imperfect! how far from governing and filling the soul! how remote from such a love as induced the man CHRIST JESUS to suffer, to agonize, to die that others might live! Although they may have some degree of love for others, yet how small compared with the affection for themselves, for their own connections and relations in life! How great an evil they will suffer others to endure, for the sake of the most trifling good to themselves! How strangely the exercise of grace will disappear, and all their selfish passions be waked up by small inconveniences coming on themselves or on their families, so that all appearance of brotherly love appears to be suspended! Thus weak are even the children of GOD in their graces and in that love which beareth long, which suffereth much, which hopeth the best, and is kind. That sinful self-love, in which our depravity originally consists, hath obtained a strange power over our minds. Reason is perverted—the understanding is blinded—the heart is corrupted—bad men will wholly reject the law—and even good men, as we mean by good men in this world, will dispute what is meant by the commandment, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”—It is a wonderful depravity! it is a great and universal depravity, or such consequences could not follow. When the human mind is so blinded, in the essential things of religion and godliness, it is not strange that there

should be a great degree of blindness and many errors, in things which are less essential to the nature of piety and holiness.

THIS error of the heart, which lies at the bottom of all other errors, accounts for the sins which are in the world—For the utter unholiness of many, and their total disregard to the spirit of equity and righteousness—for the formality of others, who, while they profess to know the law, obey it in such a cold and indifferent manner that it wounds the heart of another to be dependant on their kindness—and for the great intermixture of unkindness, and the imperfect manner of doing good that is found in the best.

LET all who read lament their own deficiency, and endeavor to be sensible how far short they fall of their duty, and how far they are removed from the spirit of grace. Let them pray for the aids of that blessed Spirit which JESUS CHRIST purchased with his dying blood, that he might change the reigning enmities of unholy minds, and bring them to resemble his own infinite and eternal love. May the love of GOD reign in many hearts to the praise and glory of his grace. AMEN.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be clearly documented and verified. The text continues to describe various methods for ensuring the integrity of the data, including regular audits and cross-checking of entries.

In the second section, the author details the specific procedures for handling discrepancies. It is noted that any inconsistencies should be investigated immediately and resolved through a transparent process. The document also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the staff involved in the record-keeping process, ensuring that everyone is held accountable for their work.

The final part of the document provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations. It stresses the need for ongoing training and development for the staff to stay updated on the latest practices and technologies. The author concludes by expressing confidence in the system's ability to provide reliable and accurate information for decision-making.

S E R M O N XI.

On Christian self-denial.

MATTHEW, XVI. 24.

THEN said *JESUS* unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

THE nature of that self-denial, which is required from Christians, is a subject which deserves to be very seriously considered. Much is said by the sacred writers, and especially by **CHRIST** himself, on the necessity of self-denial for being his disciples, and for entering into the kingdom of heaven. Some things, which were said by him on this subject, doubtless applied to the peculiar sufferings of his disciples, and of others who live in seasons of great persecution for the sake of religion; but they are not to be wholly thus applied. Those, who suppose that Christians, can live in obedience to the laws of **CHRIST** without self-denial, at any time, or in

any earthly situation whatever, are greatly mistaken. They are mistaken in the nature of religion, and of CHRIST's laws, and in their own temper. There is no part of the holy scriptures, which represent the life of GOD's people in this world, to be one of ease, quietness and conformity to present things; or to their own natural dispositions. All the descriptions of CHRIST himself are contrary to this; all of them represent his people as in a state of warfare, not only with the world, but with themselves and their own appetites; all describe their course to be filled with self-denial.

FURTHER, there are many exhortations against the allurements and blandishments of the world, of time and of sense. Many things are said intimating that those who dwell in the lap of plenty and ease, will have more need of exercising self-denial, than others, who have a harder destiny in life. Certainly the former have more temptations to encounter, and though the assisting grace of GOD may be sufficient for them, they must more hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. It will be a difficult work to fortify their hearts, against such allurements as are offered by their worldly situation. Let us therefore fix it as a truth, that all must exercise much self-denial to enter into the kingdom of GOD.

WHILE on one hand we allow the necessity of self-denial, and always find by experience that CHRIST's words are true; yet the irreligious have an idea of unhappiness in religion, which is never found by experience. They have no idea of a kind of self-denial, which increases the happiness of those who exercise it. Through ignorance of the nature of experimental godliness, they suppose that it produces gloom, uneasiness

and constant wretchedness of mind. But this is far from being the case.

TAKE one of those irreligious persons who hath this idea of piety and its consequences, and no conception of experimental religion, its feelings and its comforts; let his heart be changed to love GOD, the divine law, and his neighbor, according to the precepts of the gospel, and he will instantly say, I have found a happiness that was unknown to me before. My capacity for happiness is not diminished, but my apprehensions of its nature are entirely changed. By giving up my former happiness, I have found one that is infinitely superior to what I ever had conceived. I am now more happy, in all the self-denial required by the gospel, than I ever was by indulging myself in the temper and practice which were forbidden.

THUS these persons would say, if their hearts were changed, who are now so ready to think and represent, that the self-denial required in the gospel, necessarily makes men gloomy and unhappy. With the principles and the heart, which they at present possess, it makes them gloomy to think of the laws and duties of religion, and the penalty which is threatened to disobedience; and not knowing the power of religion in the heart, they most falsely think, that they should be made unhappy by exercising self-denial. But their unhappiness arises from their own evil hearts and consciences. They do not conceive, how it is possible a man should be more happy in denying his own remainder of depravity, than he is in indulging it. All which they say on this subject, shows that the reigning power of sin is yet in their hearts, and that they are at a great remove from the humble and spiritual temper of Christians.

IT will cast much light on this subject, to attend to the occasion and circumstances on which the words of the text were spoken ; and by thus doing, we shall find that the self-denial required is no more than a denial of our own evil principles, passions and appetites ; and this every honest and good mind will take pleasure in doing. Though this may contradict the sinful principles of the heart ; so far as there is a sanctified temper, there will be a holy triumph in obedience.

THE conversation to which our text is attached, was introduced by CHRIST, “ showing unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and Scribes, and be killed and raised again the third day.” After this, Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, “ be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.” After the disciple had acted thus imprudently and sinfully, CHRIST “ turned and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me ; for thou favorest not the things that be of GOD, but those that be of men.” After this he spake the words of the text, “ if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up the cross and follow me.” And he added, “ for whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it.” For the explanation of this whole passage, we must attend to an idea, which prevailed among the Jews, and had taken deep root in the minds of the disciples. The Jews, through the sinfulness of their own hearts, had little idea of the spirituality of religion. They had overlooked those prophecies which spake of CHRIST as a suffering Saviour ; and explained all the predictions of the future glory of his

kingdom as pertaining to their own nation. They therefore expected that when the Messiah appeared, he would deliver them from their bondage to the Romans, and make them a great and all-conquering people in the world. This lust for dominion, was one thing which prevented their acknowledgment of JESUS CHRIST. A Saviour, who appeared in the form which JESUS CHRIST assumed, and who disclaimed all earthly authority, could not gratify their national ambition. They were looking for the salvation of this world, and not of another; and thus they explained the evangelical predictions of the prophets.

THE disciples, although made good men by the sanctifying grace of GOD, were very far from perfection. They remained in a great degree ignorant of GOD's designs, and their worldly ambition was not wholly cured. We learn this from many things which occurred, and are related in the evangelists. I shall only mention two. The first is when the mother of James and John came and worshipped JESUS, "and desired a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, what wilt thou? She saith unto him, grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left in thy kingdom. JESUS answered and said unto her, ye know not what ye ask." The request here made, was not that they might sit on his right and on his left hand in the kingdom of heaven; but in that earthly kingdom, which they supposed he would receive. This appears by the feelings of the other disciples, and the answer which CHRIST gave to them. "And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But JESUS called them unto him, and said, ye know that the prin-

ces of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." From the indignation of the other disciples, and the answer which CHRIST gave them concerning temporal authority ; it appears that they all understood the request to be for a temporal dignity in his expected earthly kingdom. The indignation of the other disciples, was because they supposed them aiming at an earthly influence.

THE other instance I shall mention was after the Redeemer's resurrection, and immediately before his ascension. "They asked him, saying, wilt thou again restore the kingdom to Israel ?" They meant here the earthly kingdom. Although at the crucifixion their earthly hopes were clouded, when they became convinced of his resurrection, their hopes were again revived, and they said, "wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ?" Perhaps they were never saved from this delusion, until the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit of GOD was poured out for their further sanctification, and to instruct them in the nature of CHRIST's kingdom here on earth. After this, we hear no more from them of an earthly kingdom attached to the spiritual kingdom of CHRIST in this world.

ALL this is explanatory of our text and of that self-denial that is required, and of its nature. Peter took CHRIST, and began to rebuke him, when he showed them of his death. He received a severe reproof from his master, who proceeded to inform him further into the nature of his kingdom. That if any man would come after him he must deny himself, and take up his

cross and follow him. He must reject all peculiar pretensions to worldly honor ; must be willing to suffer by the hand of others if providence should order it ; and prepare his mind for a kind of happiness entirely different from a satisfaction in worldly things. It was the sin, the ambition of Peter which was here reprov'd. He was looking to the world for some honor and happiness, and this temper the blessed Redeemer corrected ; but it by no means implies that religion exposes a person to unhappiness, or that the self-denying do not enjoy a better good in their own present estimation, than they ever enjoyed before.

To place the subject in a just light, we will consider,

I. IN what Christian self-denial essentially consists.

II. HAVING seen in what the true Christian self-denial consists, it may be inquired, whether the happiness of men is increased or diminished by a compliance with CHRIST'S command to deny ourselves ; and also, whether the apprehensions of the unholy, that religion requires men to deny their happiness, and which arise from passages of a similar meaning with the text, have any foundation.

I. I AM to explain in what Christian self-denial essentially consists.

CHRISTIAN self-denial consists essentially, in loving GOD and the interests of his kingdom more than we love ourselves and our own private interests. The corrupted nature of man is to love himself more than he loves GOD. He attempts to place himself on the throne—to be a

deity to himself—and have his own will superior to all moral obligation. The denial and rejection of this depraved, sinful nature is Christian self-denial. The divine law which is reasonable, requires us to love GOD, who is infinitely glorious above all others, and more than ourselves. Also, to prefer the divine will in every respect to our own. This love of GOD and his will is the Christian self-denial; and it is no other than giving GOD that place in our affections and by our submission, which is his right; and taking that place, which belongs to us at the foot of divine sovereignty and excellency.

FURTHER, accompanying this love of GOD, and subordination of ourselves to him in our own affections; there will be a preference of all the interests of his kingdom, to these private and separate interests of our own, which are of a contradictory nature. The man, who can relinquish himself that he may be all for GOD; who can cheerfully give back his whole being to him, who is the rightful proprietor; will also be able to relinquish all interests of a private kind, which, in their principles and tendency, are divided from the best good, the greatest perfection, and the highest glory of GOD's kingdom.

ALSO, where self is subordinated to GOD, men will serve him in preference to themselves. All their powers, faculties and desires will be devoted in obedience to do the things which he requireth, whether it be his worship, or acts of justice, equity and beneficence to men.

FROM the description that hath been given of the essential nature of that self-denial, which it is made the duty of Christians to seek, it is nothing more than denying the corrupt part of

themselves—denying that temper which they gained by the apostacy, and which they have been indulging through their whole unholy lives. It is denying that temper which they ought never to have possessed—which is a rebellion against reason, duty, and the most sacred obligations. But Christians are not called upon to deny a good disposition—or to reform from any thing in temper and practice that is excellent. They must deny themselves the wished for right of opposing and resisting GOD, and setting themselves above him; since this is not only wrong as against GOD, but contrary to their own happiness.

THEY must lay aside all ambitious views respecting the things of this world. Although this will doubtless be a cross to their remaining earthly affections, it will be no cross to the Christian temper, in which, a sense of the highest dignity is attached to the near relation, which subsists between GOD and his people. They must lay aside the prospects and hope of earthly affluence; for GOD hath a better good to give them than this, and he often denies them worldly things, lest their minds should be enticed and cooled in their desires for heavenly things. They must put away a love of sensual pleasure, for no man can be devoted to this, and at the same time desire and diligently seek spiritual enjoyments. These are so contrary in their nature that one or the other must be relinquished.—They must part with the pleasures of a sinful and immoral life, for all these are incompatible with the Christian character and temper and practice. But still in all this self-denial, there is nothing more than the denial of sin; of selfishness; of an evil ambition; of a wicked avarice; of a criminal sensuality,

and of such a life as reason instructed by the word of GOD would chuse.

FURTHER, Christians are often called to deep afflictions, and to part with their most beloved enjoyments according to the common course of providence; but this is not peculiar to them in distinction from those who live the most ungodly and unchristian lives.

IT is also known, that the enemies of CHRIST'S kingdom have been instrumental of bringing many evils on his people. How these are consistent with as happy a state of the mind as men ever enjoy here, will be hereafter noticed. It appears therefore that the self-denial, which is required in the gospel, essentially consists in loving GOD and the interests of his kingdom more than we love ourselves and our own private interests. It is enthroning GOD in our own hearts, and cheerfully submitting to him in all respects. It is denying the idol self, which all men naturally set up, and which is the essential nature of sin, and giving GOD his place in the affections—allowing to his will the sway which it ought to have in the universe—submitting to be in all respects as he chuses us to be—and quietly placing ourselves, our persons, our families, our properties, our pains and our pleasures at his disposal. In this consecration of ourselves to GOD, there is nothing held back and denied to him or his kingdom; but all is consecrated as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight. Such is the general nature of the self-denial required of Christians in the gospel, and those who do not comply have no right to expect benefit from the promises of the gospel.

II. HAVING seen in what true Christian self-denial consists, it may be inquired, whether

the happiness of men be increased or diminished, by a compliance with CHRIST'S command to deny ourselves ; and also, whether the apprehensions of the unholy, that religion requires men to deny their own happiness, which arise from passages similar to our text, have any true foundation.

1st. WITH respect to the last part of this inquiry, it may be decidedly answered that religion doth not, in any respect require men to give up their own true and best happiness. The design of religion is to make men happy. The highest and best happiness of GOD himself and of his intelligent kingdom, disposed him to ordain the moral system and give a law of holiness. To glorify himself and reclaim miserable creatures to happiness, was the motive which moved infinite benevolence to provide a Redeemer and the way of salvation through his obedience and sufferings. For the same ends all the laws of evangelical obedience are given. And that temper of mind to which the gospel promises are made, is the only one which can make any one blessed. All who believe the scripture revelation, will allow that heaven will be a state of perfect happiness ; but there will be a more perfect denial of self in the heavenly state than ever can take place on earth. There, all will be a denial of self, and devotion to GOD—all self-renunciation, and consecration to GOD and his kingdom ; and the beginning of the same temper, gives the beginning of the same happiness to the saints on earth. And there is no case supposeable, in which religion requires men to relinquish their best and truest happiness.

2dly. As we have shown that there is nothing in religion unfriendly to the supreme good of

men, let us consider the subject with respect to several kinds of people.

1. EVERY thing in religion is a painful self-denial to the unholy, who have never been made the subjects of GOD's sanctifying grace. They have no pleasure in GOD, his law, his government, and in such duties as they are commanded to perform. It gives them a sensible disgust, and they feel the rising of opposition even to consider and understand what religion is. It is hence that they think religious people must be gloomy and unhappy. It makes them gloomy to think of their duty, and of parting with the pleasures of sin; and still more unhappy to consider the punishment which is prepared for all who continue in unholiness. And as they have no conception of the pleasures of religion; and as they also see pious people refraining from the things which appear to them to be delightful; they suppose of course that such must feel unhappy in all their seriousness, in all their duties, and in all the restraints which they put upon themselves with respect to sinful pleasures. The denial of self must appear to be a misery to those who know no other good than the gratification of their own passions and appetites.

2. THOSE, who have only very low degrees of grace, may sensibly feel pain in denying themselves and their remaining sinful appetites. All Christians have not the same degree of holiness. Unto some, GOD is pleased in his sovereignty to give a much greater degree of sanctification than to others; and those who have the least degree of holiness, perceive the most sensible pain in relinquishing themselves, the world and its pleasures. Their appetites and passions are often troublesome—they sensibly feel a warfare of

alternating desires for God and for the world. These persons deny themselves less than others, who have a greater weanedness from the world, and more conformity to God ; still, in their less degree of self-denial, there is more that is sensibly afflicting, than in the higher attainments of such as are more sanctified. The painful sensations of denying ourselves, do therefore arise from the remainder of sin which is in the heart ; and speaking strictly, in the self-denial or self-renunciation, which there is in true piety, there is nothing painful. The unhappiness is greatest in those who have no true piety ; when they reflect upon their duty, feel the admonitions of conscience, and are wholly opposed to a compliance. And among those, to whom some portion of grace is imparted, those who have the lowest attainments, have the least degree, but at the same time, the most pain of self-denial.

3. It follows of course, that those, who through much prayer, watchfulness, and the imparted grace of God, have made higher advances in a holy temper and practice, experience the greatest pleasure in their duty. They are most raised above the power of temptation, for temptations derive their power in a great measure from the sinfulness of the heart. They find the least pain in denying themselves that they may serve and glorify God. And they have the highest pleasure in self-abasement, that God may be glorified and become all in all.

With respect to many peculiar sufferings to which the holy and humble are called, in a world that is opposed to piety and godliness, it cannot be denied that these sufferings are painful ; but there is a happiness in that holy temper which

enables the people of God to meet and endure them. And it is very common for the happiness they enjoy in religion to be so great as wholly to exceed the weight of affliction ; so that if their hearts could be known, all would acknowledge them to be the happiest of people. A martyr burning at the stake may be more happy than all the cruel throng who insult his dying pangs. The fervor of love to his Lord and to his cause, may give a triumphant joy to the soul, which would be cheaply purchased by the pains of a burning body.—The children of God through the overflowings of divine grace granted in an hour of near communion with their Lord and Redeemer, often have a happiness that would more than compensate all the pains of a dissolution. It is true that the children of God do not always feel these supports under their afflictions, but there is reason to think that this denial of comfort happens when their hearts are not right. This may often be the case when they are not sensible of it. By the influence of conscience, and a remembrance of what they have felt in time past, they may have a good degree of firmness in appearing on the side of CHRIST, although the sensible exercises of love be small. It is a sensible exercise of love that gives a present comfort, and CHRIST is always true in his covenant faithfulness to furnish support in such cases.

FROM such cases of extraordinary affliction, it therefore appears, it cannot be inferred that religion makes men unhappy. The malignity of those who hate religion is the cause of their abuses ; and when these are received with a Christian temper, there is a happiness in enduring from a regard to God's honor and from a principle of obedience, and there probably will

be a communication of divine light and love into the heart, which will make the sufferer more happy than if he were not tried.

FROM the subject we infer,

I. THAT self-denial is not necessarily painful. Those who have the most of a self-denying spirit, in love and obedience to GOD, are the most happy; and the pain arises entirely from a deficiency in the Christian character. Self-denial is as necessary for happiness as it is for duty. When CHRIST said, "whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple;" that is, he will not be mine in character, neither will he be my peaceful and rejoicing disciple. This shows the necessity of self-denial for entering into the kingdom of CHRIST, and that those who have it not are neither holy nor happy. There are many, who wish to be Christians and make some faint endeavors towards a regular and as they hope a Christian life, and who through fear are struggling against the outbreaking of their own lusts, and thence think they are Christians; and that Christians are necessarily exposed to such pain as they feel. But in this there is no denial of self—no Christian denial, and the pain is the fruit of an evil conscience struggling against the propensities of an unfancified nature. If there had been the Christian self-denial, there would have been a happiness in being devoted to GOD above all the pleasures of a sinful life. The words of Christ do therefore appear to be true, both in point of duty and happiness; that unless men crucify self, and are denied to the ambitious, sensual and avaricious desires of an evil heart, they cannot be his disciples. Those who have no degree of self-denial

must be in that state which is without the gospel encouragement. All such as are exalting themselves, depending on their own righteousness, or endeavoring to promote their own interests without any regard to the glory of God and the best interests of his kingdom, are destitute of any promise from the Saviour.

2. THIS subject shows that Christians and those who have no experimental knowledge of religion, have different ideas on the subject of self-denial and bearing the cross.

THE people of CHRIST do not connect an apprehension of unhappiness with the duty. They seek it for themselves that they may be happy in the exercise; and when they exhort their brethren to deny themselves, they do not mean to recommend the means of unhappiness, either present or future. With all exhortations of this kind they connect an idea of the greatest happiness that can be enjoyed on this side the grave.

BUT it is not thus with the un sanctified, for to them Christian self-denial always conveys the idea of pain. They think taking up the cross and following CHRIST to be a gloomy duty. They think the denying of self to be an incessant suffering of pain; and that those, who endeavor to comply with the command, are continually pining in an unhappy frame for enjoyments of a worldly and sinful kind, which they dare not touch lest death should be the consequence. With these apprehensions they must suppose Christians to be the most unhappy people in the world, and that the way to heaven is necessarily hedged up with thorns, and pains and the most anxious disquietude of mind. Thus many who find a distaste to a serious life in the beginning

of their attention, are still farther discouraged. All is gloomy around them—it is gloomy and awfully terrible to go forward and meet the judgments of a condemning law—it is gloomy to think of spending a whole life in Christian self-denial as they understand it; and being made uneasy by the prospect every way, they put seriousness away and grow hardened in sin, until all sense of danger is gone, and they sink unperceivedly into the gates of death until there is no return. Such are deceived indeed, but it is through that unholiness which is incapable of delighting in God and the glory of his kingdom. While seeking happiness in the advancement of self, they lose peace and life, and by refusing to become humble and self-denied, they forfeit the dignity and honor of being brethren and co-heirs together with JESUS our Lord. AMEN.

[Illegible handwritten text]

S E R M O N XII.

Experimental religion the same in all ages.

ROMANS, vii. 9, ————— 25.

For I was alive without the law once : but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

For sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Wherefore the law is holy ; and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Was then that which is good, made death unto me ?

God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good ; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

For we know that the law is spiritual : but I am carnal, sold under sin.

For that which I do, I allow not : for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I.

If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good.

Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

For I know, that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.

For the good that I would, I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of GOD after the inward man.

But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death !

I thank GOD through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of GOD ; but with the flesh the law of sin.

IN this chapter, the apostle Paul gives us a very remarkable account of his own Christian experiences. The greatest part of the chapter must be unintelligible to those who have never experienced any similar exercises, and to many it will appear to be a chain of contradictions. While some thus judge, to those who have felt a similar security and conviction, and afterwards a similar operation of the principles of holiness, in a state of warfare with the remaining corruption of the heart, the whole description appears according to truth ; and drawn with a degree of accuracy and just expression, which could not have been attained without the inspiration of the Spirit of GOD. As an intro-

duction to the view which he had of himself in his own christian state, he first described what his feelings were while in security, and what his apprehensions were when convinced of sin by the awakening spirit of GOD.

IT is one of the most common objections made against experimental religion, by the careless and the unholy, that it consists of enthusiastic exercises, according to the notions of fanciful minds and an overheated imagination. That in different ages, different apprehensions on these subjects have become the fashion of the time in which they were broached. That there have been as many kinds of enthusiasm, as there were periods of time, in which through certain external causes, fervor in religion became fashionable.

OBJECTIONS of a similar nature with the abovementioned, are often brought against the very existence of all evangelical piety; and some feel themselves so fortified by the supposed truth of what they assert, that they mean forever to oppose experimental godliness. In first meeting this objection it will be allowed, that there is, and in every age hath been enthusiasm; extraordinary fervors in things relating to religion; fanciful and ridiculous imaginations concerning Christian godliness, and a very sinful boldness of hope, where there was no scriptural evidence of Christian piety. It will also be allowed that these vain imaginations have been almost infinitely diversified, according to the constitution of persons; to particular situations and temptations; and generally, in some degree according to the fashion of falsehood in the day. But doth this disprove the reality of experimental godliness? No; it only proves that truth and piety have another dangerous and extensive field of error to oppose; and while infidelity is com-

batted on the one hand ; enthusiasm, with all its dangerous fervors and false hopes, must be watched on the other. The very existence of these counterfeits, is an argument for the probability of experimental religion. Error, either of doctrine or experience, will be various in its appearance. There can be no standard for error ; and therefore we must expect to see it assuming every form, and subject to the control of fashion and circumstances. It hath been, and will yet continue to be so. From this diversity of error in experience, we hope to draw an argument of probability, in favor of a true scheme of experimental piety. If errors have been multiform, and without any mutual consistency, in different persons and ages ; and if we can find interspersed through the whole period of time, and in a multitude of persons, a scheme of experimental godliness, harmonizing with the scriptures ; and the experience of all these consistent with each other, and of the same moral nature ; we may determine that such things proceed from an efficient cause that is permanent and true. It is actually the case, with respect to Christian experiences, in all instances, that they are of the same moral and holy nature ; and though diversified in some circumstances, are essentially the same. Also, in those views and exercises of mind, which precede a genuine sanctification, there is a great degree of moral uniformity. Even in those ages, which were the most dark since the time of CHRIST there have been a multitude of experimental believers. This multitude of true believers hath been scattered through many nations ; broken into many nominal sectaries ; and without any opportunity for communionial intercourse, whereby their prejudices might be removed. Still, when they conversed or wrote, they expres-

sed the same belief and feeling of experimental godliness in CHRIST JESUS. While differing in circumstances, in ceremonies, and in non-essentials, they expressed the same love, hope, faith, repentance, and delight in the holy character and perfections of GOD. It is generally allowed that the Christian scriptures contain a scheme of doctrine and morality; and it is also true that they teach us a scheme of evangelical experience, and of the common exercises of awakened minds before they become converted to a love of the truth. We, therefore, have from the scriptures the best advantage to judge of experience, and to determine whether the professed religious exercises of men's minds are from the power and Spirit of GOD, or from their own fancy. As the apostle Paul was a chosen instrument for teaching the Christian doctrines; so he was also for elucidating Christian experience. The sum of his experience, we find concisely described in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. It is the design of this discourse to consider the views and exercises of Paul, as we find them described by himself; and as we proceed, to compare them with the apprehensions of the present friends of experimental religion. By the friends of experimental religion, is meant, those who believe, not merely in the truth of the scriptures, and in the fitness of a moral life; but in the awakening, convincing and renewing operations of the Spirit of GOD. Also, in a life of progressive holiness by the action of GOD, on the minds of those whom he hath called, whereby the work of grace, which he hath begun, shall be completed in glory.

To effect the design of this discourse, we will consider the following things.

I. THE views which Paul had of himself, and the exercises of his mind, while he was a secure, and when he was an awakened and convinced sinner.

II. His apprehensions of the divine law, after his heart was changed by the grace of GOD.

III. THE experimental exercises and affections of his Christian life, as they are described in this chapter, and in other parts of his writings.

