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SERMON CCXXXII.

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JOSHUA'S RESOLUTION.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

THIS was the resolution of Joshua, the ruler of Israel. He was one of the multitude, who, under Moses their leader, had, by the strong hand of the Lord, been delivered from Egyptian bondage. He had spent forty years in the wilderness, on the journey from Egypt to Canaan; and was one of the only two of the whole multitude who were adults when they came out of Egypt, who were permitted to enter the promised land. On the death of Moses, he had succeeded by divine appointment, to the supreme authority in the nation. He had conducted the tribes of Israel, through Jordan, into Canaan; had led their armies to battle and to victory; and had put them in possession of the promised land.

The nation of Israel had now been in peaceable possession of the land of Canaan, several years; and Joshua had become old, and knew that according to the course of nature, the time of his death was near. Anxious with his latest life to glorify God, and promote the interests of the people, over whom he had presided, he gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and there addressed them.

In this address he briefly recited God's gracious dealings with them, beginning with the call of Abraham, and carrying them through their history, down to the time when he addressed them. He then applied his address, by exhorting them to fear and serve the Lord, who had thus

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graciously dealt with them as a people. And he urged them to an immediate decision, whether they would serve the Lord or not. "Choose ye (said he) this day whom ye will serve." He then told them what his resolution was—a resolution which he had doubtless formed many years before, and according to which he had, through a long life, acted. This resolution we have in our text—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Whatever others might do, this was his resolution.

This was a most noble and blessed resolution. And O, that every individual in this assembly would make it for himself! And that every head of a family would make it in behalf of his family! We should then be, indeed, a blessed congregation.

In speaking from the text, I will—

I. Explain the resolution.

II. Offer reasons to enforce it.

I. I would explain the resolution—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The resolution, you perceive, is two-fold. Joshua resolved that he himself, personally, would serve the Lord; and then that his family also should serve him. The amount of his resolution was, that he would maintain both personal and family religion. It will be proper to consider each of these branches of the resolution separately.

(1.) Consider it in regard to personal religion. "As for me I will serve the Lord." What is it truly to serve the Lord? I answer—

1. If we would personally serve the Lord, we must become *reconciled* to him. Mankind, in their natural state, are alienated from God. They do not approve of his character, law, government, and plan of salvation. On the contrary, they dislike them, and are opposed to them. As we read Rom. ix. 7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence, if we would truly serve the Lord, it is evident, we must become reconciled to him. This native enmity, and opposition, and dislike, must be given up; and the contrary feelings towards God must be exercised and cherished in our souls. He searches the heart and requires the heart in all our services, and common sense teaches that we cannot acceptably serve him, unless our hearts are right with him, unless they become reconciled to him, which they are not, in their natural state. And agreeably to this we are often exhorted in the Scriptures to "be reconciled to God;" the ministry of the gospel is called "the ministry of reconciliation;" the great business of ministers is sometimes summed up, in instrumentally reconciling sinners to God; and God's people, of whom it is said,

that they were sometimes alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works, are described as reconciled to God. This is the commencement of religion in their souls. Hence, my hearers, if you would truly serve the Lord, you must first become reconciled to him—to his character, law, government, and plan of salvation, so as to approve of them.

2. If we would personally form the resolution in the text—"As for me—I will serve the Lord;" and practically execute it, we must *repent* of our sins. We must be sensible that we are sinners; feel that sin is an evil thing; condemn ourselves for it; be sorry for it, and mourn over it; and forsake our sins with hatred of them, and turn from them to God. Such repentance is essential to the real service of God. This the nature of things teaches; for if we have been in a state of alienation from God, and rebellion against him, it is not possible, that we can heartily engage in his service and pursue in our feelings and conduct a directly opposite course, without condemning our former feelings and conduct, and exercising sorrow for them; or repenting of our sins. And that repentance is essential to the service of God is explicitly taught in his word, where sinners are often exhorted to repent; and remission is connected with repentance; and God commands all men every where to repent; and it is declared "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