I. WE are to consider the views which Paul had of himself, and the exercises of his mind, while he was a secure, and when he was an awakened sinner, and as we proceed we shall see the similarity of experimental exercises and affections in all ages.

PAUL, in the first part of his life, was a formal Pharisee. Not having given himself up to vicious and sensual extravagances, he lived in strict conformity to the rules of his own sect, and had a zeal for GOD, although it was not according to the knowledge of the gospel. But while thus strict; while he supposed that he obeyed the law so punctually as even to be a favorite of heaven; he was wholly unacquainted with the Christian temper. He saw nothing of the corruption of his heart; nothing of that selfishness and pride, which are sinful against GOD, and the natural disposition of all men. Therefore he did not know but he was in a safe state; yea more, entitled to a very great degree of glory and blessedness as a reward for his precision in the external duties of religion. Whilst he had these sentiments of himself, GOD took a mighty hold of him by the power of his Spirit. An account of the extraordinary manner of his convic-

tion, conversion, and calling into the service of CHRIST, is found in the acts of the apostles; and it was a most remarkable display of the power and grace of GOD. To see an unholy opposer and bitter persecutor of the religion of CHRIST, thus strangely and totally changed, from hating to loving the truth; from putting to death all who professed a gospel faith, to become the most eminent preacher of the same gospel, was indeed a high display of divine power, and of the energy of truth, when brought home to the hearts and consciences of men, by the Spirit of the Lord.

AFTER he had become obedient to the gospel, by faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST and repentance towards GOD; and had experienced the power of religion in his own heart, he was enabled to form a just view, and give a true description of his state, while he was secure, and when awakened by the Spirit of GOD.

OF his state when in security he gives the following description. "For I was alive without the law once."

THIS is a most admirable description of the state of secure sinners, whether they are sunk deep in sensuality, or whether they are depending on a self-righteous performance of external duties, while wholly destitute of a love of GOD, and of the truth.—Sinners who are sunk deep in sensuality are alive without the law.—Immersed in the world and its pleasures and interests, they appear to have lost a sense of invisible things, of an invisible GOD, of an eternity to come, and of its rewards. And when a sense of these truths is lost, the feeling of moral obligation is of course gone; for in persons of this

description, a sense of moral obligation is kept alive only by fear of the punishment of disobedience. It is thus that we see sensualists and people, who are devoted to the world, its interests and diversions, wholly insensible of divine truth. They are alive, or in a state of quietness, and without any apprehension of sin, guilt and danger. And when they hear themselves charged with iniquity in the sight of GOD, they disbelieve; when charged with a guilty character, they think there is no reality in the accusation; when threatened with punishment at the hand of a just GOD, they disbelieve the event, or accuse him of being unjust. Hence arises all manner of error and security in a life of irreligion. They have no sense of the obligation to godliness, nor of its real nature, nor of its importance for the glory of GOD, and their own highest happiness; and being insensible of these things, they of course, neither feel themselves to be sinners, nor in danger. Thus sensualists and thoughtless sinners are alive without the law.

THE same effect will be produced by a spirit of self-righteousness, which happened in the case of Paul. He says that touching the righteousness of the law, he thought himself blameless. He was careful in the performance of all external duties, and gave no attention to compare his heart with the divine commandment, and discover his total want of spirituality and a holy affection to truth and duty. Many are in the same manner alive without the law.—Contented with a visible formality, they have no sense that by the state of their hearts they abide under the wrath of GOD; and it is a very strange thing, to hear themselves charged with being in a state of condemnation.—Many in this way remain alive without the law, until the light of eternity convinces them of a fatal

mistake. This is the genuine Pharisaic error, which hath led many to death. In every age there have been professors thus self-destroyed.

OF his state when awakened by the Spirit of GOD, and brought to see his lost and miserable condition, he gives the following account. "But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died."

"WHEN the commandment came."

BY this expression we are not to understand that he did not know the law; or that he had not been educated in the literal knowledge of it from his earliest youth. He knew it perfectly in letter and doctrine, and thought that concerning its righteousness he was blameless. He had supposed that by the law he was directly going to a heaven of eternal bliss. He had supposed his own obedience to be so perfect, that even infinite purity would not accuse him; and in this apprehension he boldly persecuted and dragged to death, others who were not like himself in sentiment and in practice.

CHRIST said, "he came not to call the righteous to repentance," by which he meant, those who, in their own opinion, were not endangered and going down to death. Such could not prize him as a Saviour, for they saw not their need of his assistance, and therefore his call was more immediately directed to persons, who had other apprehensions of themselves.—It was directed to those who saw they were not righteous; but impure, guilty, miserable and condemned. He also said, "the whole have no need of a physician, but they who are sick." These were persons to whom the commandment never came. Although they had always lived under doctrinal instruction, and knew the letter of the com-

mandment ; yet through their own resistance, its power had been kept from their consciences. They had never feelingly perceived a present lawgiver, the spirituality of the commandment, or their own sin, guilt, and danger.

WHEN the commandment comes to the minds of sinners by the mighty and applying power of **GOD**, they have new views of the law, and of their relation to the lawgiver.—They see the reality of the moral system, of the moral law, and the holy character of the lawgiver.—They see themselves to be under an obligation which can never be repealed, and that there must be every right motive with the Almighty Jehovah to make his commandment glorious, even in the punishment of the rebellious. Fear and trembling are now excited, and they perceive themselves, to have been blindly sporting with their own everlasting concerns, and the awful realities of eternity. A scene, which is filled with the most important, great and awful objects and truths, of which they once formed no conception, is now presented before their minds, and they tremblingly cry, “ Lord what wilt thou have me to do ? ”

“ **SIN** revived and I died.”

THEY find themselves sinners, actually condemned by the law ;—really filled with that temper which the commandment forbids ;—and that all their actions, through life, have proceeded from the same disposition. To them this appears to be the case, even with the performances of external duty, on which they once depended, for their acceptance with the Lord, the Judge. They find that they cannot repent and love **GOD**, at whatever moment a sense of safety shall require it, as they once supposed they could ; at the same time they see, that the ina-

bility arises entirely from the stubbornness of their own wills and the hardness of their hearts. They find themselves so filled with those dispositions, which are contrary to God and the prescribed rule of duty, that there is no place for an amendment to begin, unless it be by a change of their hearts; and they are even afraid of their own resolutions and prayers, because they see the whole to proceed from the same unholy principles of heart. They find, that if the law of God be just, they are justly condemned; and in such cases, there is no sensible peace of mind until they are brought to unconditional submission before a sovereign God; to see and feel, that in their case, he may and will do as he pleaseth; either be merciful because he can show mercy, or reject because the law condemneth.

IN most cases, those who are savingly brought home to the Redeemer by submission, are conscious of a burden being removed from the mind, the manner of which they do not then conceive. Although they have no hope and no joys in the light of God's reconciled countenance, they feel a quietness that is new, and the removal of a distress with which they had been borne down. This is the quietness and peace of submission;—of coming and casting themselves at the feet of a sovereign God, and consenting that he should do his own pleasure. O happy soul, who hast thus submitted! This is the point in which sovereign mercy triumphs to take away sin and guilt. Although in different minds, there may be great diversity with respect to clearness and strength of exercise, yet in all who come to a Redeemer there will be a deep and serious feeling of these truths. They will be able to unite their testimony with the apostle,

that when a sense of the commandment came home to their minds and consciences, they saw themselves to be sinners, both by nature and practice, and that they were slain by the law.

ALL that can be written concerning the views, feelings and exercises of sinners, while secure and when awakened, is summarily comprized in the comprehensive description of the apostle, "for I was alive without the law once : but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." To answer the purposes of infinite wisdom, GOD took powerful hold of his mind, and made use of miraculous means for his awakening ; also, the period of his distress was short compared with what many considerate sinners experience ; but this alters not the moral nature of the effects which were produced. In his security he was like other secure men with which the world is filled. In the period of his conviction he was like other convinced sinners, trembling, afraid of GOD and his judgments, and inquiring what he should do to escape the wrath to come. He saw the law to be real, and that it condemned, and held him under the sentence of eternal death. He perceived that the commandment which was given to lead holy creatures unto eternal life, wrought death in his conscience from which he never could deliver himself.

THOSE who, in the present day, disbelieve the power of GOD in convincing sinners, and that the concern and distress of mind which they often manifest, are unnecessary and proceed from imaginary causes, cannot reasonably believe Paul's account of himself. It is true that miraculous means were used to awaken him, and GOD chose this method to be an evidence of the Chris-

tian religion, which was then newly promulgated. Still his distress did not arise from the miracle, but from the sight of a holy GOD, a holy law, a sinful and guilty heart, and the danger of immediately sinking down to eternal death. These things are as objectionable in one case as in the other; as necessary in one as in the other; and in both, they are according to GOD's usual manner of dealing with sinners, before he in sovereignty renews their hearts and gives them the peaceful hope of the gospel. Those who endeavor to suppress such apprehensions of themselves and their own case, are departing from the way in which mercy is usually found.

II. WE will consider his apprehensions of the divine law, after his heart was changed by the grace of GOD.

THIS is summarily expressed in the following words. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Before the change of his heart, the best that he could say of the law, was, "that he found it to be unto death." It appeared dreadful to him, considered as the sentence of his condemnation; neither was there any thing in its nature, which made him love it. Still he was sensible that the sin he saw in himself had deceived and slew him, and that the law, in its penalties, was a true expression of the fruits of sin which he was exposed to suffer. But we directly find him saying this law is good; good because it is holy and just. It is excellent, and lovely, and to be desired; and he ever after, in all his epistles, extols the commandment. Although he strenuously labored to convince sinners that the law could not give them life, and to draw them off from legal and self-righteous dependencies; yet he repre-

sented it as good, excellent in its nature and requirements, and the only rule of the Christian temper. Also the only rule by which we are to judge whether we are sanctified and forgiven through the grace of **GOD**.

THERE is something very remarkable in the words of the apostle on this point. His description of the goodness of the law is introduced, with the word "wherefore," as a consequence drawn from some preceding premises. "Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good." The premises, from which the consequence that the law is good, was drawn, were that the law condemned him, considered as a sinner. He now saw the law to be glorious and excellent, and the lawgiver to be praised for that very sentence under which he had trembled. Once he judged of the goodness of the law, by the effects which it had upon his own condition with respect to happiness and misery; but now he determined it to be good from its holiness and justice; from his being slain by it; and by its spirituality, that was in opposition to those unholy principles which sold him under sin.

A **HOLY** mind hath no dislike of the law for its penalties; indeed, so far is he from this that it appears to be one of the highest excellencies of the commandment, that it both forbids sin and threatens it with punishment. The penalty is as necessary for the glory of **GOD**, and for the maintenance of moral government as the precept; and therefore all right minds will approve it, although pain be the penalty and they themselves the subjects. Pain is undesirable to good minds, but the prostration of moral rights, obligations and duties, as must be the case, if there were no penalty to the commandment, to such

would create the greatest and most sensible pain, and therefore be the most undesirable event that could happen.

FURTHER, we ought to observe how carefully he guards all that he wrote on this point, lest he should be understood to cast a reflection on the law of GOD. He says, "that when the law came, sin revived and he died—also that he found it to be unto death." Lest he should be understood to cast a reflection, he immediately adds, "wherefore the law is just and good." Then he subjoins by way of question, "was then that which is good made death unto me? GOD forbid. But sin that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."—The blame of the undesirable effect is cast upon sin, that is, upon those voluntary sinful principles and exercises which he had found in himself. He gave all praise to the lawgiver and the law, and took all the blame to his own evil heart, acknowledging that his sinful principles and the practice which flowed from it were exceeding sinful.

THUS the apostle Paul expressed the new experimental views and affections which he had towards the divine law; and implicitly bore his testimony, that GOD would be glorious in executing the threatening, on all such as do not become of an obedient spirit.

THE ideas beforementioned, perfectly accord with the representations that have been given by experienced persons, in every age and at the present day. The change of heart that is given by GOD to his people, in every time and place, brings them to one sentiment and feeling on this important and discriminating subject.—Those who have been afraid of the command-

ment now love it. Those who have thought it too strict, now think it, in every respect reasonable. Those who have wished to lower down the commandment, now see it to be necessary, and are ready to bear their testimony in favor of all its strictness and its extension even to the thoughts of men. Once they disliked GOD, considered as lawgiver, and were ready to wonder how a perfect being could give such a commandment ; now they read the law with inexpressible delight, that they may thereby learn his character and come to a more clear and intimate acquaintance with his nature, counsels and requirements. From thinking that it is a burden to be under such strict limitation of duty ; they are changed to consider it as a privilege, that there is a commandment given by the infinite wisdom of their heavenly Father, which in all cases teaches them what is their duty, and how they ought to act. Such persons are made of an honest heart and wish to do right. They feel that imperfect creatures are very incompetent to direct themselves, and it is a great relief in their inquiries for duty, that they may go to the law of a Father, a Redeemer and Judge, to know what state of heart and what actions are right. There hath been a kind of Christians, in every age, who have had these apprehensions of the divine commandments. They see so much imperfection in themselves, that they hardly dare to avow before men that love of GOD's law and that mourning which they feel when they find it violated ; yet they experience some precious seasons, in which they can say these things before GOD in their closets, while they confess their own imperfections, and pray for grace, that they may live in a manner more agreeable to their duty.

DAVID, in a very great number of his Psalms, expresses his high opinion of the divine law—his delight in the character of the lawgiver—in the reasons why GOD hath given a law—and in the precepts and in the duties, which are enjoined. Indeed the Psalms of David contain a very complete description of the experimental affections of a holy mind towards GOD and his commandments ; and considered as such, they ought to be much read by Christians in their seasons of self-examination ; and those who cannot adopt the sentiments as their own, do herein find a mark that they are not sincere. The same experimental sentiments concerning the divine law were expressed by all the ancient saints whose moral feelings are described in the old testament. Nothing filled them with a higher pleasure than the word and the commandments of GOD. They freely expressed their pious transports in view of a holy commandment, which is binding on themselves and on all the creation of GOD.

WHEN our blessed Saviour came on an errand of grace to a guilty world, and declared that all men were condemned by the law of GOD, and that his great business was to purchase and offer a free salvation from the penalties of the commandment ; he still asserted the excellency and the obligation of the law. “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” We have the most explicit

testimony, that the glorious Redeemer and head of the Christian Church delighted in the law of GOD ; and this it witnessed by his words, by his personal actions, and by his obedience in suffering unto death. All his true disciples have been like him in their love and obedience to the law of GOD. The same approbation of the divine commandments is to be found in all the sacred writers of the Christian dispensation. Those who have been friendly to experimental religion, from the time of CHRIST down to the present time, have agreed in those things, which have been the subject of consideration in this discourse. And although immense multitudes, some of a formal and some of a sensual and secure character, have put away the power of godliness from themselves, and endeavored to explain revelation so as to make men safe without the power of godliness ; there have also been a great number, who have received the Christian religion, in its spirituality of affections, and in purity and humility of practice. Those two kinds of people have often been mingled together in the public and visible Church ; but we know that the tares must grow together with the wheat, until the time appointed for their separation. On the most thorough examination we find, that kind of religion, which by way of distinction, hath been called experimental, hath been espoused by many in every age. Although in every age, there have been enthusiasts, and such enthusiasts have had no uniformity in their wild and overheated reveries of imagination, nor any appearance of humility ; yet the sober friends of experimental piety have been uniform in their opinions of religion in the heart. They have believed in a depravity of heart which leads men away from GOD.—In an awakening and convincing action on the mind, whereby sinners

are made anxious, trembling and inquiring.—That God's usual method of bringing sinful creatures into the kingdom of grace, is by the action of the law to lay them prostrate at his feet, and teach them they are justly condemned, and altogether unable to deliver themselves, without the unmerited influence of infinite power and goodness.—That there is a change of disposition and taste, produced by sovereign power, whereby they love God, rejoice in his commandments, and feel their happiness to consist in honoring the divine name and keeping his word.—That those who are thus changed, are weaned from the world, humble in themselves, hope in divine grace, believe and rejoice in the Spirit of God, become obedient and prayerful in their lives, and hope for their supreme happiness in the enjoyment of God himself.

It may be proper for me here to observe, that where those new apprehensions of the divine law take place, which have been mentioned; there will also be new apprehensions of the glory of God, the lawgiver. The beauty of his character will appear to be infinitely glorious; his kingdom to be right; and all his dispensations to be good. The new formed heart will rejoice in God, and become an obedient subject of his grace and holy influence.

A MORE particular consideration of the experimental exercises and affections of Paul's Christian life, as they are described in this chapter, and in other parts of his writings, is reserved for the next discourse.

WHAT hath now been said ought to lead all those to a very serious inquiry, who doubt of the

reality of experimental religion, as it hath been described. The holy scriptures certainly represent, that many who have gospel light and Christian instruction, shall fall short of final salvation. Those who attempt to live a moral life without experimental religion, will probably apply these descriptions to such as are openly profane and immoral; and to persons who appear to pay no regard to the means of instruction and grace. That the description is truly applied to those, so far as the application can extend, no Christian or believer in the holy scriptures can doubt; but whether it doth not apply further, is the question to be determined? We are told, that not only the openly profane, and those who neglect the Christian means, shall fail of eternal life; but that others will say to CHRIST, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" In another place CHRIST tells us, that no man could cast out devils in his name, and at the same time lightly speak evil of him. These must probably be very moral persons, and yet CHRIST says, that he should say unto them, depart from me for I know you not. We are also informed of those "who have the form without the power of godliness"—of the Pharisee, who prided himself in a visible regularity of life, and still had no Christian humility—of works which do not justify in the sight of GOD.—of those who go about to establish their own righteousness, and are ignorant of the righteousness of GOD; with a great number of other descriptions, in the writings both of the prophets and apostles, which speak of a defect in the hearts of men, while they profess to believe the truth.

WE also find the people of GOD represented to possess a warmth of heart in divine things,

which leads them to be much in prayer, and in free conversation on the interesting subjects of faith and experience ; and as possessing a spirit of devotion which weans them from the world, and carries an evidence that their hearts and affections are placed on the things above. And this is represented to be the fruit of an indwelling influence of the Spirit of God, which is not granted to the world. It is not conceived how all these things are reconcilable, with the notion that experimental religion is enthusiastic and unnecessary for a safe hope of eternal life. Certainly, by these considerations, those ought to be led to a very serious inquiry, who discredit that work of the Spirit whereby men are convinced of sin, become new creatures, and are converted unto CHRIST. Although they know nothing of these things, in their own experience, and do not by their cursory attention to the subject, see the need of them ; they ought at least, seriously and candidly to inquire, whether they may not be mistaken ; whether they have not fallen into some misapprehension of the nature of vital godliness, which blinds their eyes and exposes them to an irretrievable mistake. Doubtless they feel disgusted with such a kind of religion ; but it is the natural character of men to be displeased with the spirituality of devotion. It must be expected, that many will entertain a very favorable opinion of themselves, who will be disappointed, on entering the other world, to find that they wholly overlooked the power of CHRIST'S gospel. And they ought to be greatly solicitous on this subject, when they find that the apostles, and a multitude in every age since their time, have believed and have found their consolation in the manner which hath been mentioned. And it will be allowed, even by their opposers,

that this multitude have been self-denied to the world and their own pleasures, meek, of a sober conversation, and people who appeared to be filled with a love of the souls of others, and to be seeking a portion beyond the grave in the presence of GOD. May all who read be enabled by the grace of GOD to consider and see.——
AMEN.

S E R M O N XIII.

Experimental religion the same in all ages.

ROMANS, vii. 9, ————— 25.

For I was alive without the law once : but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died, &c.

IT is an important point to be established, that there is a kind of experimental religion, which is wrought in the minds of men by the special influences of the Spirit ; which is marked out in the holy scripture ; is uniform in its nature and effects in all ages, and characteristically distinguishable from the enthusiasm of un-sanctified, ignorant and warm minds. With this view the experience of Paul, as written by himself under the sacred guard of divine inspiration, hath been the subject of consideration in a preceding discourse, and is continued in the present.

WE have already considered the views which Paul had of himself, while he was a secure and when he was an awakened and convinced sinner.

ALSO we have considered his apprehensions of the divine law, after his heart was changed by the grace of GOD.

A COMPARISON hath been drawn between his views and exercifes, and what have been always found in secure and in convinced finners ; and in those who appear to be effectually converted to a love of the truth. So far as we have proceeded in the subject, it clearly appears, that in all ages of time, experimental religion hath been the same in its nature and effects.

III. IT now remains that we particularly consider his views, exercifes and affections in the Christian life, as they are described in this chapter and in other parts of his writings.

HERE we are again entering on a subject which can be justly apprehended, by none beside the experienced. To all others, what is said, if it be justly expressed, will appear like a series of contradictions. The mixed state of a Christian's heart must be unintelligible to all, until they have the weak beginnings of a holy taste. This is initial holiness in a state of warfare with the remainder of depravity that is found in all the children of GOD in this world, and which can be removed, only by the death of the body, for that is the time when GOD hath promised to perfect his saints. It is a mixture of holiness and unholiness ; of mourning and joy ; of delight in the duties of religion, and at many times a backwardness to perform them with the required spirituality. The Christian loathes himself for the things which he continues to do. While he loves the law of GOD and it is his supreme delight, as the apostle expresses it, he finds a law in his members warring against the law of GOD ; that is, he insensibly backslides ; loses the com-

forting exercise of love to God and the truth ; his faith becomes very weak ; his sight of divine things and of eternity is dimmed ; and for happiness he looks again to the world and its enjoyments, which appeared to him of no value, when his faith and love were in lively exercise.

THIS transition of views and affections is wonderful and strange to the Christian himself, after he hath long experienced it ; until he recollects that all his life, his light and the comforts of his love are from GOD. They are kept up no longer than he abides in CHRIST, by an active faith, and goes to him for righteousness and strength.

THE most common cause on the part of the children of GOD, that they feel a sensible decay of the divine life, and lose light and comfort, is that they cease going to CHRIST for a communication of spiritual strength from him. While there is any depravity left in creatures, they naturally trust in themselves. Having stood for a season, in light and comfort, they forget the author of their strength and joys. It seems to them as though they stood habitually, and by some principles which they now firmly possess as their own. When this comes to be their state of mind, they forget a strengthening Saviour, and are standing in themselves ; and now they are prepared to fall. They have forgotten or do not feel the absolute truth of the words of CHRIST to his disciples. " Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine : no more can ye, except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. Without me ye can do nothing."—This declension of sensible dependence on a Redeem-

er, is the most common cause of those decays which Christians feel, when they complain of being in a stupid and sleeping state; also, of those backslidings, by which they openly dishonour God, and shame the Church of the Saviour. They often feel a deadness to duty and complain of their own declension, when there is no visible backsliding and departure from the Christian practice; but we must confess, that it is sometimes worse than this. They sometimes are left to act in a very unchristian manner; so that the world accuses them of having been hypocritical in all their past professions of being on the side of the Lord. When this is the case, the Lord of glory is crucified afresh; they are commonly too deep immersed in slumbers to be very sensible of their own decay; and they have to meet some awful rod of the Lord, by which he, in covenant faithfulness, will bring them back again to a sense of duty, with great affliction and the pangs of a deep repentance.

THE probable cause, why God leaves his children to decay and backslide, is to keep up a constant testimony in the world, that the efficiency of his own spirit, is the cause of all the vital piety that is among men.

WHEN the enemies of experimental religion, observe this inconstancy of Christians in the appearance of humility and of fervent love to their Redeemer, and to the duties of worshipping him, and sometimes see them backsliding into open sins, they make an improvement of the event, directly contrary to what they ought. They infer from this, that there is nothing uniform and permanent in the nature of Christian piety.—They also infer, that a holy and unchanging God can have no special agency, in forming a char-

after which appears to be so variable ; and therefore they argue both against the real influences of the Spirit, and the existence of a holy principle, which shall be perpetuated unto eternal life. But all this, on Christian principles, is consistent, and proves the doctrine of a special divine influence from GOD, in first forming and in afterwards maintaining alive the graces of his people. It shows, that all the progress of a Christian life depends on divine communications, and that Christians can no more preserve than they can make themselves such. It shows, to what human nature is tending wherever the efficacious grace of GOD doth not interpose. It proves the sovereignty of GOD, not only in the first forgiveness of sin, through a divinely formed righteousness ; but in all that preparation by which sinners are fitted to enter into eternal life. They are as much dependant for the preservation of spiritual life, and will be through eternity, as they were for the beginning of consideration and repentance.

IF GOD did not thus deal with his people, sometimes warming their hearts with love, and sometimes permitting them to backslide, his efficiency would soon be forgotten. The world would say, that men have a power in themselves, without the special aids of the Holy Ghost, to begin and persevere in serving the Lord ; and thus the aids of the Spirit, in the great work of redemption, would be denied. These are the probable reasons, why GOD permits his people at times, to become lifeless and to backslide.

HAVING made these preliminary observations, on the reasons why GOD permits, and why Christians do in fact, so often lose their sensible life and comfort in religion ; we will now directly

attend to the views, affections and exercises, which Paul found to be in himself, in those parts of his Christian life, which succeeded his conversion.

1st. NOTWITHSTANDING a sense of great deficiency and remaining sin, he was conscious of a real love to GOD and delight in his commandments.

WE have noticed this already. "Therefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy, just and good."—He adds many other expressions of the same import. "I delight in the law of GOD after the inward man." He says, that he would, or sincerely wished to do that, which he did not. He sincerely consented unto the law, that it is good. It was not he, that is, his reigning disposition to do that, which he often found in himself. Although we find this lamentation over himself, it doth not appear that he had any doubt of the reality of religion or of his own sincerity. His hope was not shaken, although his heart was grieved and his conscience burdened, with his imperfections. He had a comfortable hope of a new nature; but lamented the imperfection which remained, and that the work of grace which was begun, had not changed him more perfectly.

WHEN the unsanctified complain of their sins, it shows the condemnation of their own consciences, and that they know themselves to be without any sincerity; but it is not thus with the people of GOD. With all their imperfections, they are conscious of some sincerity. They feel some love in the midst of coldness; some light in the midst of darkness; some exercises of grace, where there is much sin remains. The

case is similar in all the people of GOD, who have a right to hope themselves so ; for if they do not find the reality of grace in their hearts, they have no right to hope.

THIS representation is confirmed by the humble professors of experimental religion in our own time. They speak of much sin, great deadness of holy affections, and short coming in duty ; but still they know, that they have views and affections, different both in their nature and their effects, from what they once had. They find some sensible love of GOD and of his law and government. Some delight in their duty ; some very sincere desire to grow in grace and a holy conformity to GOD. They know that the duties of religion, that seasons of worship in prayer and praise, and that the company and communion of the sincere disciples of Christ are pleasant to them. A consciousness of these beginnings in grace delivers them from a servile fear of the judgment to come. While they appear to themselves less than the least of all saints ; still from some degree of conscious sincerity, they hope, they rejoice, although surrounded with the darkness of remaining sin, and lowness in grace. It is thus, that the true people of GOD often spend the greatest part of their lives, in the intermingled exercises of holiness and sin. GOD permits such a varied life, that it may be both to themselves and others, a constant evidence for the effiience of his grace which is the only and constant cause of spiritual light and comfort.

2d. ALTHOUGH the apostle believed in the grace of GOD to himself, and had no prevalent doubts of his own sincerity, he still felt himself burdened with great imperfection of heart.

THAT he felt such a remainder of sin, is learned from the expressions which he used in this chapter, and many of a similar kind, may be found in his other epistles. "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.—For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would that do I not; but what I hate that I do.—For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.—How to perform that which is good I find not.—The evil which I would not, that I do.—I find then a law, that when I would do good evil is present with me.—I see another law in my members waring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.—O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death."

THE whole of this description is misapprehended by un sanctified men. By the law of the mind, which is contrary to the law of the members; by his consenting to the law, that it is good; and by the good that he would, they understand such resolutions of amendment as they often make, through an alarmed conscience; and therefore they suppose, that when in such a state of mind they are as the apostle was in his best frames. But his state was far different. In him there was holiness and unholiness alternating in exercise; in those all is unholiness, and their best frames are only a state of restraint through fear and selfish motives. Experimental Christians of the present day, find a state of mind similar to that which the apostle describes. In the midst of their most sensible love and comforts, the bright view will be suddenly intermitted.—Darkness will succeed light in a manner they did not expect.—When on the wing, and it feels to them, as though they could rise and take posses-

sion of heavenly joys ; the attempt shows their weakness, for some worldly lust intervenes, and the vision of glory is gone.—In the midst of gracious exercises and affections, worldly thoughts and desires, and exercises which are positively sinful, will arise, and it causes them great trouble to resist the temptation, that comes, either from some external power or cause, or springs up from the depravity of their own hearts.—When they arise to take possession of the Canaan of joy and peace that is before them, they find themselves in the wilderness, and perhaps at the foot of Sinai, which thunders awfully in their hearing. Thus their light is interrupted by darkness ; their joys by fears ; their exercises of faith by doubts ; their mourning for sin, by some powerful temptation which involves them again in the sorrows of the world and of an evil conscience ; and the Redeemer, whom they suppose to be near, and to be their strength, is gone. In his absence, it feels as though the enemy must overcome ; and they have the arduous task through much prayer and self-humbling, again to find the Lord and King, by whose aid only, they can conquer the world, the flesh and the devil.

AFTER they have had favored seasons, in which the day appeared clear and the path plain, and when they did not apprehend any danger, their eyes are opened to behold a most awful backsliding that is past. They look back, and see that they have been away from God their strength—that they have been immersed in the cares and pleasures of the world—have forgotten their communion with their Christian friends—in a measure neglected and become formal in those seasons of private devotion which used to give them ecstatic delight—and been scarcely distinguishable in their appearance, from the

more regular part of the unholy world. From such seasons of backsliding, the children of GOD are often awaked, by some great worldly affliction. When their eyes are effectually opened, and their hearts graciously relent, they can kiss the rod which hath smitten them—adore the covenant faithfulness which chastized them back to true peace—and they will wonder that they could have been so ensnared, after they had seen the glory of the LORD to draw them forward to eternal peace. Such accounts as these may be heard from the mouths of the people of GOD; and although their hopes are not destroyed, they are filled with lamentations over their remaining sin. And the meaning of these complaints is similar to what Paul meant, in saying “that when he would do good evil was present with him.” Also, “that he found a law in his members warring against the law of his mind.”—This made him cry out, “O miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death.”

3d. It is next proper, that we should notice some experimental exercises of Paul, which he hath strongly expressed, in other parts of his writings; and in which Christians of all other ages are found to accord.

He had a deep and impressivè sense, that salvation is bestowed by free and sovereign grace. He saw that all his duties, works and righteousness, without the unmerited mercy and forgiveness of GOD were of no avail to forgiveness and salvation, and that we are justified and pardoned through faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST. This he expresses in many places, particularly in the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians. Where recounting what he had done while in

his natural temper, that he might be righteous before God, he tells us, that touching the righteousness of the law he used to think himself blameless. But he now found, that what things were gain to him, in respect of a righteousness of his own, were loss with respect to the salvation that is by CHRIST. He now found that all this righteousness of his own, stood in the way of salvation ; for it prevented him coming to CHRIST by faith as a poor, needy, helpless and hell-deserving sinner, who could do nothing for himself, without the power of divine grace working in him, and making him another creature from what he found himself to be.—He was brought to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS. And how often do we find him disclaiming all worthiness, and taking to himself all the blame, and guilt, and deserving of an eternal rejection. How often do we find him, admiring and adoring free and sovereign grace, in its nature, extent and richness !

It is thus with all Christians. They have, in this matter, a similar experience with the apostle. One of the truths most deeply impressed on their souls, is the necessity and efficacy of grace, of free and sovereign grace ! of efficacious and undeserved grace ! of sanctifying, as well as of forgiving grace !—They discard themselves—they find death written on all they have done—that their own righteousness is nothing but sin and guilt, and while they depend upon it, an accusing conscience is not removed. They find the whole of their own righteousness to have been but loss, as it respects the free and holy salvation, that is in CHRIST JESUS the Lord, and is received by faith. All their songs are to free and sovereign grace, and all their hopes from this. Here

also, there is a similarity between the experience of the apostle, and what hath been common in true Christians of all other ages.

ALso, in the same place he expresses a deep sense how far he fell short of the rule of Christian duty. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of CHRIST JESUS." He believed that CHRIST had apprehended or called him to perfect holiness—he now found himself filled with an afflicting remainder of unholy affections; still he determined, through gracious assistance, "to press forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS."

HE had a deep sense of his own unworthiness, compared with what he hoped that he saw in other Christians. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given."—We are not to suppose that Paul was less eminent in grace than other Christians; indeed he was, through the sovereign grace of GOD among the most experienced and holy Christians. But he judged of others from what he saw; and they gave a visible evidence of divine love shed abroad and reigning in their hearts. He judged of himself; from what he felt; and he was conscious of an inward sin and imperfection that others could not see, and therefore he honestly said, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints."—Herein he was not singular. Modern experimental Christians, who give evidence that they are so indeed, have the same humble feelings, concerning their own attainments in grace. They hope; but it is with humility. They number themselves with the people of GOD; but it is with a feeling that they are among the least in the kingdom of CHRIST. They hope to have a

place in the kingdom of heaven ; still it appears to them, that if they come thither, they must and ought to have the lowest mansion in glory. And when they speak in this manner, it is with the feelings of sincerity. We know that men may affect humility ; but where this is affected, they have more reason to be alarmed than to hope. There is reason to believe, that, in every age, CHRIST hath called many to his own spirit of humility, and that they feel themselves, even while they joyfully hope, “ to be less than the least of all saints.” If the unholy disbelieve this, as they often affect to do, it arises from the pride of their own hearts. They are so ignorant of humility, it is difficult for them to believe that it exists in other minds.

PAUL devoted himself to the kingdom of CHRIST. He said that “ necessity was laid on him to preach the gospel—that he was willing to spend and be spent” in preaching for the glory of GOD and the good of men’s souls.

ALTHOUGH he was called to be an apostle and a peculiar duty was devolved on him by this call ; yet the spirit which he manifested in this respect, was not peculiar to him as an apostle, for a degree of it is felt by all the children of GOD. All are not called to the same duties ; but all are devoted to the same cause—all feel their obligations to GOD and CHRIST—all are animated by one common interest, glory and service in the honor of CHRIST. There have in every age, been many, who have professed the same animated desires, to be devoted to the kingdom of GOD and CHRIST, and they were found willing to deny themselves—to deny all earthly pleasures, that they might advance the kingdom of a blessed, a glorious, and a beloved Redeemer.

THERE is another Christian affection, which was so conspicuous in the experience of this eminent apostle, who was not only a teacher by a special call from heaven ; but an example of the same holiness which he inculcated on others, that it ought not to be overlooked in this discourse.

His love of the souls of other people. This he manifested, by forsaking all other prospects and devoting himself to promote the salvation of sinners. He expressed it, in the lamentation that he made over his own blinded nation.— When speaking of their unhappy case, and the yearnings of his heart over them, to describe it he saith, “ I say the truth in CHRIST, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart.” This was a natural expression of Christian desire, that the souls of others might be saved. If we read the description through, it may appear to be expressed in high wrought figures ; but figurative as it may be, it is understood by Christians. It is often repeated, in the ardent desires which pious people have for the salvation of others. CHRIST prayed for sinners, “ Father forgive them, they know not what they do.” His people partake of his Spirit, and most earnestly pray and ardently desire that souls may be saved. The un sanctified know not the groanings of soul, that the children of GOD have over them ; and they often impute, the prayers which are offered for them, to some very evil motive or to pride. Those who know the worth of their own souls ; and have found the infinite good of religion, and are made benevolent in their disposition, cannot refrain from praying, “ GOD be merciful to my perishing fellow creatures, which are around me. I have

found by experience that grace can save, O let its trophies be numberless. Let other ungrateful ones be added to those, who are already saved as brands from the burning."—Herein the experience of Christians, in every age, hath been of the same nature and confirms the doctrine of this discourse. Grace operating in the heart, is in all, of the same nature. Time, place and subject will not alter it. It is the Spirit of CHRIST breathed out anew from the hearts of his people, and proves the whole to be a divine work.

THIS similarity of Christian experience, shows that it proceeds from a powerful and all-governing cause which acts uniformly in the kingdom of grace; and that experimental religion hath in all ages been similar, in its nature and effects.—GOD hath a common method of dispensing to those, whom he intends to bring to his kingdom of final glory. This uniformity of views, affections and desires, is an evidence, that the professors of experimental piety are not enthusiastically moved. It shows that GOD hath a uniform method of bringing sinners into the kingdom of his grace; and when this is done they have similar exercises, in that part of life, which intervenes between their effectual calling by grace and their departure to the world of glory. Enthusiasm could not move people so uniformly. Absolute ignorance or pride would not be so consistent in the views and exercises of different persons. Men's un sanctified imaginations are always irregular, and generally overheated and boasting; nor doth it lead to humility and a regular life of good works. To find an eminent apostle speaking in conformity with all the saints whose lives are recorded before him; in conformity with the representations of our blessed

Redeemer ; and in conformity with the descriptions, which have been given by an immense number of pious and holy men in the intervening ages ; is an evidence which never can be refuted for the truth and reality of such experimental exercises. Those who have them not, ought by this to be alarmed and tremble for their own future safety.

4th. BOTH saints and sinners speak of sin, and allow that they feel its influence. When the un sanctified hear the people of God speak of themselves as great sinners, they think there is no difference in their conditions. It is therefore a matter of great consequence to give some rules for distinguishing between the apprehensions of the renewed and the unrenewed on this point. When those who have no gracious affections, hear the best Christians complaining of depravity, of hard hearts, of blind minds and of rebelling lusts, they are sometimes made secure, thinking there is nothing in themselves more evil than Christians lament. This improvement of Christian confession is often made by the unholy ; and some of those who have no feelings of conscience, when they hear the people of God lamenting past barrenness and sin, think from thence that these are the worst of people, who labor habitually under dreadful accusations of conscience for some hidden iniquity. It is therefore a thing of great importance, that we obtain some rules for distinguishing between the views which Christians and the un sanctified have on this point. This will next be attempted.

1. It is pure and unmixed sin, in the dispositions of their hearts, of which the un sanctified are convicted. They are taught this by the dictates of reason and the testimony of natural con-

science. Conscience bears a witness, that they dislike the divine character, law and government. They feel the sensible risings of opposition to divine holiness; to the purity of the law, and the principles of government in the administration of God. They see nothing lovely in the perfections and commandments of the Lord; and although they are taught by the dictates of reason, that it is fit the divine government should be maintained, there appears to them no beauty or excellency in the truth to which they assent.

THE true Christian is not conscious of unmingled sin. He feels a sensible love of God and of holiness, mingled with his imperfections, and his unlawful attachments to the world. He perceives an excellency in moral truths and duties, and finds an unhappiness that he cannot attain to perfect obedience. The views which he hath had, of a glory in God and in the truth, surpassing all mortal description, helps him to distinguish the nature of religion and unholiness, and makes him more sensible of his failure in duty.

2. DREAD of punishment makes the un sanctified acknowledge themselves to be sinners. A contemplation of the evil that is threatened to the ungodly, causes their fear, and quickens them to an examination, whereby they are self-condemned, and dare not deny their transgression. It seems to them that if they deny this conviction of reason and conscience, it will increase the guilt and punishment; but if condemnation could be avoided the sense of sin would be gone. Whenever conscience is laid asleep with respect to the consequences, a sight both of the nature and magnitude of the crime is lost.

In the case of the people of God, who have a humble hope through forgiving grace, the sense and confession of sin doth not arise from

fear. Fear, is in a degree removed by a love of the commandment ; but on comparing themselves with a holy lawgiver and law, they find an unlikeness for which they are grieved—an imperfection for which they mourn. That appearance of excellency, which they have discovered in the nature and law of GOD, enables them to discover their own remaining deformity. The beginning of holy affections serves to discover both the remainder of sin, and its turpitude and desert of the just anger of GOD. The actual exercise of holy affections serves as a new light, to discover what remains in the soul, that is of an unholy nature ; also to see the baseness of every thing that is unholy. We hence see that the people of GOD have a more afflicting sense of remaining sin, than they had of the whole body of spiritual death before its reigning power was destroyed by sanctifying grace. The remainder appears to them greater in quantity—more evil in its nature—and more undesirable in its qualities and effects, than a total corruption did, before their hearts were renewed by divine grace. They speak more feelingly of sin than they ever did before. Hence they see more in themselves that is wrong than they ever did before—have a more affecting conviction of the justice of GOD in their condemnation—of the imperfection of their best services—and that forgiveness is a gift of divine sovereignty. Hence when they are most humbled, and most sensible of sin, they hope most clearly, through the free and sanctifying and forgiving grace of GOD. They have an ardent desire to be freed from sin, and its unreasonable nature lies as a greater burden on their minds, than the fear of being punished by the justice of GOD. To one a fear of punishment is the only alarming motive to cir-

cumspection; to the other, the evil nature of sin and the dishonor that is done to GOD and the injury to his cause is the most powerful motive to watch and pray. It therefore comes, that at the time, in which their hopes arise the highest, they have the most humbling apprehension of being guilty sinners; and that all their hope must come from the grace of GOD. If we were to add to that sense and conviction of sin, which is felt by the un sanctified, a despair of any deliverance; it would produce a remorse, which will be a principal ingredient in the punishment of the ungodly. But the apprehension of unworthiness and a just desert of being forever rejected, which is felt by the people of GOD, will remain with them forever, even after they come to the mansions of eternal peace. They will then know themselves to be delivered from sin; at the same time will be sensible, that their state in glory is to be wholly ascribed to unmerited mercy.

3. The sin which the un sanctified confess, when natural conscience accuses them, is exercises of positive disobedience. The commission of actual iniquity is what burdens their consciences and makes them fear; but they have very little sense, of the guilt there is in omitting the important duties, which we owe to GOD and men. They feel guilty and may allow themselves to be sinners for positive exercises of enmity to GOD and his government; but have little sense of sin in the omission of loving him with their whole heart, strength and mind. Through all their secure life, the want of love to GOD, and of devotion to his service hath never afflicted them as a sin. They have not seen him to be glorious and deserving of love; and therefore an inordinate affection to the creatures, hath not ap-

peared to them to be a grievous transgression. They have felt no guilt in serving the creatures, more than they have served God; none in looking to them with a confidence for protection; none in their thoughts being engrossed by earthly objects, to the exclusion of more divine considerations; and the sin of idolatry which is chargeable on all sinful creatures, they have not perceived to be in themselves. Perhaps they have felt guilty for profaneness; but not for omitting prayer.—Perhaps for defrauding their neighbors; but not for the want of loving them as they love themselves. We may go through the whole law of duty and apply the same remarks. It is sins of commission and not of omission which burden the conscience and extort the confession of un sanctified persons, that they are sinners.

It is far different with the people of God, in whose hearts a gracious work of sanctification is begun. Their hearts are changed—their taste is rectified—the standard by which they judge of truth and duty, of obedience, sin and guilt is new, and wholly different from what it once was. Further, they have new desires and feel carried out from themselves. They look with a new kind of discernment, and can, without selfish prejudices bring themselves in contemplation, into the presence of God and his law, and before his bar. They see that the omission of duty, flows from the same heart as the commission of crimes—that those who do not love God supremely, if a suitable temptation to ensnare be offered, will actually hate and resist him in the most sensible manner. The want or omission of a holy temper, doth therefore appear to them to be the fountain from which all actual crimes proceed. They further see, that their own preservation from crimes, so far as it depended on the motives by

which they were actuated, was of a selfish nature and source. Therefore they can impute no innocence to themselves, on this account. They see the infinite excellency and worthiness of God; and therefore the omission of duties, which are due to him and to his law, do henceforward appear to be crimes, flowing from the same fountain and partaking of the same immoral nature as the most flagrant sins of commission. They therefore consider the omission of duty which they owe to God, as sin of the worst nature and consequences. When they speak of remaining sin with which they are burdened, this doth not always mean positive exercises of opposition to God; but often, and perhaps most commonly a want of that sincere, ardent and affectionate love and obedience, which they know to be due to his infinite excellency. They feel unworthy and guilty, for not having a more fervent love, a stronger faith and a deeper repentance and mourning for sin. Even the weakness of their faith appears to them as a greater evil than all crimes did in their un sanctified state. Hence, while they have some sensible exercise of love and faith, they find themselves to be infinitely undeserving and guilty; and this they freely confess and humbly lament before God. As an increase of grace purifies their spiritual sight, they continually perceive new evils in themselves, new commissions of sin, and new omissions of duty, which were never before discovered. The Spirit of God assists them progressively to see more of themselves, and unveils the hidden iniquity of the heart, which is not in the least conceived by the un sanctified. This God doth that they may come to repentance and approach slowly towards the promised perfection. It appears therefore, that when the unholy hear Christians so sensibly

complaining of sin, instead of thinking their own state to be as good as the people of God, they ought to be alarmed by their ignorance of themselves.

4. THE unholy are not in the habit of comparing their own hearts and practice to the law of God. As they live without God, so they live without his law in the world. Have little sense of obligation; of a rule of duty; or that there is any thing more to be done than to live and enjoy themselves and the world. In this state it is not possible for them to know much of themselves; and their sin is of course hidden from their sight. It is only some great crimes, or some dreadful outbreakings of heart against God which they notice. When these are felt, conscience is terrified, and they own themselves to be sinners. But there is no possibility, that with that kind of sight which they possess and in their careless state, they should have any knowledge of the number, greatness and perpetual flow of sin, which is in their hearts. They do not know themselves—they do not use the means to know themselves—they do not read the commandment with self-application; or perhaps they do not read it at all; and how in such a case, can they know themselves to be sinners? When they are speaking or thinking of themselves or others, they speak and think in ignorance. Through the hardness of their hearts, the blindness of their minds, and the stupidity and carelessness of their state; the awful, solemn and eternal state of obligations and rewards is hidden from their view. They say and think nothing with knowledge on the subject. All is the darkness and ignorance of unholy minds,

going down to death. Presumptingly they judge things, of which they are utterly ignorant.

IT is not thus with the people of God. They have a taste and relish for truth, and a love of God's character and law. They have formed a habit of consulting the commandment; and of viewing their whole character in the light of its precepts. They consider themselves responsible for all their thoughts, words and actions; and that each one is evidence of being in a state of life or death. Thus, the multitude and greatness of their sins is in some measure discovered, and they find themselves to be exceeding sinful and far greater transgressors than was possible to be known in a state of security. When the unholly and un sanctified, are surprized to hear Christians complaining so much of sin, they ought to consider their own criminal neglect, and that the little sense they have of their own sin, arises from not comparing themselves with the rule of duty which hath been given by God himself.

THE observations which have been made on this point, will give some assistance, in distinguishing between the apprehensions of indwelling sin, that are entertained by the people of God, and by those who are unrenewed and in general security.

LET not sinners think themselves safe because they hear Christians complaining of more sin than they perceive in themselves. Let them not think that those whose consciences are so tender, and who examine themselves so faithfully, and thereby become sensible of their own imperfection, are more evil than others.—Let them not think themselves good, because they have little sense of being evil.—Neither let them imagine that the sense of indwelling sin, that is had by

the people of GOD is similar to the accusation of their own consciences, and thereby be prevented from an anxious engagedness to escape the danger of their present state.

IF they were sensible of great indwelling sin, or utter deficiency in duty, and many crimes of heart and life, continually taking place against GOD, their case would be more hopeful than it now is. We should then begin to number them among the sick, who are sensible that they have some need of a physician.

IT is pure and unmixed sin, without any degree of holiness, for which the sinner's conscience accuses him.

THE Christian complains of remaining sin, but it is mixed with some sensible and joyful exercises of love and delight in GOD, in the law, and in his own duty. It is the weakness of his faith and love that afflict and make him think himself the chief of sinners.

IT is a dread of punishment which makes the un sanctified acknowledge themselves to be the chief of sinners; and if a fear of GOD's anger were removed, they would think little more of their being transgressors.

A LOVE of the truth is what makes Christians discerning, and opens their eyes to see themselves full of evil, and infinitely short of the duty, which they owe to GOD.

SINS of commission, are what burden the consciences of transgressors. They feel a positive enmity to the truth; but see little sin in a want of love to GOD. But the Lord's people see the sin and guilt of omission in their whole lives, and that they have come short and are guilty enough in their best services, to cut them off forever, if the Lord were not a GOD of infinite grace.

They are delighted with their duties of worship as the means of finding GOD ; but not satisfied with them, as having been performed with due spirituality and devotion, and they condemn themselves for the sin of their most holy things.

THE sinner doth not compare his whole nature, temper and practice with the divine law, and is therefore ignorant of all his sins, except a few very outbreaking enormities.

THE Christian compares every thought, word and action, with the divine commandment, and finds himself deficient and guilty in the whole. He cannot find holiness in himself, without a mixture of sin.

THUS there is an essential difference between the Christian's apprehensions of indwelling sin, after he hopes that grace hath begun to reign ; and the accusing consciences of the ungodly.— They see sin with a different kind of sight—they judge of it with different hearts—they fear and lament it from different motives—and the sight hath different effects on their dispositions and practice. One is filled with grief, mourning and self-loathing ; the other with fear, when the conviction is urged upon them. One is purified ; the other, if this conviction be resisted, is hardened and is soon to sink into deeper security. One attends to the visible duties of religion with love and delight ; the other merely through fear, and when this is gone, he forsakes religious services. One finds a pleasure in confessing his sins, and in thinking himself less than the least of all saints ; the other, though convinced of sin, and constrained through terror to own himself a transgressor, finds his pride mortified in making the confession. It is through the influence of terror that he confesses the truth, and he tremblingly

owns that which he would deny if fear were removed.

By a very lengthy consideration of this subject, we find something of the nature of experimental religion, as distinguished both from formality and enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is inconstant in its opinions, feelings and practices. Enthusiasts may agree to be warm in religion ; but they do not agree in their apprehensions of GOD and the truth ; nor in the nature of that evidence, by which men may determine themselves entitled to salvation. At all times, the kind of reigning superstition and enthusiasm, depends on circumstances ; but true religion depends on the eternal and immutable nature of GOD, and of his law, and the principles of his government. One therefore is varying and passionate ; the other fixed and affectionate. One hath fixed rules for a good life ; the other makes great professions, without being good at all. One judges and acts by rules drawn from the word of GOD ; the other from present feelings and imaginary impulses, which may proceed, even from the undetected corruption of their own hearts. Superstition draws its motives from a regard to self ; true religion from a regard and love to the glory of GOD. Enthusiasm seeks self-advancement ; religion makes men humble that they may advance the glory of GOD by obedience.

THE view which we have taken, of the nature of experimental religion and its uniformity, in all ages, ought to alarm those persons who deny its reality. There is a cloud of witnesses against them. CHRIST himself is a witness against them, in all the descriptions which he gave of

true and evangelical piety. The ancient saints, who lived before the time of CHRIST are witnesses against them.—The apostles and primitive Christians witness against them, for all these speak of a work of the law on the mind, and of the power of gospel grace in sanctifying and giving spiritual comfort to the soul.—In every age of the Church, since the time of CHRIST there have been a cloud of witnesses for the reality of that kind of experimental religion, which hath been described in this discourse, as agreeing with the experience of Paul.—Doth it not then become those, who think, that all professions of special Christian experience are a delusion, thoroughly to examine the point; lest they be found rejecting the truth as it is in CHRIST JESUS. It is easy now to deny, to ridicule, and to put to pain, for a short season, the hearts of those who believe themselves sincere; but it will be impossible, savingly to experience the truth, when the day of grace is past. The case of those is dreadful, who sin away the day of admonition and repentance. If they mistake, they mistake and are miserable forever. If they hear, believe and obey, they are blessed forever. May all who read be of this blessed number.—
AMEN.



S E R M O N XIV.

The gospel of CHRIST is not after man.

GALLATIANS i. 10, 11, 12.

— *For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of CHRIST.*

But I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of JESUS CHRIST.

AS the principal design of the apostle, was to correct some errors into which the Galatian Church had fallen, thereby departing from the faith and practice in which he had instructed them; he begins his epistle with asserting the divine origin of the gospel, and warns them, though men or angels should teach another gospel, not to receive it. In doing this, he did not pretend to exalt himself or his own reason as being better than the reason and judgment of other men; but gives the whole glory to God. To show that the glory belonged to God, he

says that the gospel which he taught was not after man. It was not such as the reason of any man would contrive, and therefore above his own invention ; also, that it was not such as the heart of any man would love, unless spiritually sanctified by a holy influence from above. Therefore, not having either strength of reason or goodness of heart naturally, to instruct them as he had done, it never could have happened, unless he had been divinely called, and furnished and made willing by the mighty power of GOD. If we allow, that he was thus called, enabled and made willing by the efficacious grace of GOD, it proves the very point which he wished to establish. That his gospel was not after man,—not from himself—not a human invention received from any other man ; but from the revelation and grace of GOD. He further says, that the gospel is so far from being after the natural dispositions of men, that it is impossible, at the same time, to gratify these and to be a faithful servant of JESUS CHRIST. “ For if I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of CHRIST.”—And experience hath always proved what is here asserted; that it is impossible to be faithful to CHRIST, and by the same means to please men. The truth faithfully delivered will reprove them,—alarm their consciences—forbid their sinful indulgences,—and put them under uneasy fears and restraints. It is natural to be displeased with those who are the cause of pain, even when they are in the faithful and conscientious discharge of their duty.—Nothing will prevent some degree of this prejudice in unholy minds, but a lively fear of eternal death, and a sense of their present and immediate exposure to it. In such cases, they become willing to hear, for the sake of escaping misery, and feel those to be

most their friends who tell them the truth with the greatest plainness.