3. The personal service of the Lord includes *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. "This," said our Savior when he was upon earth—"this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." "Without faith it is impossible to please him"—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." There is no acceptable return to God whom we have offended, but through Christ as mediator—Christ is the way; "no man cometh to the Father but by him." It is through his righteousness alone that we can obtain the forgiveness of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons and services. And it is by faith alone that we can obtain an interest in this righteousness. This faith in Christ, which makes a part of the acceptable service of God, implies a conviction of sin and ruin, and utter helplessness. Under this conviction the person exercising true faith, believes that Christ alone can save him, and that he is able and willing to do for him what he needs; and renouncing every other dependence, and approving of the plan of salvation through Christ, he cordially receives him as he is offered in the gospel, for the pardon of his sins, and the acceptance of his person and services, in the sight of God. This is a very important

and fundamental article, in all true and acceptable service of the Lord. It doubtless made a part of Joshua's service. For religion was substantially the same under the Old Testament dispensation, as it is under the New. The saints of that period, through prophecies, and promises, and types, were led to believe in a Savior to come, and relied on his merits for pardon, and the acceptance of their persons and services. By faith Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice. Noah was heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced; he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. And in Habakkuk we read—"the just shall live by faith." Faith was doubtless a part of Joshua's service; and it is still an essential part of all acceptable service of the Lord.

4. Another essential part of the service of the Lord is *love* to him. This reason teaches; for even men, if they could know the heart, would not approve of professions of service, where love was wanting: and much less will the heart searching God whom we are under infinite obligations to love. Besides, God, in his word, repeatedly and explicitly requires that we should love him. God demands, "My son, give me thine heart." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." He teaches us that the faith which is acceptable "works by love;" and that "love is the fulfilling of the law." And he has made many promises to those who love him; and has denounced threatenings against those who do not. Love to God then, is essential to the true service of him. This love to be genuine and acceptable, must be supreme. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind." And our Savior says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." And again, he says, "If any man come to me, and hate not (that is comparatively) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

5. In the service of the Lord is included *obedience* to all his commandments. And indeed this is the main and great point, and is emphatically the service itself. The other things we have considered relate to a right state of mind. This is the conduct proceeding from such a state of mind. Obedience is the necessary fruit of genuine reconciliation to God, repentance, faith, and love. If we are reconciled to God, so as to approve of his law, and delight in it, this approbation and delight will lead to uniform obedience. If we repent of our sins, in genuine re-

penitance is included turning unto God, or obedience; it is breaking off our sins by righteousness, or obedience. If we believe in Christ, while we depend on him alone for the acceptance of our services, we shall be "careful to maintain good works;" for "Christ is not the minister of sin." He is called Jesus because "He saves his people from their sins;" "he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works"—and "faith without works is dead." It is not genuine. And if we truly love God, this love will constrain us to cheerful obedience. Obedience necessarily results from the state of mind, which has been shown to belong to the servants of God. And it is implied in the very word, *serve*, in our text. For what is service to any one but obedience to his directions or commands? Besides, the Lord in his word, tells us that "he that *doeth* righteousness is righteous;"—that "they who *do* his will, shall enter into his kingdom;"—and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

This obedience to be genuine must be *sincere*, must flow from the heart, and be performed from love to God, and with a single eye to his glory, as the ultimate end. It must be *universal*, extending to all the commandments of God. The real servant of God does not select this and that command; and resolve that he will observe them, while he excuses himself from others more self-denying and difficult; but the language of his heart is that of the Israelites when they covenanted with the Lord at Sinai—"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." While he comes short of perfect obedience to any of God's commandments, and mourns over his imperfections; he sincerely endeavors to obey the whole. And his obedience is not a mere transitory thing; but he endeavors *habitually*, in all circumstances, to render it; and he *perseveres* in it through life.

The commandments of the Lord are contained in his word. This the servant of the Lord reads and searches, to know what is the will of the heavenly Master he has resolved to serve. And agreeably to his will made known in his word, he worships him in all the ordinances of his appointment—in the closet, the family and the sanctuary; he endeavors to promote his kingdom and glory in the world; he renders to all their due: and is merciful to those who need his pity; and he governs and keeps under his own passions, denying himself what God forbids; and cherishing and exercising habitually the graces of the Spirit. In short, he endeavors to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Whether these commandments relate to the duties he

owes immediately to his God, to his fellow men in the several relations of life, or to himself.