IN further discoursing from these verses, I shall principally enlarge on those words—"The gospel which was preached of me, is not after man; neither received I it of man."

IN these words the apostle appealed to the moral nature and tendency of the gospel, and of the doctrines and duties which it contains, as evidence that it was not of human invention, but must come from GOD himself. This is a very important truth, and I am persuaded, that the more it is considered the more clearly it will appear, that the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST hath a divine origin, in the power, wisdom and grace of GOD, most wonderfully displayed; and that without this cause, it never could have been published and received by mankind. I do not mean at present to argue this from the miraculous evidence of divine truth; but from the moral nature of the gospel, the doctrines it contains, and the duties which it enjoins. Neither would any considerable number of men, ever have received this scheme of truth, if they had not been led to it by the sanctifying power of divine grace, which is a revelation of JESUS CHRIST in the soul, entirely different from any attainments of human reason, while the heart remains un sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I WILL endeavor to illustrate what I intend in a number of particulars.

I. THE doctrine of divine sovereignty, is not after men, or according to their natural disposition, nor could it have been received from that disposition, which all appear originally to possess.

WHOEVER understands the gospel scheme of salvation, must be sensible that it stands wholly upon divine sovereignty. God is represented acting sovereignly in determining that any shall be saved—in appointing to whom he will extend his grace—in the manner and the time when this shall be done—and in defining the obligation of creatures, and the duties they shall perform. This is not only asserted as a reasonable doctrine in speculative belief; but to be saved the heart must accord with it, so that those who are redeemed by this gospel, do chuse the Lord to be a sovereign.—They delight in his absolute supremacy—their sense of safety and happiness stand on this truth, and they do not wish happiness in any other way. But this is not after man, nor was it ever originally received from fallen men. Men chuse to be sovereign themselves, and have a natural preference to their own wills, above the will of any other being. We find this to be a natural disposition in old and young, high and low, rich and poor; and when from any external circumstances they are necessitated to submit, they consider the necessity as an evil. This forced submission to the providence of God Almighty alters not the case; for in such instances, they consider submission as an evil. We know that there are some who are brought to exercise a submission on other principles, and in a manner happy for themselves; but all such are ready to acknowledge that it was given to them by the grace of God, and is not after their own natural hearts.

I THINK every candid person, who knows his own original disposition and hath discreetly observed human nature, must allow that this submission to divine sovereignty in all things that relate both to this and the life that is to

come, is not after man. Also, that a scheme of truth to which this doctrine is so essential a pillar, could not have been received from any one, or from any combination of men, who heartily delighted in it; unless their minds were changed by the power of divine grace. If changed by the power of divine grace, this is not after men, but from GOD; and if not changed by divine grace, they never could have assented and endeavored to enforce on others, such a scheme of faith, and such a method of being happy. If they might possibly, through the power of rational conviction, go so far as to allow, that submission to the absolute sovereignty of the divine will is right; still they never would go farther, as this gospel doth, and inform us, that this is the highest happiness of creatures. A submission to absolute sovereignty, even in GOD himself, is the last thing which a sinful heart yields.—There may be the submission of necessity—there may be a pretended and hypocritical submission, in order to avoid a greater evil; but a sinner never yields a peaceful submission. This is not after man, nor is it received of man; and to consent to it, there must first be a revelation of divine truth in the gospel, and a revelation of divine grace in the heart.

2. THAT weanedness from the world, and derivation of a supreme happiness from invisible things seen by faith, which the gospel directs and enjoins, is not after men; nor could it ever have been received from men, unless they were divinely taught by GOD, either in their own experience, or as inspired instructors of the world.

FOR the truth of this observation, I may also appeal to what we have seen and felt. There is no class of persons—men in no condition

appear naturally and spontaneously, to look for their supreme happiness to the things of an invisible world; or to be denied to the things of this world, in that manner, which the gospel requires.—The youngest actors go to the world for happiness. The longer they continue in it, the more naturally their views are turned this way, and even disappointments and afflictions will not cure the evil. We do not see men naturally coming on the stage of action, with such a faith in invisible things, as makes them real and happiness to the mind; but it is quite the contrary. Their appetites carry them away from all consideration of futurity, while they are seeking, indulging, and loving present things; and the longer they experience the world, even with all the forbidding circumstances attached to it, the more difficult it becomes to be thus denied.

IF to the representation now made, it be objected, that there are those, who apparently exercise this self-denial, and look to the the invisible world and to an, invisible GOD as their portion; I need only to answer, that all such will really yield me the point of truth which I wish to confirm. All such will readily own, that the gospel which hath changed and given them new views, new desires, new pleasures, hopes and expectations, is not after men in any sense. Nor after or like to their own original desires and feelings; but that when they were infinitely unworthy, they received a new temper by the sovereign and sanctifying grace of GOD, and that they did not receive it after the wisdom of men, nor according to the way in which they had proposed to themselves to be saved from the wrath to come.

AMONG those who are not willing to make this acknowledgment, we do not find a disposition to be denied to the pleasures and interests of the world; nor a natural disposition to look to another world to which the gospel calls us, for their supreme portion of good. It is therefore, not supposable that any man or combination of men, could be so friendly to this gospel, as to offer and urge it on the acceptance of mankind; unless taught it by their own experience from divine grace; or by revelation through the power of the Almighty, that they might become instructors of their perishing fellow men, in things which it is of infinite importance for them to know. Paul had received the gospel in both these ways; by an eminent degree of sanctification, so that his own daily experience taught him it was from God; also by a special inspiration that he might be the instructor of mankind unto eternal life.

3. THE meekness, humility, and low opinion of ourselves compared with others, which the gospel enjoins and makes necessary evidence of our belonging to CHRIST, are not after men—not agreeable to the natural disposition of the world; nor could these truths have been received from men in their natural and unholy state, without the special interposition of the power of Almighty grace.

THE evangelical precepts on this point are many. There is, first, the example of CHRIST himself the great head of the Church, washing his disciples' feet, and after he had done it, saying, "know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one

another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." By performing this humbling service, our Saviour strongly inculcated that meekness, humility and low opinion of themselves compared with others, which ought to be found in all his followers. There are many precepts and descriptions which enjoin the same. "But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister or servant. Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. For I say to every man among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think.—Be kindly affectioned, in honor preferring one another." Paul with all his great attainments said, "unto me, who am less than the least of all saints." This meekness, humility and preference of others to ourselves, showing them all respect and kindness, and ministering to their good by our own self-denial, is enjoined through the whole gospel. But is this after men? Is this temper and practice according to the natural feelings of the world? Where do we find those who appear naturally to delight in such laws and duties? It is with great pains and labor that men are kept, even in that state of society, which controls them from overbearing and destroying one another. Impotence, pride and a self-assuming arrogance of will; a disposition to rise superior and make others subservient to their own happiness, is the natural inclination of man: This evangelical humility, is not after men; but must come from God. Both the laws enjoining it, and the actual exercise in a Christian temper, must be of divine

original, by the inspiring and sanctifying influences of GOD'S spirit.—Men will not ordain laws to condemn themselves ; nor will they describe a system of moral virtue that is repugnant, and of course condemns their own natural dispositions ; unless they are impelled to do it, by the energy of GOD acting on their minds.—It hath been the constant labor of infinite power and wisdom, from the time of man's apostacy, to preserve even in their doctrinal knowledge, that scheme of moral virtue which is enjoined in the gospel of JESUS CHRIST. Men have been always going away from the laws of humility, indulging pride, and attempting to build up themselves at the expence of other's peace and interest. So great is the evidence of this, and that the character generally and naturally applies to men, that if the world were to see any one, who perfectly complied with evangelical precepts in the things that have been mentioned, they would either reverence him greatly as a character formed by the special energy of GOD, or they would attempt to destroy him in a rage excited by the reproof which they must feel from the sight of such an example. JESUS CHRIST gave this example to the world, and those who did not reverence him as one come from GOD, were embittered by the reproof of his example and precepts, to thirst for his blood and take his life.—It was because neither his character or precepts were after men.

4. SUCH a love of our enemies that we can do them good, even when they are doing evil to us, and sincerely desire their best interest and pray for them, when they use us despitefully, seeking our ruin, is not after man.

THIS is wholly a divine doctrine, and from heaven and from God himself. It is such a degree of moral virtue, that the Heathens did not even ascribe it to their gods; much less in all their boasted systems of moral virtue, did they ever enjoin it on men. The gods of the Heathen were described by their votaries, as being full of the most implacable enmities and revenge, on supposed injuries; and in this respect were formed by the corrupt imaginations of men on the model of their own depravity. This was not because reason did not always justify a benevolent and forgiving spirit; neither was it because there was not from the beginning, evidence enough that such a spirit is most excellent—most worthy of an intelligent nature—and most conducive to general happiness; but the bitterness of the heart prevented men's inquiring for evidence of such a temper.—It was not after men, nor according to their hearts to pity and love their enemies, and do good in return for evil. While they proudly gloried in being rational creatures, they followed their own hearts without right reason. And the world hath been filled with the effects of this corrupt temper, and with the works of enmity, retaliation and revenge.

IT is the first thing we see in children, when they have attained an ability to show by actions the bitterness of their little hearts.—Gratify their selfishness, and they will appear to be innocence itself; but do to them what they suppose to be an injury, and deny their pleasures, they will strike, imprecate and revenge. Every one who hath had the care of governing young minds, however much biassed and blinded by inordinate natural affection, must allow this truth, and confess the care that is necessary to

inspire the principles of forgiveness, even so far as is necessary for common civility ; and this falls altogether short of evangelical piety.— This temper grows up with mankind, and its unhappy effects increase with their opportunities ; and though much art may be employed, and many endeavors to hide the evil feelings of the soul ; yet they are constantly breaking through the disguise, so that we may see the natural character of men with certainty. It was in view of man's natural character, that the apostle takes occasion to celebrate the benevolence of GOD in giving his Son to die.—“ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die ; but GOD commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us.—For if while we were enemies we were reconciled by the death of his Son, &c.”—Such love and benevolence is required in the gospel.—CHRIST himself gave an example of it, and enjoined all his people to follow him ; so that without being in some degree partakers of his spirit, they have not the proper evidence of their forgiveness and acceptance ; but it cannot be pretended that such a temper is after men, or natural to them.—They are continually contradicting it—they do not like to have such a disposition urged upon them, and to be reproved for their want of it.

CONSIDERING what human nature is, there is no reason to suppose that the laws of Christian forgiveness and love to enemies, would ever have been publicly enforced on men as the necessary qualification for eternal life ; or that the want of this temper would have been represented as exposing to divine wrath, unless it had been done by the special injunction of the supreme

moral governor, who can raise up instruments to declare his will, and subjects of his grace to exemplify the divine beauty of the character which is enjoined. He also can form instruments to express to others the happiness which his people experience, by an obedient conformity to the example of their Lord and Saviour.

5. THE universal holiness in body and spirit, and consecration of our whole souls to the glory of GOD, which the gospel requires, are not after men.

THE gospel laws are, "be ye perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect.—Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to GOD, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.—Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of GOD." It is not after men's natural dispositions to give such laws as these and a multitude of others, which require perfect holiness—the reign of piety in the heart—every action to be performed from the purest motives—and a consecration of ourselves, in the exercise of all our powers and faculties to the glory of GOD and the good of his kingdom. It is not after men to write by way of precept, a scheme of religion, which glorifies GOD and humbles the creature so much—which places all men on a level in the divine sight—which speaks to the greatest in the same language, that it speaks to the least—declares all to be accountable creatures, reproves the vices of all in every condition, the high and the rich, as well as the low and the poor; and describes all transgressors, who do not come to the meek and humble temper of the gospel, as going to eternal ruin.

HAD this gospel come from any man or combination of men ; such requirements of holiness—such freedom of command, and threatening to persons of every description, would not have been found in it ; for in such a case the compilers would have shown some favor to their own imperfections and sins, and some flattering complaisance to the great ones of this world, on whom they were dependant. —When we read the gospel, and observe the holiness it commands—the challenge it makes on the affections of the heart—the reproofs which it gives to kings and subjects—to priests and people—the spirituality which it requires every day of our lives—how it calls all our thoughts to heaven and eternity—how it humbles our present pride, and reproves our love of the world, with its honors, interests and pleasures, we must not only determine, that it is not after man ; but also that no man or combination of men, could have enforced such a scheme of doctrine and practice, in any country whatever, without meeting the vengeance of a sinful world, if they had not been protected by such miraculous evidence of its divine origin as we find related in the scriptures of truth. Doubtless we ought to consider the mighty works, which accompanied the gospel revelation in the beginning, not only as evidence of their divine authenticity ; but also as means of protecting those, who were the instruments of communicating it, from the violence of those who hated their doctrines.

6. THE gospel is a revelation of grace from GOD for the forgiveness of sinners. There are many things in the manner of bestowing this grace which are not after men, and which evidently bespeak its origin in the infinite wisdom

and mercy of **GOD** ; and that our knowledge of it, must be wholly derived by a revelation from him.

THE wisdom of men would never have conceived such a way of atonement as the gospel proposes, through the blood of **CHRIST** a divine person. Sinners are willing to have mercy and grace, but they do not desire it in the way of holiness ; and when they come to understand the method of recovery, they stand as much opposed to it, as they were to the law which condemned them, and which made the gospel necessary for their relief.—Salvation and redemption are pleasing words to all men, when the law and their own consciences are threatening them with punishment ; but the terms on which salvation is offered makes the difficulty in being saved.

THESE terms are not after men, nor were they received of men, but from **GOD**, who hereby shows himself as holy in forgiving sin and receiving the transgressor to eternal happiness, as he was in forbidding it, and in sentencing the sinner to death.

FURTHER, as this gospel denies all merit to those who are saved, it is not after men, but directly repugnant to the wishes of human nature.

WE find by experience how natural it is for men to place a sort of dependance on something which they can do for their own relief. When conscience convinces them of sin ; when the Holy Spirit awakens them to see their miserable condition by nature, and the impropriety of their past lives ; and they attempt a reformation, they naturally place a dependance on this reformation, as a reason why **GOD** should be merciful. After a conviction of sin hath taken so strong hold of the mind, that they are sensible of their need of a Saviour in their own case, and that

there must be an exercise of grace in bringing them to heaven ; they still hang upon an expectation from their own merits, and think that if they could make themselves some better than they now are, the grace of God would forgive the rest of their unworthiness and guilt. This temper is in direct repugnancy to the scriptural ideas of salvation by free grace. The reformation is necessary—the attendance on the means is necessary ; but not to make ourselves more deserving of divine grace, for this never can be done. An apprehension that God will be merciful, if we can make ourselves some better and more deserving of grace than we now are, is stepping into the ground of self-righteousness and our own merits, and dividing the glory of grace between CHRIST and ourselves ; and therefore, in full repugnance to the gospel method of deliverance by free grace and that alone. Reformation ought to be attempted as a matter of duty, and as our only preparation for the holy life of heaven ; but not under an idea that any betterment we can make in ourselves merits the divine favor to forgive the remainder of our sins. Thus in this respect also, the method of salvation by free grace is not after men, or such as their unholy hearts would either have devised, or consented to inculcate as the only way to eternal glory.—And, my brethren, if we go through the whole evangelical scheme of doctrine and practice, we shall find that it is not after men ; and there is no reason to suppose that it could have been in a single instance received through the instrumentality of men, if he had not inspired and sanctified some, thus making them instruments to declare his truth to their brethren, even in contradiction to what had been their previous feelings.

7. THE representation, that is given in the holy scriptures, of the eternal blessedness of the heavenly life, and which is agreeable to the feelings and wishes of the people of GOD, is not after man.

IN the writings of the Heathen, and of all those great bodies of mankind, which have professed other systems of belief and practice, beside the Christian, there hath not been any one, which hath given the same account of the nature of happiness in the invisible and future state, as we find to be explicitly declared in the Christian scriptures. Others have in general, professed a belief of a future state. Most of the Heathen have done this; but when we come to examine their ideas of this future happiness, they place it in amusements and employments very similar to those which are in this world; only in some degree purified from rustic grossness and open crimes.—The Mahometan errors, which have spread far in the world and which acknowledge a future state, have placed its happiness in a degree of sensuality, that far exceeds the most luxurious scenes of a sensual world. And if we examine all others, beside the Christian, we shall find that they describe a condition of future happiness, in the same kind of enjoyments as diverts and amuses the men of this world. Some in the inquiries and contention of a mere philosophy; some in the dispute for honor and preference according to the notions of dignity in this world; others in athletic exercises, in the triumph of exulting warriors who had been successful on earth, and in the sensual ideas of quaffing nectar in golden bowls of pleasure. Such they have made their gods, the state of their votaries and their eternal pleasures. And in general this hath been represented as the consequences, of an in-

explicable fate, which is superior to the power of gods and of creatures. Others have represented future peace as depending on the most gloomy and horrid rites, and on the despotic will of a deity without reason, humanity or love. Indeed all representations of a future happiness, have apparently been taken from men's corrupted and sensual ideas of happiness here. None of them have an idea of Christian holiness—of a holy God—and of such a temper as is supremely delighted in beholding, in praising and adoring him forever. None of them have conceived the idea of perfect and eternal happiness in a communion with GOD; by a supreme love of his glory, by an eternal enjoyment of him in his counsels and works, and by loving their fellow creatures as they love themselves. This last is a conception of heavenly happiness, not natural to men, and is wholly originated in the scriptures of truth. Let any one read the holy scriptures with an impartial honesty, and attain to just conceptions of the holy and eternal happiness, which they propose to the humble and believing followers of JESUS CHRIST; and then let them look on the world as they have found it by observation and their experience; and they will become most strongly convinced, that neither the religion nor the rewards of happiness proposed in the scriptures could be from men. Men, with the dispositions which are natural to them, would never have formed such an idea of the highest happiness that created minds could receive.—They never would so wholly have left the finite and sensual pleasures of life, in forming their ideas of perfect bliss; they never would have gone so directly to a moral communion with GOD himself, for the most perfect and enduring peace and joy of mind. In this thing the

gospel of CHRIST is not after man. If the gospel in its doctrines, in the duties which it enjoins, and in the rewards which it proposes, be so aliene from the natural tempers of men and from what they naturally love; we must suppose that it came by revelation, and carries with it the highest divine authority.—We must of course suppose, that all men's aversion to the doctrines and duties of the gospel have their origin in that natural aversion to holiness, which will, if it be continued, be punished by an eternal separation from the blisful presence of the Almighty.

THUS it appears, that the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST could not be received from men; because it is not after men in any respect. It gives not the same descriptions as have been common in the unchristianized world, neither of the character and rights of GOD, nor of the law and nature of virtue and duty to GOD and men, nor of happiness here and hereafter. All is of another kind—all is new—all is different from human invention, superstition and enthusiasm. All breaks like a new light on the world, concerning the blessedness of Deity; and the obligation, peace and glory of creatures in time and through the interminable duration of eternity.

THIS subject is infinitely interesting to the establishment of Christian truth in the world. It is infinitely interesting to the present and future happiness of men. We know that the world is filled with people, who mean to deride and oppose Christianity, until it becomes unfashionable in every place. All, say they, is priest-craft—all is human invention and designed to answer certain secular purposes. It becomes us seriously to examine this point—to lay it before us, to

turn it over, and view it on every side ; until we have come to a knowledge of the truth even on such principles as ought to convince the most sceptical.—Since the time of JESUS CHRIST there have been a million of priests and ministers of his religion, and many millions more, who sustained no office in the Church, who yet have believed, practised and communed with them, and often burned at their side. These have calmly and with joy committed themselves, their families and their all into the hands of divine providence and grace, that they might glorify a merciful Saviour, and benefit the souls of other men by testifying the truth of his cause. Among this immense number of men, we will allow that some have been carried away with a conceited enthusiasm ; some with a gloomy and four superstition ; and we will allow that a still greater number, who were terrified by their own consciences predicting a hell to come, have under hypocritical pretences joined with the professing Christian body, while they ought to have been ranked with their own infidel and disbelieving brethren. But making all these deductions millions will be left, whom from their words and actions, we have every reason to suppose sincere. In this multitude an immense number have been persons of strong reason—the most extensive science in things natural and political—acquainted with all the ages of the world, and with every thing historically handed down to us concerning them. They appear to have judged with calmness, with a greatness of mind, that ought to do them honor in this world, and with a piety that shows them to be the friends of God, if he be a holy being. What could influence these to give up all in time, that they might be holy in eternity ; What hath induced these multitudes

of priests, ministers and professors of religion to take the part they have done! Was it priest-craft? Was it fanaticism? Was it selfishness? Nay, surely it was not, for these persons had found understandings and common sense, and by adhering to the interests of the world, could have done better for themselves than they did, if their duty to God and the solemnities of eternity had not prevented them. Would to GOD, ye infidel readers, that ye could bear with me a little in the folly of my boasting: yea indeed bear with me, for I am boasting for CHRIST and his cause, and his people, and I am jealous concerning you with a trembling fear, lest ye fall short of eternal life. How dreadful will it be, after all this confidence of yours, to come to an end, which ye have supposed to be fabulous; but which is plainly expressed in the scriptures of truth? Let not the word priest-craft be ever mentioned again without blushing, by those who have been accustomed to use it. Were not all these priests, ministers and professors of religion, men of like passions with other men? Have they not in time past, and do they not still continue to own it? What could separate them from the sensuality and open impiety of the world, if it were not the grace of God? What, on selfish principles, could lead them to take the part they have done,—What beside a deep conviction of the truth? Perhaps you will say they have had offices in the Church, and those had some degree of emolument. We will allow it; for in a cause like this, we will allow you all, yea more than all the truth, that you may not be able to make the outcry of design, artifice, and self-interest. Allow that they have had the emolument of their bread and water—allow more than this, that state policy hath some times interposed and

placed them far more eligibly than JESUS of Nazareth, who had not where to lay his head. But what do you gain by this? Allow there have been some hypocrites and impostors, and sensualists, and scandals to the Church, who ought on earth to have kept their own proper company, with those who did not believe; still it is true, concerning the great body of Christian priests, ministers and professors, that they could have no earthly inducement to take the part in which they have been actually engaged. We are willing to bring those truths to a trial, on any principles, which do not in their very nature destroy the Christian holiness and the sovereignty of God. This gospel is not after men, and its friends and professors cannot in general be accused of acting on worldly principles. There must have been other motives to make them do as they have done. They must have been divinely called instructed, comforted and fortified by the power of divine grace, or they could not have acted the part to which infinite wisdom destined them in the world. If all the friends and agents in the Christian cause had been destitute of common sense, they could not have atchieved what hath been done; or if they had been men possessed of common sense; much more if they had possessed that art and cunning which hath been attributed to them, and had been acting on selfish principles, they would have given up a design which they knew to be fraudulent, and made their fortunes and honors and dignities in a way more agreeable to the principles of the world. But why did I say their fortunes, honors and dignities? They have not had these—they have been, in most cases, men like their master, acquainted with grief—and having no place to lay their head.—On the principles of

rational argumentation, we will pledge ourselves to apologize for the religion of CHRIST; and prove that neither he nor his followers in the truth, could have had a worldly motive to support the part in which they have been sustained by his grace. Prisons and confiscations, and the burning piles of martyrdom have been held out to them as the rewards of perseverance! Ye men of the world, ye men of no faith, judging from your own hearts, will ye, can ye think that these are high attainments! No surely! Your own hearts must convict you of being deceitful, when ye speak of priest-craft and worldly allurements being the source from which Christians are made. When you demand our earthly crowns, we will show you the cords with which we have been bound and strangled. —We will point you to the piles of faggots in which our fathers and brethren have been burned. When you demand our hoard of riches, we will show you the caverns in which we have slept to avoid the dew of the night!

BUT you will say, kings have been on our side! remember that it is only a few out of many. You will say, that national councils have sealed decrees, in the name of the meek, the humble religion of JESUS. We will allow these things have happened, which gives you a pretext for this obloquy. But have ye not a little honesty? If it be but a little, ye will allow, that we have not profited by earthly kings and councils, until we have first been called before them as criminals and as the outcasts of the earth. And it is possible, that thus having found our character and hopes; partly to satisfy their own guilty consciences and partly to aid their own worldly designs under a religious pre-

text, they may have tried to join themselves by an antichristian policy with the truth and with the friends of the religion of CHRIST. But do ye not know that we have never wished for this obtruded company? Do ye not know that we had rather meet our spiritual king in our closets, than conform to the brilliancy, the hypocrisy and chicanery of an earthly court? Do ye not know that the Antichrist whom we abhor, was begotten in earthly courts, and nursed by the hypocrisy of our professed members in whom we had no confidence? This is truth without a coloring. Allow then that the gospel, which we love, is not after man; and that however sinful we may have been in other respects, our gospel did not originate in the world. Nor do we look to the world for a completion of that blessedness, which we hope will be given to us by our Father in heaven.—We believe—we know the gospel to be divine. We derive an inexpressible comfort from it now; and through the grace of GOD we rejoice in the hope of an eternal weight of glory. Neither do we wish to enjoy this glory without you.—Repent—love and obey this reasonable and holy law—love, receive and adore our GOD and Redeemer, and you shall be saved and be glorious forever. AMEN.



SERMON XV.

On shutting the kingdom of heaven against men.

MATTHEW xxiii. 13.

BUT woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

A WOE, pronounced by the blessed Redeemer himself, must be dreadful to those on whom it falls, and can be considered as nothing less than an endless curse. To be condemned by the God and Saviour of infinite goodness, while he was offering salvation, proves a character to be of the worst kind. When, in the text and context, we find woe and condemnation denounced to those, who thought themselves the most unexceptionable of characters, it learns us how strangely men may be deceived in their own case—how strongly they may think their disposition and practice is according to the will of God, while they are really unfriendly to

GOD, and going down to endless death. These things show us how falsely men may depend on their doctrinal knowledge—on their regular and systematic lives—and on their earthly estimation of being decent people, while they are destitute of the sincere, spiritual, and delightful obedience of the gospel.—Sin appears in a number of forms too great to be described. In every form, it is displeasing to a holy GOD, and exposes to his displeasure ; but there is none, in which it is more hateful before him, and more contrary to the nature of moral virtue, than where men become instrumental of the ruin of others. It is awful indeed for a man to destroy and lose himself ; but when he destroys himself, in such a manner, as carries others with him down to an endless ruin, there are no words can describe the guilt, nor can any present conception reach the pain, that must probably arise from the crime. It cannot then be consistent with the awful and solemn obligations of a religious instructor, nor with the benevolence of the Christian character, to refrain from warning, in every instance, where there is danger that this sin may be committed.

THE sin of the Scribes and Pharisees which CHRIST reproved, was, first, in mistaking and explaining away the spirituality of the law, so that those who heard them, through their instruction rested in a formal morality, without the power of godliness. It consisted, secondly, in their opposition to CHRIST and the pure doctrines of the gospel, which reproved the hearts and awakened the consciences of men. The spirituality of the gospel was one of their great objections against it. After they had explained away the spiritual nature and requirements of the law, it could not be expected that they should receive a gospel, which reproved all the

visibilities of religion, in which the heart was not sincere; and required a new heart and a supreme love of GOD and his law as the lowest evidence of a gracious adoption into his family.