6. Once more under this head, I remark, that, fully to do our duty in serving the Lord, we must publicly avow before the world that we are his servants, and acknowledge him to be our Master. Or in other words, it is our duty to make a profession of religion, by coming to the ordinance which Christ has instituted to be the public badge of discipleship—I mean the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. This duty is taught by the command of Christ, "Do this in remembrance of me"—This is expressed as imperatively as any other duty taught in the Bible—and as we have seen that the servant of the Lord has respect to all his commandments, he will of course have respect to this as well as others. And there are reasons which make this command peculiarly binding. But, I proceed—

(2.) To consider the other branch of the resolution.—This relates to *family religion*. Joshua resolved not only that *he* would serve the Lord; but also that his *family* should serve him. "As for me, and *my house*, we will serve the Lord." A similar resolution ought every head of a family to form and execute, in regard to his house. What is the import of this resolution, "As for—my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua must have meant that he was resolved to maintain family religion; that the members of his family should unite with him, externally at least, in the service of the Lord; and that he would do his duty towards them, in endeavoring to bring them heartily and truly to engage in this service. And this is the import of this part of the resolution. Daily, morning and evening, the head of a family ought to collect *all* his household together, and lead them in worship at the throne of grace, acknowledging their dependence on God, as a family, and as individuals, confessing their sins, thanking him for his mercies, and asking for needed blessings on themselves and others. This family prayer ought to be accompanied with the daily reading of the word of God; and singing his praises may also very properly be added.

Again, if we would make the resolution in our text, that our house should serve the Lord, and faithfully execute it, it becomes us to *instruct* those under our care, in the things of religion. We ought to lead them into a knowledge of the character of God, the relations they sustain to him, and their obligations to serve him; their sinfulness and guilt, and just exposure to the divine wrath; the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; and the nature and necessity of a new heart, faith in Christ, repentance, love and obedience. These and other great truths of revealed

religion, they who would have their house serve the Lord, must often speak of to the members of their families, and inculcate upon their practical attention. And they ought to use their counsel, their influence, and when necessary, what authority they may possess, to bring them according to their age, and circumstances, under the instruction of others, as in the Sabbath School, the Bible class and the public Sanctuary.

Again, the resolution in the text that our house shall serve the Lord, makes it the duty of heads of families, who would faithfully execute the resolution, to *restrain* their children, and other members of their families, from such company, and places, and practices, as may be dangerous to their religious interests. This they should do by guarding them against the danger; and when they see them running into danger, by reproof—and when these fail to produce the desired effect to keep them from evil associations and practices, heads of families, should exercise what authority they possess, according to the relation they sustain to the respective members of their families, to restrain them. The neglect of duty in this respect, is one great reason why our streets are filled, and especially on the Sabbath, with so many youth, who are ruining themselves and one another, and are growing up to be curses to their parents and friends, pests of society, and eventually to people the world of wo.

Further, in the resolution of our text in regard to our households, is included the duty of setting before them a good *example*. Example has a powerful influence, especially on the young. Good example itself is a powerful means of grace, and has often been blessed of God to the saving good of those who have been favored with its influence; and it is calculated to give effect to the instructions, counsels, restraints, and authority of heads of families; while, if heads of families are not careful in their example before their children and domestics, the other means they use with them for their spiritual good, will have little or no effect.

Once more, if heads of families would perform the duty, included in the resolution, that their house shall serve the Lord, it becomes them to pray for their families, not only with them, but in their secret devotions. We cannot give our families grace—we cannot bring them heartily and practically to resolve for themselves, that they will serve the Lord.—We can only use the means, which God hath appointed.—He must give the increase. This we ought to feel; and under a sense of dependence, often look to God for grace to be faithful in the discharge of duty to our families; and for his blessing to attend our efforts for their

good, and that he would effectually incline their hearts to engage truly in his service.

Thus Joshua doubtless acted in regard to his family.—He doubtless maintained the worship of God in his house, and required the attendance of his family; he instructed them in the things of religion, and brought them under the public means of God's appointment: he restrained them from dangerous associations and practices; he enforced the other means he used with them, by his example, and he looked up to God in prayer for his blessing upon his efforts—and thus it is the obvious duty of every head of a family to act.