THERE are many ways, under the gospel dispensation of light, in which some dangerously oppose the salvation of others, and become the instruments of their destruction.

FIRST, some do this by open and complete infidelity, or a renunciation of the Christian scheme of religion, as it is contained in the holy scriptures. There are many of this character; but although they speak great things, make much noise in the world, and profess to be more wise; and discerning than other men, they are generally persons of a suspected character.—Still, the open and the plausible deniers of CHRIST'S religion, may beguile a number of unstable, unwary and unholy minds; and they may be the instruments of keeping many in security, who never have and never will be able to disbelieve the revelation that is from GOD. Thus, they may have a most dangerous influence, although they have comparatively, but a few who are complete disciples, to their destroying opinions. How dreadful an account, will those have to give before the bar of GOD, who are instrumental of making others reject the counsels, the word, and the grace of GOD. A disbeliever of Christianity, must be sensible, that he is a singular man, in lands which are favored with Christian light. If there were in such, any degree of wisdom, they would be careful not to burden themselves with any thing more than the destruction of their own souls. On the principles of those, who disbelieve the scriptures, all who believe in them must also be safe; and why

should they be solicitous to propagate their own peculiarity of sentiment? In such a case it is unwise to do it. It is a rash madness to accumulate guilt by tempting others to disbelieve.

SECONDLY, many, who have a general belief in revelation, prevent others from entering into the kingdom of GOD by denying the power and spirituality of religion. They make both the law and gospel a dead letter, with respect to personal holiness and sanctification of heart.—Perhaps, these are instrumental of more injury to the souls of men, than the open disbelievers of all revelation. It was before said, that open disbelievers, in general, are persons of a suspected character. They are commonly very immoral; for when men reject the revelation of GOD, he often gives them up to some distinguished vices, either open crimes, or a deep avarice, or the pursuits of ambition by very dishonorable means. Also, there is in the greater part of the un sanctified, a remaining testimony of natural conscience, that they are guilty, and need pardon and redemption. These causes render the open disbelievers of revelation suspected, even in the opinion of most, who do not love the power of godliness. Those who dislike the spirituality of religion, but at the same time profess to be Christians, have a double advantage to beguile souls. By their instructions, insinuations, and manner of describing religion, they deceive men to think that they are safe in the form, without the power of godliness. That GOD can and will be merciful, if men abstain from open vices and pay some attention to the forms of worship and of a regular life; although they have not a new heart and holy and evangelical affections. Vast is the number of men who are prevented entering into the kingdom of heaven by these notions of

religion. Those who inculcate and are instrumental of this mistake, bring themselves under the woe of the text. For they shut the kingdom of heaven against men. They neither enter themselves, nor do they suffer those who are entering to go in.

I WILL illustrate the subject of this discourse, in a number of observations, showing the persons who are most exposed to fall under the woe pronounced in the text; also, the manner and means by which it is done.

Observ. I. THE ministers of religion are in great danger of falling under this woe. In the Jewish Church, the original business of the Scribes, was to write and give new copies of the law. As only a few were acquainted with the art of writing, the employment was most respectable, and many of their religious teachers were Scribes. In the day of CHRIST, a great number of the Scribes, were Rabbi's or doctors in theology, the same which he directed Christians not to be called, and were principal instructors in the national religion. They were almost universally opposed to the doctrines of CHRIST, and the spirituality and godliness of his preaching.—Although they retained high titles and important offices in the Church, and the civil and religious policy of the nation conspired to make them esteemed great, yet very few of them were good men.

THE Pharisees were a religious sect, who placed the traditionary above the revealed law; they were zealous of forms and ceremonies, but omitted judgment, mercy and truth; they depended on the external form, without any knowledge of godliness. Many of this sect were teachers and ministers of religion. Doubtless,

JESUS CHRIST particularly considered them as teachers of religion, in pronouncing on them the woe contained in the text. They shut up the kingdom of heaven, by giving to those, who were under their instructions, a false notion of the divine character and requirements; of the nature of evangelical or gracious piety; and of the terms on which men are admitted to divine favor.

WHEN we read the prophets of the old testament, who were solemnly commissioned by GOD to reprove sin, in every order of men, how boldly do they charge the ministers of religion, with their neglects, and their errors in doctrine, and sins in practice! How plainly they charge them with destroying the souls of men!

WHEN Ezekiel, who was both a priest or stated minister of religion, and a prophet by the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, was appointed to warn Israel of their duty and of impending judgments, GOD told him, that the wicked who did not repent, should die in their sins; but their blood should be required at his hands. Paul charged Timothy not to be a partaker in other men's sins by neglecting to warn and reprove them.

THE instructions, charges, warnings, and denunciations delivered to the ministers of religion in the holy scriptures, are innumerable. The teachers of religion have great influence on the opinions of others. Great respect is paid to their judgment, in points which are of infinite consequence for the salvation of souls. They are known to be solemnly charged by GOD and the Church, and they are professedly devoted to the obtainment and communication of religious knowledge. They have, almost infinite opportunities to mislead and deceive men in their eter-

nal concerns. They can do this by errors in doctrine—by a false construction of the law and gospel—by hiding the essential parts of his counsel—by neglecting to acquaint themselves with the contents and true meaning of the holy scriptures.—They can do it by teaching divine things with a kind of lightness, by which men will be lead to think them of little importance; and by so speaking of the most important Christian doctrines, that many will view them with indifference, and think it to be of little importance, whether they believe or not. They can do it, by an improper treatment of men in the personal concerns of their own minds; by destroying a conviction of sin; or advising them to hope in divine mercy, when they have no good claim to think themselves forgiven and sanctified. Such, and innumerable more than can be particularly mentioned, are their opportunities for misguiding; and therefore they are in great danger of coming under the woe.

THOSE who are teachers of religion by office and solemn designation, may feel a friendship for their people, and desire that they may all come to salvation, and still fall under the woe of preventing their entrance into the kingdom of GOD. There is something more for them to do, than simply to feel friendly, and wish that their people may come to a knowledge of the truth savingly. They are watchmen over a charge, which is of infinite value. They are to reprove, rebuke and exhort; to pray and intreat; to travail in birth, until CHRIST be formed in the souls of their people. To be faithful and escape the woe, they have many duties to perform, which are always painful and self-denying, and often dangerous to their personal happiness in the world. They ought always to be on the

side of God and the truth, though men oppose and persecute. To reprove the stubborn and haughty sinner—to stand against those who are powerful in this world, but still opposed to the truth—to admonish the profane and guilty, and search out the hidden iniquities of the heart—to destroy the groundless hopes of the insincere, and describe to men the vengeance of eternal fire, are duties painful to a tender and benevolent mind; still they must often be performed, or the woe and condemnation of the text will be incurred. To be faithful, they must most tenderly love the souls of sinners, and be grieved with their griefs; but at the same time, must be as an iron pillar and a brazen wall against them.

THERE cannot be a greater evil in the sight of God, than it is to shut up the kingdom of heaven and prevent men entering. It hath, from the beginning, been the work of infinite power, wisdom and goodness to open the kingdom of glory that miserable and guilty souls may enter—for this the mighty and gracious providence of God hath been ever operating. To open the kingdom of heaven, the Son of God came down from his glory and lived, obeyed and suffered. For this all the means of religion are instituted; and the influence of the Spirit is continually acting on the consciences and hearts of men. To open the kingdom of heaven to guilty sinners, nature in all its courses hath been upheld, and the angels of heaven, and the pious on earth, have been laboring and praying from the beginning. How great then the sin of shutting it against the entrance, even of one soul. To prevent the entrance of one immortal mind, will cause more happiness to be lost and more misery to be incurred, than all the happiness and misery of the whole world, from its creation to the consumma-

tion of time.—How great then must be the sin of shutting up the kingdom of heaven against the entrance of others. It is a sin against God, greater than we can conceive, and words will not describe the magnitude of the evil that must come on the deluded sufferer. Ought not then those who are appointed to give religious instruction, very solemnly to deliberate this subject with themselves? Ought they not to examine and be afraid lest they have ruined some one soul, and perhaps many? Whether they have not been the means of quenching some convictions which were excited by the providence and Spirit of God—led some by the system of their doctrines and their cold and formal manner of teaching, to close their eyes on the depravity of human nature, and the need of a new heart by the agency of the Spirit of God? Whether they have not, by an indifferent treatment of those who were concerned for their well-being hereafter, led them to think there was not so much need of being anxious to obtain eternal life? Whether they have not soothed false hopes, and refrained from searching out the expectations of hypocrites; or in some way been instrumental of keeping men out from the kingdom of heaven? These are solemn questions, for a man to bring home to his own conscience, in self-examination, and happy is he who doth not, if he is faithful in the trial, feel self-condemned in innumerable instances. Those who do not examine tremblingly and prayerfully, have but little sense of their own imperfections, or of the worth of souls, and of the solemn account they have to give before the bar of God.

Observ. II. ALL Christian professors, are in danger of falling under the woe, denounced

against those, who shut the kingdom of heaven against the entrance of men.

ALL Christian professors, are required by the glorious Lord of the Church, to instruct men by their good examples, and so far as they are able and have opportunity by their precepts; and are, therefore, in a lower sense, teachers of religion to those, who are in any way connected with them. Christians are mutually to teach, pray, exhort, warn and reprove those who are in their holy and covenant connection. They ought to become lights, and to instruct and warn the world by their exemplary conversation, and by an appearance of humble devotion to the glory of God and the best interests of his kingdom.

ESPECIALLY it is expected of them, that they exhibit a good Christian example. Their failure in this respect, often proves to others such an occasion of falling as shuts them out from the kingdom of heaven. Bad examples in Christians, must make others doubt the reality and excellency of Christian piety, and prove a temptation to them to live thoughtless and vicious. Thus by their bad conduct they prevent others entering in. It is most unnatural and wicked, for those who have professed and promised to love the Redeemer; and for those who profess to love the souls of men, by their own want of circumspection and unholy practices to make it doubtful to the unbelieving, whether there be in the world such a thing as true piety. True Christians may sometimes be left to do this; but there is no reason to expect that they will wholly escape the woe. If they are Christians indeed, a Lord of sovereign grace will reclaim and bring them to own the sin, and bitterly mourn the fault, and will save them for the glory of his grace. But if they escape the woe in the world to come,

they have no promise of escaping it in this ; and it is highly probable, that a holy God will in some distressing way testify his displeasure against them.

Observ. III. PARENTS and the governors of families, are in great danger of shutting others out from the kingdom of heaven.

PARENTS are the ministers of God, and they ought also to be ministers of religion in their houses. Infinite wisdom instituted the natural relation, that it might be subservient to moral and religious purposes. From the natural relation, reason, even without revelation, is able to infer the religious obligation of parents and heads of families. The Heathen will join their testimony, that an awful woe ought to come on those parents, who do not govern and restrain their children from vices, and teach them such duties of religion as may be known by those, who have not the word of God. Hence we find that all national communities, in the most unchristianized lands, who are organized with any public government, do make parents responsible for the good conduct of their children.— We have a happier light in the word of God. His word expressly enjoins the parental duties of restraining, instructing, and initiating our offspring in piety and an early fear and love of God.

FURTHER, it hath been found by experience, that there is a near connection, between the religious fidelity of parents and the probable salvation of their offspring. This will not be denied by any, who have serious and experimental notions of religion. Those may doubt this, who think that bare civility and decency of manners are all the needed preparation for eternal life ;

but the pious cannot doubt. The word of GOD is stored with encouragements to this duty in parents—with threatenings to those who neglect, awful threatenings to themselves and their posterity—and with examples both awful and encouraging, to enforce truth and duty on the minds of men.

THE duties of parents are, to restrain the passions and subject the stubborn wills of their depraved offspring. To instruct them in all the principles, doctrines, obligations, and duties of religion to GOD and man. To teach them their accountableness and dependance on an infinite GOD, both for time and eternity.—To unfold to their understanding the infinite perfections, and the natural and moral glories of his character. To show them their own immoral disposition and in what it essentially consists, and how it leads them to evil practices.—To impress their minds with a sense of a coming eternity, a judgment before the bar of GOD, and a sentence of endless duration in its effects of blessedness or woe.—To indoctrinate them in the glorious scheme of redemption by an all-sufficient Saviour, teaching them how his glorious character is formed; how he made an atonement for sin; and how sinners are effectually called home to himself, by the convincing, renewing and sanctifying influences of the Spirit.—Also, to acquaint them with the exercises, trials and comforts of a Christian life; and show them the intimate connection between a true saving faith and love, and a life of good works in the sight of men. The parent who doth not all this neglects his duty.

AND in several of the particulars which have been mentioned, the instruction must be given by example. Indeed, in all respects, the example of the parent must confirm his precepts, or

they will be of little avail. Recommendations of prayer to the child, unless he sees the parent practising the duty himself, or exhortations to truth, integrity and decent language, while there is a constant example of falsehood, dishonesty and profaneness, will fail of doing any good.

HAVING considered the several ways, in which parents are under obligation to be ministers of religious instruction and piety in their houses ; it enables us to see, how exceedingly they are exposed to the woe and condemnation of our text, for shutting out their children and the young who are under their care, from the kingdom of heaven. O cruel parents to do it, but many are guilty !—many become ministers of sin to those whom they love so well. While laboring for their earthly good, by neglecting to give religious instruction and by an evil example, they prevent them entering the kingdom of glory. How many parents do this, by neglecting all serious instruction either moral or evangelical ! How many by their own examples of immorality and profaneness !—How many by the neglect of prayer and pious order in their houses—how many by suffering their children to hear them ridicule serious people and their delight in the worship of God ! O parent, who art of this character, how great is thy blindness ! Art thou afraid thy children will serve God too much—even that God who made thee and thy offspring, and is giving thee good things every day, to make the trial, whether or not by his goodness thou wilt be led to repentance ? Canst thou think that an habitual remembrance, fear and love of God will do an injury to thy beloved offspring ? No, thy conscience hath not yet permitted thee to believe this ; but the truth is, thou hast thyself no delight in serving God ;

and to see thy young ones going before thee in serving and seeking their Maker, wounds thy pride, harrows thine own conscience for past neglects, and brings thee to a painful reflection on thy duty and thy danger. Thine own aversion to the truth and duties of religion overpowers even the yearnings of natural affection.— Their younger and less hardened consciences reprove thine own want of godliness, and it is more pleasant to thy lusts, to have the whole sleep together, than it is to be disturbed by young practical preachers of religion.—O unhappy parent! now thou canst neglect thy duty; now thou canst say all may end well; now thou canst say, in the strength of parental affection, those children have long to live, and I ardently hope it will be well with them. But remember they may die speedily, and if thou shouldst survive, how wilt thou look on their cold corpses with composure, while in remembrance of thine own neglect? How wilt thou meet them before the bar of a most holy Judge, and hear him say, these shall perish under their iniquities, but their blood will I require at thy hand? How many unhappy parents may we fear will fall under this woe and condemnation.

Observ. IV. ALL who have an extensive influence among men, and by their condition and offices are able to do much for or against the religion of CHRIST, are peculiarly exposed to the woe, which CHRIST pronounced in the text.

THE world was made and is preserved, and its laws and government were instituted to answer the purposes of infinite wisdom, in the glorious scheme of redemption. Nothing in this world can be separated from these counsels of holiness

and grace, as they have ever existed in the infinite mind of GOD. The impenitent, although not saved will be examples of the nature of sin; and whatever displays that, will show the abounding of grace and prove the glory of divine mercy in the salvation of the redeemed. To carry on the great work of redemption the world is preserved; states and kingdoms are raised up and put down; the earthly times and seasons are ordered; and all the events of particular lives, even to the falling of a hair from the head. If such be the motives of the great Creator and providential governor of the world, and they are made known to us in his word; it creates an obligation on every creature, according to his power and opportunities, to devote himself to the advancement of CHRIST's kingdom, and the redemption of men's souls from sin and misery. If there be such a general obligation on individuals, its strength is according to their talents to do good, to their opportunities, and to their influence in society. Much more may be expected from some than others. All have something, but some have much to do for the good of CHRIST's kingdom and the salvation of others. Think not, O reader, whoever thou art, that thou mayest stand idle in the field of benevolent exertion for the good of men's souls; neither think, that thou art so unimportant in society, that thou canst not prevent some one from entering into the kingdom of heaven. If thou art not a minister of religion, if thou art not a parent; still thou art a neighbor, and it is the divine law, that thou love the soul of thy neighbor as thine own soul, and watch over and warn him.

As something is expected from those who have small influence; so much is required from those who have a greater power in society. As

the parent governs the domestic ; so the civil ruler directs and influences the public body. Civil rulers are in a situation to do much for the kingdom of CHRIST, and they may also shut up the kingdom of heaven, and prevent their people from entering in. GOD saith, that in the days of the prosperity of his Church, kings shall be its nursing fathers, and queens its nursing mothers ; therefore it must be the duty of civil rulers to protect, by all the authority that is in their hands the interests of the kingdom of CHRIST. If they suffer immorality and licentiousness to pass unpunished ; if they give credibility by their influence to the opposers of piety ; if they suffer the Lord's Sabbath to be violated with impunity ; and do not use a civil influence to have religion made respectable in the world, they shut the kingdom of heaven against men.

It is a deplorable truth, that civil rulers, have in innumerable instances, endeavored to make religion and its institutions and its friends the engines of state policy. With this GOD hath been displeas'd, and is now awfully punishing, even the places, where this hath been done in ages past.—It is another deplorable truth, that civil rulers have endeavored to control the religious opinions, and have persecuted the consciences of men with fire and the scaffold.—These things were a horrid abuse of civil power, and the eyes of the world have been opened to see them with detestation. But there is always danger of going from one to another extreme. Because civil power, in its relation to the Church of CHRIST, hath been abused and wrought many horrid things in the earth ; all this is no reason that its nurturing aid should be denied to religion. Because the civil rulers of men have no right to become organs of religious instruction to

the people, and to control their consciences in the belief or disbelief of particular doctrines, it by no means follows, that they are excused from the obligation of affording a friendly aid to a pure religion and morality.—It by no means follows that immoral men, and those who deny the doctrines of religion, are fit to be trusted with the sacred interests of religion and freedom. It by no means follows that civil rulers are freed from the obligations to be friends of piety. They do, in fact, stand in a public situation, and have a general influence both in public opinions and practice. The government is the Lord's, and after they have attained the honor and taken the solemn vow, they cannot dispense with their obligations, by saying, civil influence and power have nothing to do with religion. The same obligations which they are under as men, and as common members of society, do certainly follow them when in the chair of state, and in the judicial seat. If piety, religion and good morals are affronted, and they do not protect them; they become partakers in guilt with the worst of the people. Civil rulers, are therefore in great danger of coming under the woe and condemnation, of shutting up the kingdom of heaven and preventing those who wish to enter.

Observ. V. ALL who use the authority with which they are cloathed, whether it be by nature, by divine appointment, by civil constitution, or by the customs of decency in society, to prevent others from worshipping God, according to their desires and the dictates of their own consciences, do merit the woe and condemnation of our blessed Lord.

IF they merit, and do not repent and reform, they must doubtless endure it. Many others,

besides civil rulers and parents, have an authority and influence, which is gained either by law or custom. The husband influences his wife.—The master controls his servant; and the dependant neighbor is under almost the same control, from those who are more opulent and influential.—The man of small abilities cannot resist the sophistical arguments and the multitude of words from those who are more intelligent and artful. All these have an authority by law or custom, or the influence of social relation, confidence or endearment. They, in a sense, have the minds of others under their control. Sometimes they control them by over persuasion; sometimes by ridicule; and sometimes by interest or power.

How often do we see these kinds of influence and power, used to blind the understanding; to lay the alarmed conscience asleep; to destroy the beginning of a conviction of truth, of seriousness and of an eternity that is endangered. How often do we find those, who have no fear of **God** before their eyes, by a virtual or an authoritative influence, preventing others from the place of prayer and praise, and from accompanying with such as can guide them in their souls' concerns. Art thou, O man, afraid that the friend of thy bosom will be too good, too virtuous, or too sensible of Christian and moral obligations? Art thou afraid that this friend will offer too many prayers for thee, and that in consequence of these prayers, **God** will alarm thy conscience, and spoil thy careless and sinful pleasures? Or art thou afraid that this friend will gain the mansions of glory, whilst thou art cast down to darkness?

Dost thou, who art a master, fear that thy servant will have more of the friendship of the

Almighty maker of all men, than thou hast thyself? Art thou afraid of the prayers of one so much under thy control, or is thy pride pained to think that he may be chosen to glory, while thou art left to die in thy sins and under all thy guilt.—Remember, that though thou canst throw an impediment in the way of his salvation, still thou canst not make him silent, when called by the Almighty, as a witness against thy impiety. The end will show, and eternity will witness, whether he be right in wishing to seek, serve and praise the Lord; or thou in throwing every impediment into his way, by which he either is discouraged or restrained.

THE present state of religion in the country, hath opened a scene of things very different from what hath been in years past. The late revival to serious attention, hath made the present subject a very practical one. The minds of men, of families, and in a multitude of instances of near connections, have been most sensibly divided, and some who have power and influence on their side, have actually endeavored to suppress that, which the writer believes to be a glorious work of GOD, and which will be remembered by the subjects of it with praises through eternity. May not several expostulations be made with those, who are of a different opinion?

1. Is it not fit that those who are to live or die eternally, for themselves, should be their own judges, and satisfy their own consciences in these all-important concerns? Conscience is not dependant on the will of a man who thinks himself to be superior; but on the dictates of reason, guided by the word of GOD, and by a divine influence on the mind which is awakening and sanctifying. Parents, husbands and masters,

cannot be saved or lost, in the place of those, whom they endeavor to control in matters of conscience. It may be, and in a multitude of instances, it doubtless is the duty of the controlled to comply calmly; but in those very instances, a heavy vengeance from the Lord may fall on those who control, if they exert their influence in a wrong manner. Certainly in the matter of gaining or losing an eternal salvation, it becomes those who have a power of controlling, either by the laws or customs of earthly society, to use it with great caution and tenderness of conscience. If they see those, whom they have a right to influence, to be serious, abstaining from crimes, anxious to do right and glorify God, and at the same time, of a sound mind; either to coerce, threaten, or ridicule, is a dangerous business. Neither is it safe to wound the feelings of those who are in this situation; and to do it, subjects to the awful threatening of CHRIST, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Many of the thoughtless world, because they see the serious and prayerful to be afflicted by the providence of God, think that they also may afflict and disturb them in their religion, with impunity; but they judge very falsely. God afflicts to make them more serious and more determined in their duty; but these afflict, from the hatred they have to seriousness, or to prevent all divine impressions. Even when God afflicts, with great jealousy he watches over the injuries of those who have begun to inquire, or have actually obeyed him in the gospel of CHRIST. He sees their troubles and vexations—he hears their groans—he pities them under the attacks of sa-

tan and of a destroying world, and his wrath is kindled within him, to execute vengeance in the due time. It therefore becometh those, who have in their hands a power to control and afflict such as are seriously disposed, carefully to see how they do it. If the authority be used in a wrong cause, a husband's influence, a parent's authority, or a master's power will be no excuse — no justification before the bar of GOD. It is true that all these powers are placed in men by GOD himself; but they must use them at their own peril. Using them against the cause of GOD and the souls of men, is a rebellion against the fountain of all power. It must be on very clear and high evidence, that such power can be prudently used; and after a season for deliberation and to hear calm advice, perhaps it may never be used prudently, except where the pretence of religion is prostituted as a protection for crimes, and the most evident disturbance in society. True religion is always productive of sobriety, good morals and a faithful improvement of time in the duties of beneficence and righteousness; and where these effects appear it is not safe to coerce, although the religious speak of internal exercises, fears and comforts, of which those who can command them have no conception; for power may be in the hands of carnal security, and of those who are in all the darkness of un sanctified nature.

2. THERE is an indirect power, or more properly influence, where there is no legal pretence, to exercise authority, by which men may shut others out from the kingdom of heaven.

THE human mind is strongly acted upon by ridicule; by a neglect of the common marks of social respect; and by a treatment which indi-

cates tacitly a charge of folly. These engines of influence are often used to damp the good resolutions of the serious and reforming, and in many instances they succeed, where all other means of doing evil would be ineffectual. The guilty, perhaps may think these things to be lawful, because they gratify their own disposition for diversion, and do at the same time, leave others at liberty to do as they please. But here also there is guilt. If GOD will remember to reward a cup of cold water, which is given in love to his cause, he will not forget to punish the smallest circumstance that militates against the interest of his kingdom and the deliverance of souls from the thralldom of sin.

To speak of serious people with a sneer ; to represent those who have pleasure in the service of religion although often repeated, as being weak and deceived people ; and to treat them with an air of contempt, is a kind of persecution which GOD will punish. It is true, that if they are confirmed in the spirit of faith and godliness, they will not regard such things ; but this may be done to those who are babes in consideration, and they may thereby be deterred and shut out from the kingdom of heaven. Every disrespectful insinuation, and every reflection against such, on account of their seriousness, is a spear to pierce their good resolutions, and its natural tendency is to sink them down again to the most dangerous security.

MUCH more criminal are open revilings. Such are not uncommon, and the word of GOD is stored with threatenings against them. From many passages, I shall mention but one in the epistle of Jude, where he speaks of CHRIST'S coming to judge the world in conformity to the prophecy of Enoch, "To execute judgment

upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Whatever is said against the people of CHRIST, he will esteem as said against himself, and it will be one of the awful works of divine vengeance, in the great day of the Lord, to appoint a retribution to such revilings and scoffs, which are made against CHRIST, in the persons, holy employments and in the worship which is paid to him, by his people. And although the un sanctified cannot be supposed to worship and seek the Saviour from holy motives, yet as they are moved and enquire by a divine admonition, he will not suffer even those to be reviled with impunity.

3. LET me further expostulate and inquire, of those who try to impede the serious in their progress, what their motives can be, or whether they have ever searched them out, or attended to the criminality there is in their conduct?