SERMON CCXXXIII.

JOSHUA XXIV. 15. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

MY object in this discourse will be to offer reasons to enforce the duty of serving the Lord *ourselves*, and with our *families*. And in doing this it will be proper to present the reasons enforcing each branch of the duty separately. And—

I. As it regards *personal religion*. Why should each one of you, my hearers, who have not already done it, make and execute the resolution, "As for me I will serve the Lord?" I answer—

1. This service is *reasonable*. This appears from the supreme excellence of God, and from the relations we sustain to him. God is a being of infinite excellence. He possesses every possible perfection, in the highest possible degree. He is from everlasting to everlasting, every where present, omniscient, infinite in wisdom, almighty in power, spotless in purity, inflexibly just, unchangeably true, and love itself. All his attributes are summed up in this one short sentence, "*God is love*"—and his law and governments are like himself, infinitely perfect. Is it not reasonable that such a God should be served by all his intelligent creatures, and therefore by each of us? Consider what this ser-

vices is, as it has been described in the preceding discourse; then consult unbiassed reason, and say, ought not this God to be served? The commencement of the service he requires is, that you should be reconciled to him; and ought you not to be reconciled to such a Being? ought you not to approve of such an infinitely excellent character, and of the government, and laws of such a Being? In his service is included repentance of sin. And must not sin which is opposed to such a Being, which is rebellion against his government, and a transgression of his righteous laws, be wrong? And if wrong, ought we not to repent of it? Another part of this service, as we have seen, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons and services. This is God's plan for saving sinners of our race; and from the perfection of his character we ought to conclude his plan to be wise, and righteous, and therefore we ought to return to him in this way. It is a plan which illustrates and glorifies his perfections, and magnifies and honors his law: and therefore it is reasonable that we should practically approve of it. It is reasonable that we should believe what a God of perfect truth has revealed; and since he has been pleased to open a way of mercy, for sinners who justly deserved his eternal wrath, without an offer of mercy on any terms, it is reasonable that we should return to him through the Mediator he has provided, and revealed, relying on his merits for the pardon of our sins and the acceptance of our persons and services.

Another part of this service is supreme love to him. And if God be infinitely excellent, I appeal to the reason of every person, if he ought not to be supremely esteemed and loved. Again, his government, from the very perfection of his nature, must be wise and righteous and benevolent; and the same must be the character of his laws; and if so, his government surely ought to be cheerfully submitted to, and his laws obeyed. Thus the excellence of the divine character shows the reasonableness of this service. If God be infinitely excellent, it is unquestionably reasonable that he should be served by us; or as this service has been explained, that we should be reconciled to him, repent of our sins against him, receive and rely upon the Mediator he has appointed for our pardon and acceptance, love him supremely, and obey all his commandments; and if this is reasonable, it is equally reasonable that we should acknowledge before the world, that we do thus serve and honor him.

The reasonableness of this service will further appear, and must commend itself to the judgment and conscience of every enlightened

and unprejudiced person, if we consider the relations which God sustains to us. He is our Creator, we derived from him our being and all the powers and faculties we possess ; and he made us for himself, for his own glory. He has therefore an absolute property in us ; and has an unquestionable right to demand our service as he has done : and it is infinitely reasonable that we should render it. He is also our Preserver. In him we live, and move, and have our being. He sustains the being which he at first gave us ; and we could no more sustain ourselves in being, than we could at first give it. For every breath we draw, we are dependent on God ; and if so, I appeal to every person, if it is not reasonable that we should serve him. God is also our Benefactor. All our temporal comforts have come originally from him. Every good and perfect gift cometh down from him, the Father of lights—Second causes or means, have been instrumental in producing these good things ; but God is the great first cause, without whom these means would have proved unavailing. Consider then your temporal blessings, and see how good the Lord has been to you ; and while you consider your blessings, keep in mind that they have been conferred upon you by the Lord, while you were sinning against him, and provoking his displeasure. You have received blessings from the Lord, yearly, monthly, daily, and continually. You have received numerous blessings from him, in infancy, in childhood, in youth, in manhood, and in declining age. You have received many blessings at his hands, as individuals, as families, and as members of a civil community. Were your parents preserved to take care of you, in your infancy and childhood ? The Lord preserved them. When you have been sick, the Lord has blessed the means, and healed your sicknesses. To the Lord you are indebted for food and raiment, and prosperity in business ; and to his kind providence you owe your civil liberty, and all your other numerous temporal blessings. Do not these numerous blessings which you have received, and are continually receiving, lay you under great and indispensable obligations to serve the Lord ?