WHAT must be the motives of a man, who doth any thing to impede another in his attempts to seek eternal life? It cannot be goodness and brotherly love, for a good mind will certainly be willing that a fellow creature should be happy; and though the seeker may be in some respects mistaken, a good heart would overlook some works even of weakness, in the joy that would arise to see an immortal mind beginning to be earnestly engaged in the concerns of eternity.—It cannot be an apprehension that it is really unwise to be anxious for an endless futurity; for although many forget, no man in the exercise of reason can say this is wise, or can call those unwise who endeavor to lay up for themselves

treasures in heaven. There is a conscience—there is a conviction of truth—there is a dread of futurity and of the invisible world and of coming without great preparation into the presence of GOD, which convinces the most vicious, in a moment of consideration, that it is wise to regard another world.—It cannot be a fixed belief, that the duties of religion are unnecessary or afflicting to those who perform them. Men may oppose these duties, but they cannot think them to be unreasonable. They may neglect them, but they cannot think themselves to be right. They may think that they find no happiness in piety ; but they cannot think from all that they have seen, that there is no happiness to the people of GOD in religion. They may say, we cannot bear to see people so devout, serious, and abstracted from the pleasures of the world ; but at the same time, when they make a course of regular observations on the duties and appearance of a Christian's life, they cannot think him to be an unhappy man. Neither can they suppose, that society will be injured in its best interests, by a strict performance of religious duties. It is apparent that the well being of society in this world, is promoted by the spirit and practice of a strict religion. Those who are most faithful to seek and serve GOD ; are in all respects the best friends, the best neighbors, and most punctual in the duties which arise from the special relations of life. On taking the most extensive view of this subject, it appears probable that it is guilt of conscience which moves the unholy to prevent others from those duties, which are their preparation for entering into the kingdom. To see the seriousness of other people, and especially if it be of those who are in their near connection, reproves them, and

forces the questions upon them ; is thine own state a safe one ? Art thou prepared for death and another world ? If those who appear to be pained, have a cause for anxiety, hast not thou greater cause to fear and tremble ? If the only possible way of salvation be by a change of heart, art thou not wholly unprepared ? To put away reproof and enjoy the quietness of sin, men will oppose even the sight of religion in others ; and though the terms of acceptance with God, are not altered, they will try to make themselves quiet by discrediting the religion of others. To such the text applies. “ Woe unto you, sinners, for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them, that are entering, to go in.”—
AMEN.

T t



S E R M O N X V I.

On the different conditions of men in the present and future world.

L U K E X V I. 25.

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.

THE parable from which this passage is taken, is perhaps the most solemn of all which were spoken by JESUS CHRIST. It was his peculiar talent, to bring the most solemn and awful realities of eternity into the sight of men, by such plain and familiar representations, as cannot fail to take a deep hold of all minds, which are not perfectly blind and unfeeling. We find plainly implied in this parable, a number of the most interesting truths of which some persons doubt, and very many more are wholly thoughtless.

ONE is, that there are two conditions to which men go after death. This truth cannot be more

plainly expressed, than it is by CHRIST himself in this parable. If there were no other authority than this for the truth, it ought to convince all who believe the scriptures. Two persons are mentioned, and the relation is of a certain fact. It is not a conjecture of what may be ; but an account of a fact which hath been, and as it hath once been, it may be in innumerable future instances. After describing their condition in life, he particularly tells their state after death. But these persons died according to the course of nature, as all of us soon must. Lazarus died, and was carried or conducted by angels to Abraham's bosom. Abraham's bosom, among the Jews, to whom CHRIST spake, was a common and well known description of heaven. The rich man died and was buried, and in hell he opened his eyes being in torment. There cannot be a more positive description of two different states, to which men go after death, one of happiness, and the other of misery ; and it seems strange that any, who believe JESUS CHRIST to be a true prophet, can doubt in the matter, when they find him in the parable, and in so many other places, declaring the same truth.—He spake in the most plain and positive manner, of happiness and misery and the world to come. This was the general tenor of his preaching, on all occasions and to all men, whether good or evil.

A SECOND truth, communicated in the parable, is, that the happiness and misery of another world are unmixed or most perfect in their kind and degree. The happy person was conducted by angels and found in Abraham's bosom, which represented a state of perfect blessedness. But the unmixed and extreme misery of the sinner is much more forcibly described to our un-

derstanding.—“ In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.”—In this world there are conditions of extreme distress ; but mixed with some good, and with many alleviations to the pain. In the parable there appears to be no mixture of good, nor a possibility of any alleviation. The petition which he made, seems to be for the smallest mitigation that we can possibly conceive. It was only for a drop of water to cool the tip of his tongue ; yet small as it appears, there was a denial. The only answer that could be given, was, “ son, remember thou hadst thy good things in thy life time, and now thou art tormented.” There could not be a plainer intimation that there was no possibility of any good to be mixed with his evil.—It was evil, and evil only that he must suffer. Many, who deny the scriptures as a perfect rule of faith, and substitute the decisions of their own reason for a guide, seem to imagine that a future condition will be like the present, a mixture of good and evil ; and thus they quiet themselves in unholiness. They hope that if there be some evil for them, there will be more good ; and depending partly on chance and partly on error, are in a great measure quiet about the event. All such imaginations are unfounded and directly contrary to the holy scriptures, which uniformly tell us that the joys of heaven and the pains of woe shall be perfect and unmixed. There are reasons which God hath revealed to us, why there should be this difference between the present and future state. The present is a state of trial and probation ; the future of retribution. The present is calculated, in all respects to bring sinners to consideration and repentance ; the future to punish impenitence. In the present un sanctified life, sinners are reprieved from a full execution

of the penalty ; in the future, justice will be fully executed. If justice were fully executed here, there would be no opportunity for consideration and to use that system of means, which infinite wisdom hath instituted for the recovery of sinners. Also, if judgment were executed in full here, it would prevent the opportunity for displaying, how a sinful creature will act in a variety of situations, which are peculiar to a probation state. It would appear perhaps, to the finite minds of creatures, as though the reason sinners did not repent, was because they were under the awful punishment of justice ; but now it appears that a love of sin is the true and only reason they do not repent. These are sufficient reasons, why infinite wisdom permits, in this world, a mixed state of natural good and evil ; but as these reasons will cease in another life, the woe will be without a mixture of good.

FURTHER, in that mixed state of holiness and sin, which is found in the people of **GOD**, while they are in this world, it is not possible that their peace and glory should be perfect. Where there is a remainder of sin, there must be a remainder of unhappiness ; and where there is a remainder of unhappiness and sin, the glory cannot be perfect. But when all remainder of unholiness is taken away, as we have a promise it shall be at the death of the body, the way will be prepared for the perfection of glory and peace.

A THIRD truth, of which we are informed by the general representation of the parable, is that the state of unmixed happiness or woe will be of eternal duration.

THIS is learned by there being an impassable gulph between the places of happiness and woe. " Besides all this," said Abraham, " there is a

great gulph fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." This representation doth not imply any thing against a most perfect knowledge and view of each other's state. The rich man is described as seeing all the blessedness and glory of Lazarus ; and Abraham as knowing all the torment of the rich man. The impassableness of the way, means that there could be no change of condition. The sinful could not escape from their state of misery ; nor could the blessed go to the place of woe. The blessed should be preserved by the powerful grace of God in their holy and happy state ; and the unholy by the permanency of their sinful dispositions, would always be fit monuments of the just judgment of God. The Permanency of these two conditions, is represented in a lively manner, by an impassable gulph, and this is the most natural construction of the passage. It perfectly accords in significancy, with the other descriptions of CHRIST, that happiness and woe shall be eternal ; and that there are sins which shall not be forgiven, neither in the world that now is, nor in that which shall be ; and if the sin is not forgiven, there is no probability that the sufferer shall be restored.

A FOURTH truth contained in this parable, is, that men are, in this world, placed under the best advantages for obtaining eternal life, and that a more perfect knowledge of the invisible state would give them no additional assistance in preparing to meet its great, awful, and glorious events. This is learned from the further conversation between Abraham and the tormented rich man. When he found that no relief, no mitigation of pain could be procured for himself ;

also that an impassable gulph was placed between him and a state of happiness ; he further requested, “ 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. And 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.” This is a most express testimony, that all the knowledge which could be communicated by those, who have experienced the other world, would be of no benefit to us in making a preparation. From which we may determine, that the truth is literally told in the word of inspiration, and that there is the most plain and honest account of eternity, that could possibly, by any means, be communicated unto mortals. If one returning from the state of rewards, could give no ideas different on this subject, from what the scriptures contain, it ought to be a most alarming consideration to the ungodly, who pay no attention to these scriptures. It further appears from this representation, that knowledge will be of no avail to change the heart. Men may think their advantages for obtaining life might be greater ; but if such a direct communication with the Father would have no efficacy to promote repentance, it is not conceivable how any other means would do it.

HAVING remarked on some general truths contained in the parable, we next come particularly to consider the text. “ 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."

WE will next attend to the contrast there was in the conditions of these two persons, in the present and in the eternal world; to the probable means through which they came to such different ends; and then conclude with some inferences.

I. WE will attend to the contrast there was in the condition of these two persons in the present and in the eternal world.

THE difference of condition between these persons is represented to be the greatest possible in both states of existence; but wholly reversed. The rich man is described to be in the most desirable earthly state. He was cloathed in purple and fared sumptuously every day. The purple with which he was cloathed was a badge of authority; so that to riches, he probably had joined power and influence, as it commonly happens in such cases. The sumptuous fare of every day shows how plentifully he was stored with the goods of time. The account is short, but it could not be drawn more emphatically descriptive of wealth, power and pleasure, which are all that the world can give. His purple cloathing describes power and authority, which many ambitiously seek, and a few obtain; and his daily sumptuous fare is proof both of his riches and his sensual taste and indulgences. He was indulged in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. The greater part of the world are earnestly attempting to be in the same state. How many hearts burn with desire to be in this condition, and never attain it because

GOD is too good to give it to them ! How many, who have not yet come to the end of the experiment, are still hoping to obtain ! We see the end of all this, for he died and was buried—was cut off in the midst of a pleasurable, wealthy and honorable course. In death he was weak like other men, and all his earthly advantages were no protection against the displeasure of his Judge. Conceive the rich man opening his eyes on the eternal world in torment ; and hear him who was clothed in purple, begging without avail for a drop of water to cool his tongue ! What an amazing reverse of condition ! What a change, thus suddenly to lay aside his purple and be found in torment where the least favor could not be granted him ! O dangerous power and wealth and sensuality, if such be the end to which ye lead men ; who that knows the consequence, would not tremble at his own earthly desires ! O infatuated children of men, how can ye be so solicitous for the purple and the sumptuous fare of this world, when it must so soon be said, they are dead and buried ! It is wished that to such this address may reach ; but it is probable they will never read, or if they begin, that they will spurn the sentiments as being inconsistent with all their plans of pleasure, power and wealth.

· LAZARUS was in all worldly things poor and afflicted indeed ! He was a beggar, and it seems lawfully so, for he was covered with disease, and being thus unable to help himself, was laid at the gate of the rich man, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from his table. The dogs, who were companions in his meal, licked the wounds which men had not charity to bind up.

O HOW different was the rich man, and all the company around him, from the good Samaritan! Many an one in reading this story with a pained heart, hath wished the good Samaritan had been there, that the wounds of Lazarus might have been mollified with ointment. But there were better messengers near him. His death approached, and angels were hovering around to conduct the happy soul to glory. There was honesty, there was goodness, there was a love of GOD in this poor man's heart; there was a heavenly spirit in a diseased tabernacle of clay. Here was a child of glory hid from human view, by a diseased, afflicted state on earth; but the covenant love and faithfulness of GOD knew his child in this loathsome situation—GOD had never forgotten him—he had always heard his prayer, and a book of remembrance had been kept, both of his fidelity and his sorrows. And angels were prepared to bring him hence to the glory decreed to him from eternity, and prepared for him from the foundations of the world. How vast the transition, in a moment, from the pains of a dying body, to a habitation not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—to a crown of righteousness—to a weight of glory—to a place and a seat near the throne of GOD to join in his praise forever!—Transported in a moment from being a beggar in this world, to eat of the bread and drink of the water of life forever, and be a co-heir together with JESUS CHRIST, of the fulness of GOD through all eternity!—Removed from begging crumbs under the table of luxury and at the proud, unfeeling gate of affluence and power, to set in judgment on those who are unholy, great and rich and influential in this world of sin.—For, saith the apostle, “do

ye not know that the saints shall judge the world.”

HAVING noticed the difference of condition in these persons separately, which was made by death; let us now compare them, and judge whose character and state was most desirable. We know that the rich man shone in the eyes of the world, and that multitudes envied his state—many courted his favor, and said in their hearts, O that we could be like Dives! The same persons would naturally shun the groans of pained Lazarus, and think him an outcast from his Maker’s favor. But how falsely they judged! They saw not with the eye of Omniscience—nor had they read the book of divine counsels, which is every day opening by the events of his government!—They had not looked into eternity, nor heard the groans or praises of that state! They had never counted the cost of a sinful life, nor considered the glories that await humble and persevering piety, through the goodness of GOD. In the fates of the rich man and Lazarus, let us see the truth. How strangely changed! the man, who had power and influence, in a prison of eternal darkness; and the beggar on a throne of glory!—The man of wealth begging in vain for a drop of water; while the poor saint was drinking at rivers of pleasure forever!—The sensualist eternally tormented; the pious soul embosomed forever in the sight and enjoyment of GOD! And it was death which made all this change. How solemn! how interesting the moment of departure!

II. WE are to consider the probable means, through which these persons came to such different ends.

WHEN speaking of means which are addressed to the understanding and consciences of men, and through which some come to eternal life, the special efficacy of divine grace is never to be overlooked. There was counsel in the Most High from eternity, and a special influence of his Spirit in time, which formed Lazarus in his temper for the glory that was to be revealed in him; but still in this great work the Lord wrought with means. There are means through which sinners by their misuse and perverse application become hardened. It is not uncommon for the very means, which are naturally calculated, or are a rational inducement to do right, to be misimproved and made the occasion of sin. The apostle spoke of the goodness of God as leading to repentance. By this he meant, that the benefits of divine goodness are a rational inducement or motive to repentance; although they are often made the occasion of licentiousness. And as there are means, through which, by a misimprovement, men may become hardened; so there are means, in company with which, the Spirit of God works in men that progressive sanctification, which prepares for the blessedness of another life.—It is in this sense we are to consider the subject in attending to the probable means, through which, the rich man and Lazarus came to the glory and the woe, which are described in the parable.

THE worldly prosperity of the rich man was the probable means of his destruction. Speaking after the manner of men, who cannot see the counsels of God, we may properly say, if this prosperous person had been in an afflicted state of life, he might probably have escaped the torment which he must now endure forever. There is in all men a heart of unholiness and idolatry,

which delights in the creatures. The more these idolatrous affections are indulged, the more they generally increase. Men need disappointments, trials, pains and afflictions, to make them considerate; and if they are not considerate, they will not try to escape sin and prepare for the glorious world. We see but few who are able to resist powerful worldly temptations. To show the efficacy of his grace, some very few GOD does enable to resist; but the proportion is small. Therefore the apostle, on the subject of effectual calling, wrote, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But GOD hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and GOD hath chosen the weak things of this world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath GOD chosen; yea, and the things which are not, to bring to nought the things which are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."— In perfect consistency with this description, we usually see the weak, the afflicted, the less respectable in the opinion of a proud and pleasure-seeking world, to be effectually called, delighted and filled with the comforts of piety. Those who value themselves on the supposed strength of their own reason, are very prone to contend with the wisdom of GOD, in those things, which are above all human comprehension. They cannot brook to submit to the word of revelation, where it contains things beyond their comprehension, or disagreeable to their hearts. As they are accustomed to find themselves superior to the weaker reason of their brethren, they consider not but they may in the same manner contend and call in question the counsels of GOD. Thus a

habit of pride in opinion is often formed, which cuts men off from eternal life. Also, in the same way the dignity of earthly honor excites a bold opposition to the laws and ordinances of GOD. Those who have been accustomed to use great influence among men, do not consider their infinite littleness in the sight of the Almighty. In these cases the heart is more stubborn against obligation, duty and divine authority.

FURTHER, as there is a propensity to seek the creatures and to trust in them, earthly profusion makes men forget GOD—it pampers their appetites—it enkindles their passions—it engrosses their thoughts in concerting and executing the means of present enjoyment.—It is hard to make men think of a good to come, who now imagine they are in possession, or that they are in near expectation of being filled with an earthly good. Thus the world ensnares men’s souls—Thus they are carried on, thoughtless, self-confident, boasting and occupied with what now is, to the exclusion of all thought what shall be hereafter. It was thus that the rich man in our text went down to the chambers of death. His sumptuous fare, his purple, his brethren and companions in sensuality, for whom he professed to be anxious after his own eyes were opened in torment, had lulled him in security, made him forget death, and postpone all preparation for the change.—“He died and was buried and opened his eyes in torment.”—Thus many are led by similar means to forget GOD, wholly neglect their duty, and despise piety until a sudden and unexpected remove places them beyond the reach of hope.

THE afflictions of Lazarus were the probable means of his consideration, repentance and piety. Afflictions cannot be more strongly described

than in his case. He was poor, for he had to beg; diseased, for he was covered with sores; helpless, for he was carried and laid at the rich man's gate; in the distress of hunger, for he wanted the crumbs that fell from his table; he had no one to dress his wounds, for it is said the dogs came and licked them. External and bodily affliction could not have been higher painted than in this short description. But he had a GOD and a Saviour in the midst of all this pain and ignominy; and to have a Saviour in his death, which then nearly approached, was infinitely better than to have all the glory which Dives possessed. Although the evils of this world can never change men's hearts, they are means, in company with which the Spirit of GOD often works for the spiritual and immortal good of souls. These trials show men their own weak and helpless state; they remind them of a dependance on GOD, and that there is no fixed trust to be placed on the world; they awaken the conscience to consider their own guilt and desert of punishment; and convince the understanding that men must come and lie at the foot of divine sovereignty and ask mercy and a blessing as an undeserved favor: Thus afflictions are blessed as a means of spiritual good, and many have thus been benefitted. That it should be thus, is agreeable to the representation of the holy scriptures. Troubles and afflictions are often spoken of as the means of rebuking and bringing men to consideration—of convincing them that they are sinners—of showing them their dependance—and of finally bringing them to that deep state of humiliation before divine sovereignty, which is a common antecedent to the manifestation of CHRIST JESUS and the power of his gospel in the heart. They are also represented, as the

means of maturing a work of grace in the soul after it is begun “ For, whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God deal-eth with you as with sons ; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.— Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless it afterward yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”— And thus the chastening of Lazarus, although severe, was no work of God’s particular displeasure against him. These chastenings were in covenant love, and they wrought out for him the peaceful and joyful fruits of righteousness in a weight of glory.— And thus many have experienced. Many, from the wilderness and the woes of human life ; from a state of trial which made the unholy think that God had cast them off to the buffetings of evil, have gone to a life of joy and of praise around the throne of God and the Lamb. Afflictions often carry blessings in their train. God hath a good to bestow on his children, so much greater than any thing which this world contains, that all temporal evils vanish in the comparison. In the infinite view of God, who knows the eternity which he inhabits, and all which will happen to every creature through its boundless ages ; the pains, the sorrows, the poverty, the ignominy, the bodily distresses, and all the flow of evils which can betide human life, are as nothing compared with the glory that is to be revealed in his children hereafter. Thus by trials he matures them for glory ! Thus by the evils of time he ripens the

affections of holiness, which are first implanted in the heart by his own renewing grace.

HAVING noticed the contrast there was in the temporal and eternal conditions of the two persons mentioned in the text, and the probable means through which they came to such different ends ; the discourse will be concluded with some reflections by way of improvement.

I. THIS subject shows the vast alteration there may be in the condition of persons in the present and in the future world.

WE are very liable, to form an opinion of the perpetual condition of men, from their present state. If they are affluent, great, and happy here, and have much influence in present society, we are apt to suppose that this will always be their condition. Such worldly distinctions have a great impression on the mind ; and if these persons do not appear publicly on the side of piety, many seem to think that religion is of little consequence, and that we can be truly safe and respectable without it. By things remaining as they were, they think it will always be thus. But with a multitude of men, there will be an amazing and an awful change. From boundless wealth and all the means of a gay and amusing life, they will go empty handed, naked, and friendless into the eternal world ; and there without a comforter meet the justice of a long-suffering and abused Judge. From power and office and influence, which they supposed to be their own exclusively, and on which they depended for protection, they will go defenceless to a state of woe. It is difficult, for those who possess these earthly advantages, to conceive that they shall sink to such ruin, and fall far below those whom

they now despise. But if the word of GOD is to be credited, there will in very many cases be this change. GOD seeth not as man seeth, and he judgeth not on the principle of human pride. He is not resisted in his way, nor can the present influence of men change the course of his power. He is as much the creator, proprietor and judge of the rich and powerful man, as he is of the poor and of the weak. He is as much the father of one, as he is of the other. The interests of each are equally dear in his sight—and with him there is no partiality on account of earthly advantages. Those who have the fewest advantages and have made the best use of them, may still say, we are unprofitable servants; and those who have made an improper use, deserve to be cast down as a punishment for their misimprovement.

O READER, thou wilt be strangely surpris'd, on entering the invisible world, to see how the comparative conditions of men are altered from what they now are! Many a Lazarus; many afflicted, distressed ones; many who were friendless on earth; who were despised and commended only with GOD and CHRIST; who wished to retire from the show and temptation of the world, lest they should be ensnared; whose pleasures were in reading the word of GOD, and in their closets, and in administering to the necessities of those who were poor and unobserved in life like themselves; many such thou wilt find in the place of angels!—in the company of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! How many such thou wilt find purified in the blood of CHRIST, and sanctified by his Spirit, so as to be without spot or stain in the presence of the Lord! His servants, his messengers, his ministers and his honored ones in the

kingdom of glory! On the earth they received evil things, but in heaven they are comforted,—they have become kings and priests unto the Lord, and pillars in his everlasting temple! Such will be the fruits of the redeeming blood of JESUS, and he will see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied with the glory that is given to the members of his spiritual body. The higher they are raised from the low and despised condition they had here on earth, the more the riches, the fulness and the sovereignty of his grace will be forever adored.

As some will thus be purified, and confessed and exalted forever in the presence of the Father and before his holy angels; so how awfully, will many sink from the highest advantages on earth, to the lowest place in the pains of eternity!—How many, who have been great on earth, and made whole realms to tremble, will wish for a drop of water from the finger of a glorified Lazarus to cool the tip of their tongues!—How many, who carried with them a great breadth of influence in the concerns of this life; who had the adjustment of other men's properties according to their will, their prejudices, and their own latent selfish designs; who made laws for their fellow creatures according to the feelings of their own passions, without regard to mercy and equity; who judged and executed with much worldly solemnity and importance, but not in the fear of the Almighty, and with hearts of compassion; who were filled with the profusion of the world, and walked through life in the pride of self-consequence, and the parade which gratifies a vain heart; who in these circumstances forgot that they were sinners, were made of the same clay, must go to the same grave, must

stand on the same level with their meaner neighbors before the glorious bar of God : how many such, from every land and from every age of the world, will say, “ Father Abraham, send one of those who are now in thy bosom, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue !”

2. How alarming this subject ought to be to many, who are evidently giving themselves up to seek a portion in this world ! It is not expected that the admonition will reach the eye or ear of many such ; or if perchance this should happen, they will probably close the unwelcome page, which honestly and without any flattery sets the truth of eternity before them. They at present feel a dignity or an affluence of the world that is instantly affronted with addressing them as sinners. It is probable, that nothing but death or the coming of CHRIST in the clouds of heaven will make them realize the truth.—Such are the gay—the ambitious—many of the powerful—many who are hoarding the world—many of the sensual who are given to amusement—many, who, after they have been the artful or impure instruments of deceiving their fellow creatures, can hear their groans, and see their tears without an emotion of tenderness. All these must soon die, and come into judgment before the same Lord, who placed the affluent, sensual and purpled Dives in torment. How easy and sinful, multitudes of these careless creatures live ! Without a sense of God and another world ! Without prayer or praise, or any knowledge of God’s holy word ! Although they live in a land filled with Christian information, they think not themselves to be sinners. All their talk, their visits, and even their more retired meditations fall

short of another world. "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. 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." This indeed is the madness of sin. It is painful to behold such folly, which highly provokes the Lord; and it is the duty of all, who love the souls of their fellow-creatures, most affectionately and tenderly to warn them. It would not be strange if they resent and revile; but those who have Christian feelings, will calmly bear the unkindness, remembering the example and the prayer of JESUS, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do!"

3. This subject administers consolation to the afflicted children of GOD in this world.

Now they are receiving their evil things, but they shall soon be comforted.—"O ye afflicted, tossed with a tempest, and not comforted, behold and consider that presently your stones shall be laid with fair colors, and your foundation with sapphires. Your windows shall be of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones—you shall be taught of the Lord and in righteousness shall ye be established." Although you are afflicted and receiving your evil things, yet the rock of ages is your hope, and your GOD liveth and will be your salvation. For your support under present trials, remember the following things.

1. THAT GOD is glorifying himself by all which you are now called to meet. In his government he is glorifying himself; and you cannot have a better consolation than the thought, that GOD is glorified, and that in some way, above your present comprehension, his kingdom is ad-

vanced by what you suffer. If you be indeed the chosen of the Lord and his Spirit be in you, you can find no richer consolation than the thought, that by every event which takes place, the glory of divine counsels is unfolding, and infinite wisdom, is preparing to make a heaven of innumerable holy faints the most blessed that can be.

2. THAT by your present evils, GOD is sanctifying and preparing you for a holy and peaceful state of glory. It is through much tribulation, that men must enter into the kingdom of heaven, and this is because they are sinful creatures. If we had no tribulation and evils here, we should idolize the world—we should trust in the creatures and be attached to them as a permanent good—we should consider but little and know nothing of our own hearts. The school of affliction is generally the best for the Christian. It is in this, that he is humbled and hath the sweets of humility—in this he learns himself and the frail nature of the bewitching creatures—in this he learns to cry to GOD, to depend on him, and take him for a sole protector and portion. How many of the stubborn and thoughtless, have by the evils of the world been made to consider! How many backsliding Christians, who were daily crucifying their Lord afresh, have been brought back to him by the rod! The rod is bitter, but who that hath felt it in company with GOD's blessed Spirit, would not kiss it for the sake of the blessed effects that follow? He who sends the rod, can open heaven to the pained soul and reveal all his supporting glories to the mind! How many a repenting Christian hath said to afflictions, be thou my brother and my companion, for I cannot do without thee! When I was prosperous I went astray, was unfaithful to

GOD and my own soul—unfaithful in my private duties and my public obligations ; but since I have been afflicted I have been abundantly repaid in my own personal peace, and have felt a present Saviour, assisting me, in a very weak manner, to try to serve him and his cause.

3 LET Christians remember that the time of their evils here is short. After a moment they will all be gone—it is but a hand's breadth of time, and you shall be dismissed and purified and admitted triumphant to glory. See how the moments fly ! The wings with which they rapidly fly are conveying you, ye humble children of sorrow, to the presence of your Father. The beaming light of eternity begins to break on your sight ! The dawn of eternal glory, if you are faithful to GOD and yourselves will brighten as you advance ! It is true that death and the grave are gloomy to unholy men, who have chosen their portion here ; but you have chosen your portion beyond the bounds of time, and over death and the grave ye may triumph and say, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave where is thy victory ? Thanks be to GOD, which giveth us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST ! ” To-day you may be pained ; while to-morrow you will be comforted with eternal joys, even with the fulness of glory that is reserved for the saints.—To-day ye may weep ; but to-morrow perhaps all tears will be wiped from your eyes. To-day ye may be in the hands of a hard hearted world ; but to-morrow in the presence of an Almighty Saviour, who will bind up all your wounds and heal them eternally. Glory be to GOD the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever. AMEN.