The Lord also sustains to you the relation of Redeemer. Our race had ruined themselves by sin. Mankind had universally rebelled against God, and transgressed his laws, and had thus incurred the sentence of condemnation—eternal death. They had also lost his image, and become altogether depraved, and unfit for the enjoyment of holy happiness. In this condition, when they all deserved to be forever banished from his presence, and made miserable, he was pleased in infinite mercy to

provide salvation for them. At an infinite price he opened for them a way of redemption from sin and ruin. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." In this ruin were we, and for us was this redemption provided. To provide it, the infinite Son of God became incarnate, was made under the law, perfectly fulfilled it, and after having passed through a life of deep humiliation, privation, and sufferings, laid down his life, under agonies undescrivable, an offering to make atonement for sin, and to ransom the souls of ruined sinners. My hearers, can you contemplate the love of God in Christ, and not admit that you are under infinite obligations to serve him? Can you look at the humiliation and sufferings of Christ to open a way of salvation for you, and yet withhold your hearts from him? yet refuse practically to take up the resolution in the text, "As for me I will serve the Lord?" Surely that heart must be hard indeed, that can thus refuse. I appeal to every individual in this assembly, is it not reasonable,—and infinitely reasonable, that you should be grateful to him who has done so much for you? and that you should give your hearts to him, who gave his heart's blood for you, and to whose love, and sufferings you are entirely indebted, that you are now out of hell, and are prisoners of hope, and enjoy the bounties of God's providence? In view of what Christ has done and suffered to purchase salvation, I appeal to every person, if it is not a reasonable and indispensable duty to take up and execute the resolution of the text, "As for me, I will serve the Lord"—

This salvation, thus expensively provided, God has, in distinguishing mercy, revealed and offered to you. And herein he has highly distinguished you above far the greater part of our world, who are left in Pagan darkness. He has given you his revealed word, a preached gospel, Sabbaths, and sanctuaries, and numerous means of grace. And in regard to means and privileges, the Lord has exalted you, not only above the heathen, but also above the greater part of Christendom. Surely, my hearers, the great and distinguishing goodness of God to you, in a spiritual respect, imposes great, and indispensable, and peculiar obligations on you, to serve him. The service of God is a reasonable service. He is infinitely excellent, and therefore worthy of your service; and he is your Creator, preserver, benefactor, and redeemer; and therefore you are under immeasurable obligations to serve him. Let the reasonableness of the duty then operate upon every one of you and influence you to make and execute the resolution in the text—"As for me, I will serve the Lord."

2. Another argument I would present to enforce the duty is—this service is *honorable*. I know a different opinion has extensively prevailed in the world, and at this day prevails in the minds of many. Many feel that it would be degrading to them to become the humble servants of God; and especially to acknowledge him before the world. They are ashamed of the cross of Christ. But such are ashamed of what would really be their highest honor, and their greatest glory. Permit me to reason on this point a little. Is it not really honorable to do what is right, and dishonorable to do that which is wrong? Every rational being who feels right must answer in the affirmative. And if any answer otherwise, it must be because their hearts are depraved, and their minds perverted, and they themselves morally degraded. To decide the real course of honor then, we must decide the course of right. And is it not right to serve the Lord? This must be settled, by what has already been said, on the reasonableness of the duty. And if it is right, it is honorable, and the contrary is really dishonorable and degrading.