S E R M O N XVII.

On the duty and benefits of prayer.

I. THESSALONIANS, V. 17.

Pray without ceasing.—

THIS is one, from a number of precepts found in the same chapter, which enjoin such practical duties on Christians, as are necessary for their instruction and comfort here, and for their perseverance unto eternal life.— While there is a supreme and constant agency of God, in all the works of nature and grace, and the whole is suspended on his efficient will, it hath pleased his wisdom both to bless and to punish us through the exercise of our own active powers, which were first given and are always upheld by him. The exercise of these powers, either in voluntary or necessary action, is what we call the means of good to be enjoyed, or of evil to be suffered. And it is found, that all the good and evil set before men, do come

upon them in this way. Instead of derogating from the Creator, it actually adds to his glory and shows all his fulness, that he can be perfectly and sovereignly efficient, in all things, while through the immensity of nature, he undeviatingly acts in consistency with a system of laws and means. Miraculous productions have been sometimes necessary to evidence the presence and authority of the Supreme first cause; but for a general course of divine action they could not be proper. The wisdom and plenitude of Deity is more effectually witnessed, by feeding and cloathing us through that system of means, which subsists in nature, than they could have been by the immediate, instantaneous and miraculous production of the food and cloathing by which we are supported. By a system of means, the efficiency of Godhead is brought into our view, in a multitude of operations, all of which wisely conspire to the purposed end: In this system of means, the exercises of divine power are flowing at once in a thousand channels before our eyes—all of them are necessary—and all are brought to meet in the production of a single event; also all of them are influential and productive of a thousand other events, which are equally necessary for the glory of the Creator and the good of his creation.—Therefore God works with means for two reasons; first, because this manner of acting furnishes room for a more copious display of his glorious fulness to the understanding of creatures; and secondly, because it gives an opportunity for our own powers of acting to be exercised in procuring our own good, and in avoiding evil. While the efficiency is all his own, he permits us to work with him, and hath so constructed nature that our action is our happiness. The creation of natural ob-

jects and of moral character is described to us in his word, as an act of his immediate efficiency ; but on objects thus created, his efficiency continues to act with a system of means, that are appointed both in the natural and moral worlds.

PRAYER is an instituted means in religion, and one of the most important which is appointed for our preservation here and for our salvation from sin and misery in the world to come. There are no means more expressly instituted ; more frequently and solemnly urged on men ; or represented as having so intimate a connection with the right performance of our duty, with the visible glory of God, and with our own everlasting good. At the same time there is, perhaps, no duty so generally omitted by people who have the light of revelation ; or so deficiently performed by those who profess, in some measure to comply with the command. They often speak or think without a feeling of the divine efficiency or of their own wants and unworthiness. An habitual custom of inattention may even make men so vicious, that they have not a single thought of the being, presence and majesty of God, while they use or hear words, which are most solemn and full of meaning. It is designed, in this subject, to consider the duty, importance and usefulness of prayer, both with respect to the un sanctified, and to those who have evangelically obeyed by repentance towards God and faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

PRAYER is a suitable ascription to God, of power, majesty, righteousness and goodness, united with praise for what he is in himself and for his benefits, and with humble supplication for all we need, to make us happy and obedient in time and through eternity. The duty and practice of prayer, doth, therefore, stand in im-

mediate connection with the whole system of faith and practice ; of duty and happiness ; and our well-being through our whole existence. The most simple and definite meaning of the word prayer, is petition for blessings ; and in this sense of the word, many have supposed that prayer will not be a part of the heavenly worship, because they suppose that state will be so filled with good, as to exclude all sense of want ; and that there will be no possibility of receiving more than is given. But as prayer hath been generally defined to contain adoration and praise of **GOD**, for what he is in himself and for his benefits to creatures, it will be the most important and incessant part of heavenly worship. Heaven will be forever filled with the highest strains of adoration and praise, which from the multitude and fervency of those who worship, will be like mighty thunderings and the voice of many waters.

ALL the prayers and praises of men must be offered through a Mediator. Men, by their transgression, cut themselves off from a right to approach the Lord, with a single request ; until his wisdom and goodness had devised and revealed a way, in which they may ask and receive. It is only through a mediator that he becomes a propitious **GOD** ; that the pardon of sin is possible in consistence with his own glory and the good of his kingdom ; that sinners are placed in a state of trial, and furnished with means the best calculated to instruct and bring them to repentance ; and that the people of **GOD** are sanctified, forgiven, permitted to ask for blessings and to offer their praise.—As there is no other name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved ; so there is no other through which they may request the blessings of forgiveness and

glory. The Lord JESUS will forever remain the medium of all intercourse between GOD and the redeemed. All sinners are now subjects of warning and invitation, and are directed to pray with a right temper that they may receive salvation; but when the appointed day of grace is past, there will be to them no more offer of life or right to pray that they may be forgiven. But in the heavenly state, JESUS CHRIST will forever remain the mediator between GOD and the spirits of just men made perfect. He will forever be as necessary a character for the saints in glory, as he is for them here on earth. In him they will stand—in him they will be glorified—and their perpetual title to heaven will be by his merits.—Through him GOD will commune with them, and shed abroad a divine joy into their hearts; and through him their eternal praise and adoration will be offered.

THE command to pray is given to all men. All are the dependant creatures of GOD, need his grace and protection, and owe to him their adoration, praise and service.—The duty of acceptable prayer implies a holy temper.—External adoration, and praise offered with insincerity, or petitions which proceed from a heart that neither loves nor is obedient, must be sinful in the sight of him, who is omniscient and most holy. If prayer be so important a duty as hath been mentioned, the subject on which we have entered, must be interesting to men of every description, and we will pursue it in the following branches of discourse.

I. WE will consider the reasons for offering prayer to GOD.

II. THE several kinds of prayer, in which all men ought to abound without ceasing.

III. THE temper with which men ought to pray, that they may be accepted.

IV. THE happy effects that commonly follow a compliance; and the awful consequences of neglecting the duty.

I. WE are to consider the reasons for offering prayer to GOD.

THIS duty is taught by the light of nature or reason, and by the special precepts of revelation.

IF the Lord be our Creator, and we the creatures of his power and wisdom; then we ought to praise him. It is a dictate of common sense and reason, that gratitude and praise are due to him who bestows a favor; and though a revelation may confirm the obligation, we are not dependant on this for our knowledge of the duty.—If GOD be the proprietor of our existence, and we his property, absolutely in his hands and under his control; it is proper that we should express to him a sense of his rights. Nothing short of the most stupid and awful atheism, which denies the existence of all that is called GOD, can deny that we are his property, in the highest and most absolute sense.—If the Lord gives us life, breath and being, and all our daily mercies, loading us with good continually and in all things, and we can make no return to him by way of compensation, and of adding to the immense fulness which he hath in himself; it then must be our duty, at least, to return him our thanks and praise, for what he beneficently gives. By whom can this be denied, who hath any sense of his providence and of the innumerable mercies and blessings, which are every day received through his munificent care?—If we are dependant in future on the care of Almighty GOD, and must sink into nothing without his upholding agency; or if our existence being

upheld, we must be miserable without his preservation, and the numberless bounties which are subject to his disposal ; then who can refuse the propriety of coming before him with our wants, and supplicating him to supply them ? Although the light of nature or reason can give no information of a Saviour, it abundantly teaches us the fitness of praying to GOD ; and those who neglect the duty act most irrationally.—They act against that light of their natures which is found in all men.—They will be weighed in the balance of reason, and found wanting when they come before the bar of GOD.—Many seem to imagine, that if they can set themselves free from the laws of revelation, by denying its authenticity ; they are at liberty to neglect GOD in every way. They highly applaud reason in order to escape revelation ; but when they become fixed in this error, they are as unfriendly to right reason, as they ever were to the divine oracles. They wished for the authority of reason to combat the word of the Almighty ; still, they do not wish its testimony concerning their obligation to the plainest duties of religion. Here the deceit of the heart opens to view, and it is an awful wickedness.

THAT the light of nature or reason dictates the duty of prayer, we need no other testimony than the general consent of Heathen nations. They have had their rites of worship and their seasons of prayer—they supplicate the multitude of their imaginary deities—and all among them, who were regular, moral, and considerate, esteemed the character of prayerless persons as infamous, and allotted a place for such, in the regions of misery which they described, among the most wicked of sinners. This is a sufficient

evidence that prayer to **God** is a duty taught by the light of reason.

THIS shows us the extreme guilt of prayerless persons. There are many such who live under Christian light. They profess to be considerate; but by resisting greater light, they are become more hardened in impiety than the considerate Heathen. Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrha, and the untaught nations from the most dark corners of the earth will rise up in judgment against them. For their conviction and condemnation, the Supreme Judge will have no need to found his accusation on the precepts of his word. The charge against them, will stand in full strength by the light of nature and their own deficient practice; and all the millions of Heathen, which shall be collected around the throne of the Judge, will say, these prayerless sinners from Christian lands are rightfully condemned.—The immense number of prayerless persons, who have been often found in Christian lands, together with the impiety against divine things, which they have discovered, hath prejudiced many Heathen against receiving Christianity. How fearful must be the end of such persons, who go from the highest degree of light to be judged and rewarded for the greatest sin and guilt.

THE duty of prayer is taught by the special precepts of revelation.

ALL uncertainty and difficulty, concerning this point of duty, may be removed by seriously consulting the word of **God**. Although the light of nature and reason abundantly taught the duty of prayer, they could furnish no certain evidence that **God** would graciously hear, or whether, or how he would forgive. This is the only difficulty, that a considerate Heathen could have

concerning the duty, and this is removed by the revelation of grace. Here we are assured that the Lord is a forgiving God—that he hath devised a way, and by his goodness brought in the means of pardon—and he addresses the world of sinners as a God who will hear prayer; yea, he goes so far, as absolutely to promise they shall be heard if they pray with a right temper.

THE duty is enjoined from first to last, through the whole revelation of God. It is found in numberless precepts to his people in every age—under each dispensation—to persons in every possible condition, whether prosperous or adverse, happy or pained. With the injunction to perform the duty God hath joined the most awful threatenings against such as neglect it. He ascribes the evils which men have suffered, to their having been prayerless, and threatens them with punishment to come, both in the present and future world, for the same cause.—His fury will be poured out upon the families and the nations that call not on his name. He gives particular directions for what blessings we are most particularly to pray. He enjoins supplication to be made for persons, in every situation of life. For Zion, which is his own visible kingdom in the world—for all who are in authority—for our Christian brethren—for sinners—for our enemies—for those who are in affliction—and for the ends of the earth.—We are to praise him for every mercy temporal and spiritual, and for all good that is given to our bodies or our souls.

FURTHER, he hath promised the audience of prayer to those, who call upon him in a humble, sincere and persevering manner. “He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.” His words are, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be

opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. He is plenteous in mercy unto them that call upon him. Those that call upon him in the day of trouble he will answer. Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not.”—Concerning those, who innure themselves to prayer, one who had experience saith in the name of the Lord, “The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.” We are directed, “to continue instant in prayer, and to pray with all manner of prayer and supplication for all men.”—We have the example of all good men, whose lives are recorded in the sacred canon, that they spent much of their time in communing with God by supplication and praise. Many instances of remarkable answers to prayer are placed on sacred record. Our blessed Redeemer, who came to be our example as well as to make expiation for sin, was much in prayer to his Father ; and from the many instances, which are mentioned in the short history of his life, we may suppose that a great share of his time was thus employed. As the most important direction to his disciples, for their preservation in this evil world, he told them, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” The apostle, in describing the Christian armour, whereby the people of God powerfully persevere unto salvation through the grace of God, concerning prayer, says, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”—These are the precepts, promises,

exhortations, threatenings, and examples of the holy scriptures, on this important point; and only some hints are given from the fulness of instruction, which they contain, on this most interesting of all practical duties.

FURTHER, as a reason for the duty we may call in the experience and testimony of Christians in all ages. There never was a person eminent in Christian piety, who was not also eminent for abounding and for punctual perseverance in this duty. All the highly favored servants of the Lord have borne this testimony. All of them have witnessed, that prayer is the most animating and useful duty in the Christian life—that it was the means of their strength and peace—their principal armour against the temptations of the world and the corruption of their own hearts—their support under deep afflictions—their preservation in scenes of prosperity, when surrounding circumstances were alluring them away from GOD—and the best means of communing with him and mortifying the remainder of their own lusts, which warred against their souls.—Many other reasons, which evince the duty of prayer, will come into view in the course of discussing this subject. We proceed to the next part of the discourse.

II. To speak of the several kinds of prayer, in which all men ought to abound without ceasing.

IN the present discourse, by the kinds of prayer, is meant the circumstances in which we pray, with respect to solitude in our own closets, or in company with the family, or with larger collections of people in places not consecrated to worship, or in the sanctuary of GOD.—Prayer in the closet, in the family, in private praying societies, and in the public house of GOD, hath

been considered as several kinds of prayer.—That prayer in the closet is a duty, none can deny, who remember the command of CHRIST, “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”—Neither can those who have any belief in divine revelation, doubt concerning the duty of public social prayer. From the institution of temple worship to the end of the holy canon, it is enjoined and represented to be a duty.—Concerning these, therefore, there can be no dispute, except with those whose hearts are utterly averse to all worship; and the arguments they use, on being followed to their extent, terminate in infidelity and atheism.—

BUT ought we to pray in our families? And are private praying societies according to order and duty? Many, who neglect closet and public worship, dare not deny their fitness; but when they find a mode of worship for which there is not a multitude of the most positive precepts, they think there is room to question the duty. Here the heart comes into fight. For those who can deny the fitness of family and social prayer, when performed in an orderly and reverential manner, would if they dare deny the fitness of supplication, in any possible circumstances.—Those who love this duty in the closet and sanctuary, will be delighted with the service in all other places where it is humbly, sincerely and solemnly performed.

OUGHT prayer to be daily offered in the family? This is a question worthy of the most serious consideration, by all those who govern in the household. The family is a little society constituted according to the rules of God’s word.

He hath given to parents the right of commanding, and enjoined on children and others the duty of obeying.—He hath directed those who have the care of households, to educate them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—to minister for him in sacred instruction—to watch over the souls and bodies of their charge—to tell the mighty works and the law of the Lord—and to instruct them how to serve him. The Lord hath clothed all those, who sustain this character, with his own authority, and hath threatened all the disobedient with accumulated sorrow. He hath warned them, that through disobedience, they shall not live out half their days. He hath given very many promises to the seed and families of the godly, which cannot be understood in any other manner, than on the condition of their punctuality in discharging the religious duties which are incumbent on them.

FURTHER, families are societies, which are capable of being blessed or afflicted in their collective capacity. They have separate wants, and in a brotherly manner, each ought to pray for the other's wants. They have common wants for which they ought to supplicate a supply; common temptations which they ought to resist; common blessings for which they ought to thank the God of heaven. Every argument which shows the propriety of the most public praying assemblies applies for the fitness of prayer in the family. Congregations, we know cannot daily assemble without incommoding the lawful and necessary employments of life; but it is far different in families. They are together each morning and evening, and without any inconvenience, can offer their joint supplication and praise. Also, it seems, if they had a belief in the providence of God, or a sense of the dangers and temptations which are in the

world, they would esteem it a privilege thus to do.

IT ought also here to be added, that if people are possessed of true religion, it will be their highest pleasure to worship God in their family connection. Although the unholy may think the duty of prayer to be a burden; it is not so with the pious and godly. They consider prayer as their refreshment, their means of protection, and of growing in that holy life, which leads to their desired perfection. When men deny the fitness of any kind of orderly and solemn prayer, they impeach their own sincerity towards heaven. It shows that they have no delight in the duty—no pleasure in thinking that they are before God—no confidence in his government, and in the friendship of their own hearts to his laws and admonitions.

WHAT can a parent or head of a family, who thinks on this subject, say to excuse himself for the neglect? If he denies the propriety of prayer, in all cases whatever, we know that he will reject this duty on the same grounds. But if he allows the duty of prayer in any case, what can he say by way of excuse in this instance. Doth he not know that there is a providence over him and his—that they have arisen with the opening day to go into a world of trials, temptations and evils, and that they need a protection which they cannot give unto themselves? Doth he not know that they have received common mercies, for which their hearts ought to be joined in acknowledgment and praise? And why doth he neglect to ask protection and grace; or why to return thanks to God for benefits granted? Can such a parent or head of a family, having neglected this communional duty, if he reflects on the subject, feel easy, that he hath a

single day, committed his family to a dangerous world, without asking God to keep both them and himself? If he hath thus neglected and reflects on his conduct, will not conscience harass him in all his walks. If evil should betide them, will he not accuse himself, for not having asked God to be their common protector, and that they might come to the evening in peace? Or if he should say, I did not certainly know that family prayer was my duty, will not his own conscience in the place of the Judge, answer? If thine own heart had been right, and it had been a pleasure to thee to converse with God couldest thou have neglected the service? Was it right, was it prudent thus to neglect? Didst thou not know the commands, to pray without ceasing, to pray with all manner of supplication, to be instant in season and out of season in the duty?—Or how could he with a good conscience, retire to the rest of the night, without imploring sovereign mercy to forgive the sins, which may have been committed by himself and those under his family care? From the general duty of prayer—from the fitness of social prayer—from the nature and wants of families—from the spirit and feelings of piety and godliness, we may infer the importance of family worship, which we are now considering. It also might be inferred from many particular passages as a command, but there does not seem to be any need of this to establish the obligation. Such commands will occur to those who read the holy oracles with hearts sincerely desirous of instruction.

ANOTHER question which may here arise, is this; are private praying societies according to order and duty?

WHY are they not? The world is challenged to bring a sound and sober reason against them.

Let us first see the words of inspiration. The apostle saith, "Let the word of CHRIST dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Also, the prophet Malachi hath something in point to the subject, "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another : and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that served the Lord, and that thought on his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." These scriptural quotations, and many others, which might be adduced, were it necessary, appear clearly to show the propriety, that Christians who love the service of CHRIST, and those who are anxiously concerned for the salvation of their souls, should often speak to one another, use the means of instruction, and pray together for the blessing of GOD, if it be done in an orderly and solemn manner. If those persons, who form such praying societies, were met for the purposes of amusement, no cry would be raised against them. But why do those, who resort to places of amusement and revelry and vanity, for their own pleasure, have such bitter resentment against others, who for their happiness and in the conscientious exercise of duty, resort to places of private social worship. Do they deny men's religious rights of conscience? If they go on this ground, it is contrary to all the principles of human liberty. The true reason is, they have no pleasure

in the worship of GOD. To meet others resorting to a place of prayer and praise, when they are themselves going to the place of idle discourse and entertainments of folly, alarms their consciences and carries a terrifying conviction, that if these praying people are right they are wrong—if these are going to happiness they are going to misery; and thus they become embittered against the means, whereby awakened sinners and praising Christians edify each other.—There needs only a spirit of piety to make every kind of prayer appear pleasing and reasonable. To the pious the prayer of the closet is delightful.—They delight to meet GOD in the solitude which is sanctified by devotion—to confess their sins and pour out their hearts before him—to praise all his goodness, and without interruption contemplate his glory—to commune with him in a sense of his love shed abroad into their hearts by his own holy influence, which serves to comfort and enlighten them while travelling in this vale of tears.

THEY find the highest satisfaction in family worship. To come and bow before GOD, and to join in praise with those under their care and united with them in the most endearing connections of life, gives a sweet delight to the souls of all who belong to the Lord. It gives sweetness to the beginning and the close of the day. They go forth with a new confidence in the divine keeping to meet the perils and temptations of the world; and with a humble dependance on the divine Saviour, for strength to do their duty in every situation of arduous and difficult duty. A delight in GOD will make every kind and season of prayer delightful, and there will be an effort to comply with the commands, to pray without ceasing and with all manner of suppli-

cation. Where there is the spirit of piety, these consequences will always follow ; and from the opinions, feelings and practice of men concerning this duty, we may form an opinion, which will rarely fail of being true, whether they are in the number of friends or enemies of GOD. We next proceed to an important branch of the subject.

III. THE temper with which men ought to pray, that they may be accepted.

IT is doubtless to a holy temper that the promises of a gracious audience and answer are made. the differences of opinion on this subject, have mostly arisen from a previous difference of sentiment concerning the original character of man, with respect to depravity and holiness. Those, who suppose that depravity is nothing more than a misconception of truth and duty, and that when men doctrinally see these, they will of course love them, may perhaps do well to think that there is something in the substance and matter and disposition with which unregenerate prayer is offered, that will be pleasing to GOD. Those, on the other hand, who suppose that there is in the unrenewed heart a dislike and opposition to the matter of truth and duty, must think that there can be nothing in the prayer of an unholy mind with which GOD is pleased. None can be so absurd as to think that GOD will be pleased with a temper and exercises, that are in their nature opposed to the infinite holiness of his own being, and of the kingdom which he protects and means to bring to blessedness. That opposites in a moral temper and practice, should find a mutual delight, is unnatural and impossible. The holy scriptures are not deficient, in describing the temper with which we ought to pray, that we may be accepted. In the eleventh chapter of Luke, where our Saviour is

himself considering the subject of prayer, he says, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened."—These are express promises of audience and acceptance. But to know the kind of prayer to which a promise of acceptance is made we must look farther on in the discourse. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."—It appears that the object of that prayer, to which acceptance is encouraged, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The office of the Holy Spirit is to renew, to sanctify, to take away sin, and make the praying person holy and perfect as God is holy. But it is not to be supposed, that those who are in a state of enmity with God, and do not love his character and law, ever will sincerely pray for the Spirit, whose office work is to promote that holiness which they do not love. We must therefore, conclude that this promise is made to those, who with a right temper and in a love of holiness, pray to be sanctified and made more like to God. In the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, where the apostle is recording the privileges of true Christians, he mentions the audience of prayer as one. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."—The nature of the prayer to which the promise is made, is described farther on in the chapter. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: But the Spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He before speaketh of the people of God as having received the Spirit. By the intercessions

of the Spirit, with groanings which cannot be uttered, is here meant, those holy longings, desires and intercessions, which are offered by the aids and influence of the Holy Spirit. Christians, who live near unto God, understand this description; and although it be they who pray, they are willing to ascribe all the sincerity, fervor and groanings of holy desire, which they feel, to the aids and animation of the Spirit, acting immediately on their hearts by a holy influence. Judging, also, by the determination of reason, we must conclude that the prayer which is acceptable to God must be that which is in some degree conformed to his own divine holiness. It cannot be supposed that unholy desires, although offered in the form of prayer, can be an instance of obedience to the precepts of the law and gospel, which require us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. The fact, of a person sincerely praying, for that which he doth not love, is impossible. Philosophy, formality, fear and insincerity may try to reconcile sincere prayer and an insincere heart; but the trial is a vain one. It is also vain to think, that a God of infinite and most perfect holiness, and who hath an omniscient eye, can view the prayer of an unholy mind with complacence. The very supposition is incredible. The wicked are all those who have not repentance towards God and faith in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Every one proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be abomination."—Solemn professions and good words, so long as the heart is wrong and opposed to God, cannot make the desires of such a heart

pleasing to GOD. He will view as sin, that which is sinful, and that which he views as sinful must be displeasing to him. Therefore, there cannot be any thing that is pleasing to GOD, in the desires of an unholy heart, in whatever manner they are presented before GOD; and the solemn form of offering, which we call prayer, cannot sanctify them, for they do not thus lose their unholy nature. Judging then from scripture and reason, we must conclude, that the promises of a gracious audience and answer to prayer are made, only to a holy and gracious temper.—All other prayer is displeasing in the divine sight, and although it may proceed from much fear and anxiety, is an offering that is impure in the Lord's sight.

Is there then an obligation on sinners to pray? Who can doubt it. Are they less sinful for neglecting his duty, because their hearts are unholy? GOD forbid that this should be their excuse, for it is the very thing that makes them guilty.—The obligation to pray to GOD doth not arise from the hearts of men being either good or evil; but from the fulness, excellence and worthiness of the Lord, and from the relation which his creatures bear to him, and their dependance on his providence and grace. The obligation is on all men, whether they be saints or sinners; and whoever omits his duty is guilty in the divine sight.

CONCERNING the un sanctified, it is true, that whatever they do is sinful. Whether they eat or drink or whatever they do; whether they are in the course of open vice, or in a formal and hypocritical attendance on services visibly religious, they are becoming more unholy, in the judgment of him, who is of purer eyes than to behold any iniquity with approbation.—Further,

the un sanctified do not become more worthy of receiving mercy, by any thing which they do in that state. When awakened sinners resort to prayer, they do it in the expectation, either of its being a perfect compliance with their duty, or that it will make them better, and that God will accept them on account of this betterment. But in this they are deceived through the hardness and blindness of their own hearts. There is no betterment short of real repentance flowing from a holy and regenerate heart.

Is it then as probable, that sinners who live dissipated and prayerless lives, will become the subjects of sanctifying and forgiving grace, as it would be if they attended to prayer and to other religious services, which we commonly call the means of grace? Experience, in the dispensations of providence and grace, hesitates not to answer this question. There is no reason to hope, that the sinner who lives and dies dissipated and prayerless, can be saved: It is also known to be the common dispensation of God to convince sinners that they are slain by the law, before he makes them alive by the gospel. When the terrors of God and his law are spread around them, by the action of his Holy Spirit, they will be serious and deeply solemnized.—Whatever their temper may be, and however unholy, they will read, they will anxiously hear and pray. Fear and terror will drive them anxiously to attend to those external services in religion, which they ought to perform in love, humility and with a holy obedience. By all this God is instructing them—he is giving them a knowledge of himself—of his holy law—and of their own miserable state which they never had before. Their prayers, though not holy but guilty in his sight, do with other means, bring them to see their

lost, impotent and miserable condition, and that they are condemned and must be forever lost, unless God in sovereign mercy forgives. Who ever knew a sinner become penitent, while in the midst of a dissipated course, and without any previous seriousness? They may be arrested in the midst of such a course, but seriousness precedes penitence—conviction precedes sanctification—doctrinal light, of which prayer and reading the word of God are means, precede spiritual light—anxiety precedes comfort and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost and communion with God. Those prayers of unholy sinners, for which they are guilty, are as necessary means of conviction as reading of the law. Still in their prayers they are vile—they are not becoming better or more deserving by them—there is no promise made to them—and it is not these, which change their hearts and take away the reigning power of sin. If they ever come to true repentance, they will mourn and loathe themselves for the temper with which they always supplicated God, until they were changed by his efficacious grace. Enough hath been written, to show with what temper the duty under consideration ought to be performed, to entitle to a gracious promise.