Further, is it not considered honorable among men to be connected with the great ones of the earth? to be placed in high offices, to possess riches, and to be heir to large estates, and have the fair prospect of increasing wealth and power? Now the servant of God, is at the same time a child of the King of kings; he is constituted by his heavenly Father a king and priest. He is rich, for he has now such a property in every thing as is best calculated to promote his happiness. "All things"—says the apostle addressing Christians—"all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." And they are heirs, and have a sure title to an inheritance, and to honors, far superior to any which this world can give. Surely it is highly honorable, and really the highest glory we can attain to in this world, to be a servant of God. And such has it been esteemed by some of the greatest men, as to intellect, knowledge, wealth, power and influence, in the several ages and countries in which they lived.

3. Another reason I would offer to enforce the duty is, this service is *profitable*. It is profitable in this world, in death, and in the world to come. In keeping the commandments of the Lord, there is great reward. There is more happiness to be found in this world in serving God, than in neglecting his service. This is the testimony of God in his word; where we read—"wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness; and all her paths are peace," and, "godliness is profitable unto

all things ; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And this testimony of the word of God is confirmed by Christian experience. Every real servant of God will testify that there is more happiness to be found in the service of the Lord, than in the service of sin. And their testimony ought to have weight ; for they have tried both ; and are best qualified from experience to form a correct judgment.

They who serve the Lord have their sins all pardoned, they are delivered from condemnation, God is reconciled to them, and is their friend and Father. They are entitled to peace of mind—a peace which Jesus gives, and which the world can neither give nor take away ; to joy in the Holy Ghost ; to hope of glory ; to an interest in the numerous and exceedingly great and precious promises of the word of God ; to delight in the divine ordinances ; to support under afflictions ; and to communion with God. These blessings all the servants of God, in a greater or less degree, experience in this world ; and they afford present happiness altogether superior to what the things of the world can give.

And when we come to die, which will be most profitable then,—religion, or the world and sin ? There can be no hesitation as to the answer. Religion has supported and comforted multitudes on the bed of death, and made them tranquil and even joyful ; while multitudes destitute of it have then been filled with sorrow and remorse, and have died with dreadful forebodings of the future. Multitudes have deeply regretted when they came to die, that they had neglected the service of God ; but the world is challenged to produce an instance where a person when he came to die, regretted that he had chosen the service of the Lord, or that he chose it too early. Brethren, we must all die, and it is a solemn business to die ; and we shall then especially need something to support and comfort us ; and this event is at farthest, near ; and it may be very near. Is it not wise then, heartily to engage in the service of God, that you may have the supports and comforts of religion in the solemn hour of death, to which you must all soon come ?

But there is also another state of existence—there is another world to which we are all bound, and where we shall all shortly be ; and our condition there will be happy or miserable, according as we have here served God, or served him not. They who truly serve God here, shall there receive a glorious reward. They shall be admitted into heaven. There they shall be in perfect holiness and happiness ; receive a king-

dom which cannot be removed ; wear a crown of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; possess an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ; be associated with holy angels, and with the spirits of the just made perfect ; have fullness of joy ; be admitted to the vision and fruition of God : and all this happiness will be without alloy, without intermission, and without end. By all these benefits of religion in this world, in death, and in the world to come, you are urged, my hearers, to make and execute the resolution of the text, "As for me—I will serve the Lord." Would you have the highest happiness of which you are capable in this world—would you die in peace—and would you be unspeakably and forever happy in heaven ? Then heartily engage in the service of God.

4. I mention one other motive to urge personal religion, and that is the *necessity* of the case. You must serve the Lord, or you must be forever miserable. God made all things and therefore man for himself—for his own glory. And he will be glorified in his creature man. Those who will not actively glorify him by serving him, he will cause to glorify his justice and his power in their everlasting punishment. They who will not serve him must continue under the curse of his law while they live ; death will be their enemy, when they come to die ; and when they leave this world, which may be very soon, they must lie down in sorrow, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched ; where are continual weeping and wailing ; and where there is no rest, day nor night forever. By all the terrors of the Lord, then, and the dreadfulfulness of his wrath against his enemies, you are urged to engage in his service.

II. I proceed to offer some reasons to enforce the other branch of the resolution ; viz. in regard to *family religion*—"As for my house we will serve the Lord." Having already occupied so much time in offering reasons to enforce personal religion, I must necessarily be brief on this part of the subject. And indeed if I could succeed in inducing my hearers heartily to embrace personal religion, family religion would follow of course. True personal religion in heads of families will lead them conscientiously to perform their duties to their families.

Family religion is enforced by its reasonableness. We are dependent on God as families, as well as individuals. As families we should therefore acknowledge him. We need family blessings, and therefore as families, we should ask for them. And as families we are the subjects of many favors, and therefore as such we should express our thankfulness.

Family religion is also enforced by scripture precepts. Family prayer appears to be inculcated in several passages, as the following. Peter exhorting husbands and wives as to their relative duties, adds as a reason, "that your prayers be not hindered;" which appears to teach that they are to pray together. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians, after having pointed out the relative duties of the different members of a family, adds the exhortation, which appears to be addressed to them collectively.—"Continue in prayer." And in other epistles he exhorts, "that men should pray every where," and "with all prayer," which general expressions naturally include family prayer.

As to the other branches of family religion, which were pointed out,—as the religious instruction of those under our care, restraining them from vicious associates and practices, setting a good example before them, and praying for them in our secret devotions—these are enforced by numerous passages of Scripture, which we have not time to quote.

Family religion in its several branches is also enforced by the example of a host of worthies, whose history is recorded in the Scriptures. Besides the example of Joshua, we have that of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Job, and David, and Daniel, and Cornelius; and we may add we have the example of Christ.

Again this duty is enforced by its advantages to ourselves, to our families, to the church of God, and to the civil community. That family religion is calculated to be thus advantageous must be evident from its very nature; and facts abundantly teach its advantages in all the relations which have been mentioned.

And once more I would say, family religion is most solemnly enforced by that awful imprecation which is recorded, Jer. x. 25, "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not upon thy name."

Thus I have offered reasons to enforce the resolution in the text, as it regards both personal and family religion. As it regards the former or that we should each personally for himself serve the Lord—it is reasonable because God is infinitely excellent and worthy of our service, and because he sustains to us relations which lay us under indispensable obligations to serve him. He is our Creator, preserver, benefactor and Redeemer. His service is honorable. It is profitable in this world, in death, and in the world to come. And it is necessary. We must serve him, or be forever unspeakably miserable.

And as it regards the latter, that we should serve the Lord, in and with our families, it has been shown that it is reasonable, that it is en-

forced by Scripture precept and example, that it is peculiarly advantageous, and that we are in danger of the curse of God resting on us and our families, if we do not.

And now brethren, what is your conclusion in view of the duty which has been explained, and the reasons by which it has been enforced? Will you not heartily and practically, make the resolution, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?" Will not each of you make the resolution for yourself, that you will personally serve the Lord? And if you heartily make this resolution, those of you who are heads of families will easily be induced to make the other. I am satisfied brethren, that your judgment and conscience are on the Lord's side, whose cause I have been endeavoring to plead with you. Oh that he would incline your hearts to make the resolution, that, let others do as they may, "As for me—I will serve the Lord!"

And dear brethren, let me urge upon you that you heartily make the resolution *now*. Most and probably all of you intend to make it at some future time, and why not now? All the arguments which have been used to enforce the duty of practically resolving to serve the Lord, apply to the present time, and enforce an immediate decision. Is it reasonable? it is reasonable now. For God is now infinitely excellent, and for this reason as worthy of our service now, as he ever will be. And he is now our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; and Christ has already died to open a way of salvation for us. The service is honorable now. The same reasons that will ever make it so while you live, make it so now. It will be profitable now; for you will be strangers to the highest happiness of which you are capable until you truly engage in this service. And it is necessary now. God will be angry with you till you do, for he is "angry with the wicked every day." And while you are delaying you may grieve away the Spirit of God; and be left to hardness, and blindness, and final impenitence; or you may die, and thus the door be forever shut.—Besides, Joshua, when he told the Israelites what *his* resolution was, urged them to an *immediate* decision. "Choose ye," said he "this day whom ye will serve," and elsewhere we read, "What thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow." "Behold, now is the accepted time." "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." May God add his blessing to his truth, and incline the hearts of all of you without delay, heartily to adopt the resolution of the text, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Amen.