IV. WE are to consider the happy effects that commonly follow a compliance; and the awful consequences of neglecting this duty.

AND as we have been speaking of the prayers of the un sanctified, it may not be unfit, in the first place, to mention the benefits of these. The prayers of the un sanctified, although they are vile and full of sin, and an abomination in the sight of the Lord from the unholiness of their hearts, are notwithstanding, in their case, means of instruction as necessary as reading and hear-

ing the word of God and meditation on divine truth. They are sinful in the use of all these means, and if they continue impenitent and unholy, means will become a favor of death unto death. But to omit them would destroy all consideration, and a hope of amendment would be entirely removed. The unholy prayers of sinners bring God into their view. They are means of fixing their attention upon their own unholy character, temper and practice, by which they learn the opposition that is between God and themselves. They show to them their own spiritual impotence, and that without sovereign and sanctifying grace their hearts will never come right. All this is doctrinal knowledge, in which there is no holiness; but it is a kind of knowledge, which, according to the divine plan, is necessary to be communicated to sinners, and he makes use of their own unholiness to instruct them. It is thus, in innumerable instances, that infinite wisdom makes that, which is in its nature unholy and immoral, the occasion of good in his plan of government. The sin of the wicked, even in their holy things, teaches them that which God wishes them to know before he sanctifies and forgives them to eternal life.

WE will proceed more particularly to consider the good and evil effects which have followed from obeying and disobeying the exhortation, "pray without ceasing."

I. PRAYER makes the being and perfections of God real to the minds of men. While immerged in scenes of sense, which are so agreeable to the unholy heart, there needs some means, which may be in frequent use, to call our meditations to the being, attributes, providence and laws of God. Without such means the unholy will wholly forget the Lord, and even Christians

will grow remiss in their remembrance of him, and be ensnared by sensual and temporal objects. There is no class of men to whom prayer is not useful in this respect. Praying to GOD brings his character into sight—makes his adorable and infinite perfections real to the mind—gives a holy sense of his presence, providence, government, and laws—and quickens an apprehension of our dependance, for all we need and our accountableness in all we do. It must have been observed, by all who consider, that some appear to live as without GOD in the world, and that they go on from one time to another, not considering either his glorious nature, and holiness, nor their own obligation and the consequences of their acting in the world. They live in all respects as though they considered not GOD, and that they must soon die, come before him, and receive a reward. It is scarce possible, if they had attended regularly to the service of prayer, that they could have been so thoughtless of GOD and eternity, and their own speedy destination to everlasting rewards of glory or woe. Also, the children of GOD need the same means to keep alive their sense of divine things. If they do not abound in prayer they will forget the Lord who bought them—grow insensible of their dependance on CHRIST, for strength to live in a holy manner, and become remiss in all the duties of a Godly conversation. Prayer is the most effectual means for bringing GOD's character law and government into the sight of creatures in this world, whether they be his people, or in the number of unforgiven ones, whose hearts are opposed to the truth as it is in CHRIST JESUS.

2. IT is by prayer, that men come to the most just knowledge of their own character and practice.—A knowledge of the law is necessary

for a knowledge of sin. A sight and sense of God and his being, law and government, is a most direct means for knowing ourselves. If prayer leads men to just apprehensions of the divine character, it thus becomes the means of instructing them in their own frailty, weakness, sin, guilt and perfect dependance on the forbearing power and grace of God. While they are wholly engrossed with other things, and God is out of sight, they of course, become insensible of dependance, of moral obligation, of sin, and of that utter deficiency in duty which exposes to eternal death. The things of time swallow them up—the amusements of the world entice them, and even trifles will engage their whole attention. Thus the prayerless are as ignorant of themselves as they be of God, who made, governs and will judge them. Whatever means bring them to see God, do also teach them their own natural character and danger. And it is thus, that the more frequently un sanctified sinners pray, if they are in a serious state of mind, the more sensible they become of their spiritual impotence and guilt, and of their danger and of the wrath of God that abideth on them. Thus, also, Christians are enabled to keep alive a sense of their own remaining imperfection, weakness, sin and dependance on God for their daily supplies of divine grace from him, by which all the Christian exercises are preserved in a lively and comforting exercise. So essential to piety are the means which God hath instituted, that when his people neglect the means, they must expect to lose a sense of their unworthiness, their dependance and need of a continual communication of grace; to preserve them in the humility of the gospel.

PRAYER furnishes continual instruction, in all the doctrines and duties of religion. Hereby the attention of men is fixed on the things, which are most interesting for them to know and feel. As they know more of GOD and of themselves, this opens to their understanding the nature of the moral system, which is approved by infinite wisdom; of the temper and practice, in which true holiness consists; of the need of a gospel of grace; and of the manner, in which sovereign mercy admits sinners to pardon and eternal life, and prepares them for the holy fruition of the heavenly world.—It therefore appears, that this is the most effectual means for awakening sinners, and for building up Christians in their most holy faith. Although the hearts of sinners are opposed to the principles of the kingdom of CHRIST, and they are unholy and guilty in the sight of GOD, for the disposition of heart with which they supplicate him; still it is perhaps impossible, that they should regularly attend to this form of religion, in the several kinds of prayer that have been mentioned, and be so secure as they would be, if all prayer was omitted. Also, the people of GOD will find by experience, that when they are punctual in the duty of the sanctuary, the family and closet, it is a safeguard against worldly intrusions and backsliding, which they can find in no other way.—

3. PRAYER, is the most effectual means, for comforting the people of GOD, as they pass through the wilderness and pilgrimage of human life. The happiness of the saints is in the enjoyment of GOD. It is their pleasure to behold him, to view his perfections and contemplate his glory. The means, which bring him into view, give them the highest delight, which they ever

experience ; and it is thus that prayer promotes their happiness. Retiring from the world, its amusements, labors, and enticing objects, their love is quickened, their faith is increased, and all their graces made active by humbly conversing with their Lord and Redeemer. Also, in seasons of affliction, when nothing but worldly darkness surrounds them, by that converse with God which they find in their closets, their hope and confidence is so far increased, that they fear no evil from what man can do unto them while God is on the throne. In this state of mind, although the world, in all respects looks dark, the divine government appears to be light.—Aided by prayer, their love and faith break through the cloud and they come near to the throne of grace and glory. There is a natural tendency in prayer, considered as means to produce these effects.

4. God hath promised graciously to hear and answer, the prayer of his people. There is both a natural and promised connection, between this duty and the blessings which the people of God need. The Lord heareth the prayer of those, who call upon him with penitence, faith and love. The promises made to them are very many and explicit, and all who have had any considerable experience in the Christian life, can bear witness that God is true to his promises. Although they do not expect any miraculous interposition in their favor, still under the evils which overtake them in the world, if they wait patiently, they often find a wonderful deliverance by God's common providence, through unexpected ways and means, which cannot fail to excite the most adoring apprehensions of his supreme government controlling the hearts of men and all other things.—Or if God be not

pleased to remove the evils which they deprecate, they do notwithstanding find grace imparted by which they are enabled to bear that cheerfully, which in prospect they supposed would be impossible. Those answers to prayer which the children of God can witness by their own experience, give them the most convincing evidence of the institution and its benefits. They can bear a strong testimony, that it is good to call on the name of the Lord, and that he never forsaketh such as cry unto him. Taught by a long experience of his covenant faithfulness, they can commit themselves and their ways to his keeping, and believe that a heavenly state of glorious holiness is to succeed the wilderness of human travel. Further, God is often pleased in the sovereignty of his grace, to make very extraordinary communications of light and peace to the souls of those who abound in prayer. He brings them into his banqueting house, and his banner over them is love. They are filled with joy and rejoicing unspeakable, and though not caught up into the third heavens, they conceive and feel a glory that is unutterable. Such communion with God and sight of his glory, is most commonly granted, in these seasons, which are consecrated to the devotion of prayer and praise. Those, who are accustomed to pray without ceasing, can number such seasons as one of the happy effects of their obedience.

5. IT cannot be unobserved, that there is a favor of piety, or at least a decent regularity of manners, in most instances, spread through those families where the duty of prayer is steadily maintained. Regular family worship hath a powerful effect on all; especially on the minds of the young. If called to this duty—if they hear the parent or master, supplicating the for-

givenness of their sins—acknowledging a providence and commending them to the keeping and grace of the Lord—confessing their daily sins and imploring grace through the mercy of GOD in CHRIST, it cannot fail to confirm in their minds, the testimony of natural conscience and a sense of moral obligation. The powerful effects of a religious education are discovered in many ways; and in such an education prayer is one of the means, which are most commonly and most effectually blessed by the power and grace of GOD. Further, those who are brought up in the custom of family prayer, will most likely pray for themselves. The excuse which is sometimes made for the neglect of family worship, that all may pray for themselves, is a most vain and false one. There is little reason to expect, that secret prayer will be generally used, in any house, where family worship is neglected; nor is there reason to suppose that the favor of piety, or that regular and Christian manners will be found in such places.

To conclude this important subject, if the Lord be a God hearing prayer; if the duty be taught by the dictates of reason; if it be specially and plainly enjoined in the oracles of truth; if thereby the character, laws and government of a holy GOD are brought into the view of men, and they learn their own unholiness, spiritual impotence by nature, and dependance on sovereign grace; if it be a most effectual means of convincing sinners, and of quickening the graces of Christians and of saving them from a back-sliden state; if it be a most blessed means of approaching into the presence of the Lord and receiving the joys of the light of his reconciled countenance; if there be a promise to those, who pray without ceasing, made by him who

never forgets his covenant faithfulness, and prayer be the means of preserving a blessed intercourse between the king of saints and his humble and obedient subjects here on earth : Then those who neglect the duty, have little reason to expect they shall come to a blessed eternity. Until sinners begin to cry unto God, there is no room to hope that their hearts will be changed ; when Christians grow cold and remiss in the duty, we must expect their comforts will be departed, their light will cease to shine, the world and their own hearts hold them in bonds, and their progress heavenward will be wholly stayed.— To what then must prayerless persons and families and nations come ? Surely we need not hesitate to determine, for the Lord hath said, that he will pour out his fury on the families that pray not unto him. If a book of remembrance be kept to reward those, who fear God and speak often one to another and call upon him, then he will also remember the impiety of such, as forget his providence and do not supplicate his grace. May the Lord assist us all to pray without ceasing.—AMEN.

S E R M O N XVIII.

The grace of **GOD** glorified in the general judgment.

2. THESSALONIANS, i. 10.

When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe——.

IN the first of Paul's epistles to the Theſſaloni-
an Church, that he might, in the moſt pow-
erful manner, enforce the doctrines and precepts
of the goſpel, he called them to conſider the laſt
and general judgment, when the whole charac-
ter and conduct of men ſhall be reviewed, and
a reward appointed to every one according to
the deeds done in the body.— His words on this
ſubject are, “ For this we ſay unto you by the
word of the Lord, that we which are alive and
remain unto the coming of the Lord ſhall not
prevent them which are aſleep. For the Lord
himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout,
with the voice of the archangel, and with the
trump of **GOD** : and the dead in **CHRIST** ſhall

rise first : Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so we shall ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and safety ; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief.”—What he wrote on this subject was misunderstood by the Thessalonian Church, as a prediction, that the second appearance of the Son of Man would speedily take place, by which means they were greatly troubled. This was wholly a misapprehension, and to rectify the error, the apostle again considered the subject in his second epistle, and here he says, “ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of CHRIST is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means ; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped.”—The last words, with the continuance of the description in the epistle, are a prediction of the Antichristian hierarchy which hath since arisen, and is now rapidly falling, by the just judgments of God upon a convulsed world. The almighty power, wisdom and justice of God are

making men the executioners of his own wrath upon themselves.

WHILE the primary design of the apostle was to correct those misapprehensions, which have been mentioned; he also gave some description of that great and terrible day of the Lord; of the effects it will produce on the condition of the godly and the ungodly; and of the glory which will accrue to God the Judge, in his grace to the redeemed and his vengeance on the un sanctified.—“When the Lord JESUS shall 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; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”—This passage teacheth us that the primary design of God in coming to judge the world will be the glory of his grace. He will come to be “glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe;” but at the same time, for the honor of his justice, he will punish the wicked with an awful destruction from his presence. While mercy triumphs, justice will be magnified. It will appear that all the perfections of God are dear to him. He will not sacrifice his mercy to his justice; nor will his justice be lost in the abounding of his mercy. The whole character of God will be glorified more than ever, in the day of judgment, and it will appear that mercy and justice do equally belong to the adorable nature, to the unchangeable counsels, and to the wonderful works of the Almighty. It is men who divide the character of the Lord, and set his attributes at variance, according as their pas-

sions or interests are favored by the misconceptions of sin ; but in the day, when he shall come to justify himself in the congregation of all his creatures, it will appear that “ justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and that mercy and truth go before him.”—It will appear that justice hath done nothing, but what mercy approves ; and that mercy and justice have in all instances, met and embraced each other.—Our text is particularly descriptive of the triumphs of grace and mercy, in the complete redemption of his people, “ When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.”—The triumphs of mercy and grace will be the highest glory of God, in that great and important day.

WE will particularly consider some things that will clearly appear in the day of the Lord, and make his grace and mercy wonderfully glorious, when his saints are completely redeemed and glorified in his presence.

1. IT will then appear, that his choice of them to a final and glorious salvation, was wholly the fruit and effect of sovereign grace and mercy.

ALTHOUGH there be now full and complete evidence of the total depravity of men, and that there is nothing in them which can invite divine grace ; still, this truth will be greatly illustrated when the Lord comes to judge and reward the world. The evidence of a fatal and total depravity, in all generations, will be brought into one collected view, even to the astonishment of those, who have always believed in this humiliating doctrine. It will then appear, that there was never any thing in apostate human nature, which could invite the grace and mercy of God ; that in foresight of human sin, he could see nothing but “ evil, evil only and that

continually ;” a heart all evil and without any right and holy intentions ; and a practice wholly the effect of sinful motives and desires. Then it will appear, that the most regular actions of un sanctified human nature, proceeded from motives, which would not bear the scrutiny of a holy law—that all was selfish and opposed to a holy rule of duty—all wrong in the sight of a most benevolent lawgiver and judge—and all subject to the penalty of eternal death. In foresight of such a character as this, it could be only free, sovereign and unmerited grace and mercy, that chose any to eternal life ; and the sovereign mercy of GOD will be glorified and his grace admired in appointing such to endless glory.

FURTHER, the same truth will be illustrated, in that day, from a new and more extensive sight of the nature of sinful principles, than could ever be had before.—It will then appear, that it was a particular restraint of divine providence on men, who were possessed of unholy principles, which prevented them from abounding in visible iniquity far more than they have done ; and that if they had been left to themselves, without any particular restraint, they would in a state of trial here, have showed more ample evidence of the evil nature of sinful principles, and of the awful effects which would follow unrestrained unholiness. When all this appears, as it will at the final, glorious day, GOD will be glorified and admired in bringing such sinners to a complete and glorious redemption from the awful consequences of their apostacy. The electing love of GOD will be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe.

2. THE grace of GOD will be glorified and admired in the gift and provision of a Saviour, who is able to deliver to the uttermost all those

who put their trust in him.—The provision of infinite wisdom and mercy, in the gift of such a Saviour as we have received in the gospel, do now clearly appear to the glory of a sovereign God ; but the greatness of the gift and the richness of the mercy, cannot now be so brightly seen as they will be in the day of the Lord. Then it will be known in what the heavenly glory, to which sinners are called, doth consist.—Then the infinite evil of sin will be seen more brightly than ever before.—Then the misery from which mercy hath rescued guilty transgressors, who have come to repentance, will be gloriously manifested by the pains of destruction which come on the ungodly. These things will clearly show the riches of divine mercy, and God will be glorified with new feelings of admiration, for the gift of a Saviour and the richness of the gospel provision.

3. IN that day, the glory of the divine Spirit in awakening and sanctifying sinners, will be seen and admired by all the saints of God.—It is as great a work of God to bring sinners to a holy obedience ; as it was to atone for their sins and reconcile the divine righteousness to their restoration.—Those who have not become experimentally pious, do generally overlook the great work of God in reclaiming sinners to evangelical obedience. If they believe the gospel, and suppose it to be, in some way, necessary for the salvation of the guilty ; still, as they are unacquainted with the nature of a holy life, and with their own opposition to the true kingdom of CHRIST, they conceive nothing of that divine efficiency, which is necessary to bring men to evangelical obedience. It is a great and wonderful work of God, which brings sinners into the kingdom of his son. When his dispensations

to awaken and convince and humble finners ; and the power of the Spirit sanctifying them, while they were wholly alienated from their duty, and from the terms of salvation, are brought into a collective view, he will be greatly glorified and admired, in effectually calling his redeemed sons to glory. To see how their hearts were opposed to all holiness in the character of God, in his law, in his government and even in the gospel manner of salvation ; to see how they resisted the dictates of reason, the calls of providence, the admonitions of conscience, the instructions of the word, and the divine actings of the blessed Spirit ; to see how God long bore with them, passing by their ingratitude and rebellion, and still repeating the evidence of truth and the invitation to mercy ; to see how they were becoming more sinful under all their awakenings, sinking deeper into the miry clay, and making it more necessary there should be an act of almighty efficiency to save them ; and then to see how infinite goodness interposed by creating them anew, and working faith in them by an almighty power : The sight of these things will cause the Lord to appear more glorious in their effectual calling than he ever did before.

4. THE power and grace of God will be glorified, when it is seen how he caused his saints to persevere unto eternal life. The perseverance of those, who are once effectually called, is made certain by the promise of God ; but still their continuance in his favor is to be wholly ascribed to his own efficiency. As he first called, so he effectually assists them to persevere ; and the labor of divine grace, in assisting them through the Christian trial, will cause the love of God to be greatly admired.—Through how many scenes of temptation have they been protected !—how

often have they been preserved from the torrent of rising corruptions in their own hearts!—from how many backslidings have they been reclaimed, when satan, who desired to have them that he might sift them as wheat, seemed nearly to have gained his purpose!—how frequently have they been saved by the fresh drawings of divine grace on their souls, when they neither watched nor prayed, and were not faithful to go to CHRIST for preserving their strength!—Christians know something of this by their experience here, and can look back with wonder on the multitude of means and special influences from on high, by which they have been kept from a total declension. Sometimes GOD hath called them by mercies, and often checked them by afflictions; and in innumerable instances interposed to save them from the destroyer. But when all the members of the glorious body are collected, and it appears how the Holy Spirit and providence of GOD have been acting, to remove the remaining sin of his people, to keep them near to GOD in the exercises of a holy life, and sanctify them to a meet preparation for the heavenly inheritance, the Lord will be greatly glorified and admired in bringing his children to their eternal rest of purity, peace and glory.

5. GOD will be glorified and admired in preserving his people through all the evils which they meet from the world and their spiritual enemies. CHRIST hath told his disciples, “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”—He also hath said, “the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”—The true followers of JESUS CHRIST have enemies within and without and all around them. In covenant faithfulness,

GOD often calls them into afflictions, appointed and executed by his immediate providence, whereby it appears, in the sight of an unholy world, as though they were entirely forsaken by the Lord in whom they profess to hope.—But by such scenes he intends their good, even to wean them from the world and from sin; and when they seem to be sinking under the weight of trouble and opposition, he alleviates their trials, gives them strength to endure, and brings light out of darkness. How often hath the arm of the Lord been made bare to succor his afflicted saints and preserve the general interests of his kingdom, at the very seasons, when the enemies of his truth supposed themselves to be triumphing! A general view of his gracious care over his Church and people, from the beginning; a sight of the many providential interpositions by which they have been saved; and of the succours of his grace, strengthening their minds to resist and overcome temptation, will bring great glory to the riches of his grace.

6. GOD will be glorified and admired in the perfection and beauty of holiness and happiness, that will then appear in his redeemed Church. The descriptions of heavenly glory, holiness and peace, are the most exalted conceivable. All sin and sorrow and death will be removed—all darkness and ignorance done away—the understanding improved to high perfection—the natural faculties all enobled and spiritualized—the whole soul made holy as GOD is holy—and filled with a sight and love of his glorious being. Then will be seen the nature and effects of benevolence, as they had never been conceived by creatures until taught by the sight and feelings of the heavenly Church.—

There will be collected an immense number of redeemed minds, glorious in holiness, glorious in their inseparable connection with JESUS CHRIST, their eternal and infinite head, glorious in their employments, their praise, their worship and in their communion with GOD himself and their brethren. When it is seen how divine power and grace hath formed so blessed and glorious a body, from among the guilty children of men, who were all vile and deserving of eternal death, the Lord will indeed appear to be glorified in his saints and admired in them that believe. There all the perfections and sufficiency of GOD and the Redeemer, will shine forth in most rich display. The fulness of his power, the plenteousness of his grace, and the riches of his wisdom and his truth will appear great beyond all description. It will then be confessed, that redemption is the greatest of all GOD's works, which are made known to the children of men; and that he appears more glorious in holiness, more fearful in praises, and more wonderful in working when he redeems, than when he did create. Convincing evidence will be exhibited, that the design of infinite wisdom and love in creating the world and in placing man upon it, was to prepare the way for that higher and more glorious exhibition of himself, which is made by redeeming sinners from the pains of eternal death and bringing them to the glory and happiness of heaven. The scriptures, every where, represent the highest declarative glory of GOD to consist in the formation, the spiritual beauty and purity, and the blessedness of his Church.—He will be glorified in the eternal counsels of redemption—in the divine character of the Redeemer—in the application of spiritual blessings—and in the guidance of his Church through the wilderness

of sin and human life, and in bringing them to a Canaan of holiness and glory; also, in perfectly preparing them to be heavenly in their character and enjoyments. In view of these gracious events, which will be most brightly displayed in the day of judgment, the counsels, grace and efficiency of the Godhead will be eternally admired; and higher praise will be given to God for redemption, than for any of his other works, which have come to the present knowledge of creatures.

7. THE Lord will be glorified in his saints and admired in them that believe, through an endless eternity.—Their glory and happiness shall be without end. Although the knowledge and holiness of the Church, will then be perfected, this will never prevent an ever growing increase of heavenly qualities and enjoyments.—The intellects of the glorious saints will increase forever—they will become more capable of beholding and adoring God—new scenes of his eternal counsel and works will open to their knowledge, and heaven which begins in perfection will progress in glory for ever and ever. “God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS: that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through CHRIST JESUS.”

BUT while we consider the triumphant display of mercy and grace, which will be made in the day of the Lord, by the promised perfection, blessedness and glory of his people, we ought not to overlook the awful exhibition of his justice, which will also take place at that time.

THE Lord will have a threefold purpose in coming to judge the world ; to glorify himself, to reward his saints with eternal excellency, and to punish the ungodly for their impenitence and rebellion. This is also expressed in the verses before the text, “ When the Lord JESUS shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that knew 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.”—Sundry awful circumstances are marked in this description.—It will be the day of the Lord’s vengeance. How awful is the vengeance of Omnipotence ! the vengeance of him who created and governs all nature ! of him who is governed by an infinite love of the universe, and in all his government will do nothing but what is consistent with the most perfect benevolence ! Such vengeance will always be executed with right reason and be approved by all good beings.

THIS vengeance is to be executed on them “ that know not GOD, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.”—Obedience to the gospel of our Lord JESUS CHRIST is represented as the terms of acceptance in the day of the Lord. None will be accepted, but those who have exercised repentance towards GOD, through the gospel, and faith in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. All mere moralists, and all who deny the experimental power of divine grace in the heart, will in that day be rejected, on the ground that they have not obeyed the gospel of CHRIST. Their formality in duty, and their want of a saving faith, and an evangelical temper will show that they are not reconciled to GOD, to his law or to his government ; and that their hearts are

in a most unfit state for enjoying the holy blessedness of the kingdom of heaven. It is a most unreasonable thing in sinful men to expect the benefits of redemption, when their hearts are not reconciled to that scheme of evangelical holiness, which is published in the gospel of grace. In all such cases, they are exposed to an utter rejection by him, who will judge and pass a sentence on men, according to the gospel, which requires holy and humble sincerity.—All such are to be punished “with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.”—The punishment is an awful one. The destruction is to be everlasting. A ruin without decrease, cessation or end—a ruin, which once beginning must ever continue for the glory of divine justice, and to serve as a testimony, that the soul of the Lord hateth sin and will never dispense with his law and its penalties where men refuse their obedience to the gospel of his grace. It becomes those, who reject divine grace, to consider what it will be to endure an everlasting punishment.—The description also points out an ingredient of the punishment of the wicked. They shall be driven from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. This means from such a sense of his presence and glory, as will give the highest happiness to his obedient creatures. The presence of God and a consciousness of being near to him will be a principal ingredient in the reward of the saints; but to the disobedient the sight of his holiness must be painful, and by the temper which they possess they will be cut off from all beatific views of his excellency. In addition to their pain in sight of divine holiness, there will be an infused sense of his displeasure driving them from the nearness of communion and

peace. To be cut off from the friendship and pleasing sight of God's glory and lie under an everlasting sense of his displeasure, must constitute a misery that is inconceivable; and to have hope excluded, will complete the sinner's misery. It is thus that sin will terminate, when the day of divine patience is passed. In this world, the wheat and the tares must grow together; but in the day of judgment they will be separated, for the Lord will gather the wheat into his garner, while the tares are gathered into bundles to be burned.

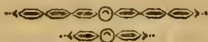
“LET US hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear GOD and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For GOD shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”—The end of all human travel is to die and go to judgment. In the warfare of death there is no discharge; and by this change, the poor man shall be called away from the miserable scene in which he hath walked; the afflicted and the pained, from the pains and afflictions of earth; the rich man, from the affluence in which he glories; and the honorable man from all his titles in Church and state; and they shall alike lie, helpless and dying, in immediate prospect of being ushered into eternity. “But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of the world passeth away.” It remaineth, that all

must come to the judgment seat of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, where the weak and the powerful; the poor and the rich; the ignoble and the honorable will meet together and be judged and rewarded with an impartiality that hath not been seen on earth.—There the writer will meet with those who read, and it will be known what is consistent with truth; and should there be any reviewer of these sheets, who is more intent to find elegance of writing than the plain, unadorned and humble doctrines and practice of the gospel, he also will be there, and will find that the laws of a vain and proud criticism, are not the laws by which an Omniscient and holy Judge, will invite some to a heaven of glory, and sentence others to a hell of everlasting sin and woe.

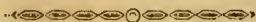
How circumspect we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness! If every idle word is to be brought into judgment, how watchful we ought to be over our lips! “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

ALL that God is now doing hath reference to that great day. Then the secret things of every heart shall be manifested, and a judgment passed and a sentence pronounced in infinite righteousness on every creature. In every one who exists, God will either be glorified and admired, or they will be punished with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. O how solemn, how interesting the thought! how great the

destiny of every soul which lives, either to be an inhabitant of heaven or of hell forever ! Indeed we should give all diligence that we may be found of the Lord in peace “ Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise GOD, be honor and glory forever and ever. AMEN.”



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